

(1) Japan Willing ...

Afghanistan. He said Tokyo had honoured its pledges, with many Afghan youth getting quality education in Japan. They had returned home to serve the country, the president added. The visiting official hailed growing economic activities in Afghanistan and its connectivity with Central Asian republics. He said Japan was ready to cooperate with Afghanistan in its economic development.

He termed Chabahar port vital to Afghanistan's trade development and said Japan would help the war-torn ally evolve a transport master plan. (Pajhwok)

(2) Obama says...

alone against Daesh extremist fighters. Asked whether he found it disappointing that so many troops remain in both countries, Obama said the United States is "not going to get the kind of decisive, permanent victories in this fight against terrorism that we would get from fighting another country."

"But we don't have this huge footprint, we are less likely to be targeted as, you know, occupiers," he added about the reduced number of troops. Even after decimating Al-Qaeda in Pakistan's tribal areas and killing the jihadist group's leader Osama bin Laden, groups in the region still "have both the interest and the capacity if we don't maintain vigilance to strike against the United States," he said. (Tolonews)

(3) Chinese Embassy ...

construction and promoting the internal connectivity of Afghanistan, which will surely further deepen the pragmatic cooperation between China and Afghanistan, and tighten the interest ties between the two sides.

The spokesperson further added that in 2016, China and Afghanistan signed the MOU on Jointly Building the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road between China and Afghanistan, and achieved a series of important outcomes in resuming the direct flight between Kabul and Xinjiang, running the freight cargo train and other aspects. The Chinese side is happy to see that the two sides signed the agreement in the beginning of the Year 2017. It is a good sign and we believe that with the joint efforts by both sides, there will be new developments, harvests and achievements in jointly building the Belt and Road between China and Afghanistan in the Year 2017.

As a good neighbor, good friend and good partner of Afghanistan, China is always committed to pushing forward the Afghan peaceful reconstruction, encouraging strong and reputable Chinese companies to invest in Afghanistan, as well as supporting and engaging in the connectivity and transportation infrastructure cooperation, in order to enhance Afghanistan's inter-connectivity and realize the common development of the region. (PR)

(4) Draft Budget ...

has rejected the draft budget for 2017 over what lawmakers called funding disparities among provinces and other problems.

Amir Khan Yar, head of the Wolesi Jirga economic commission, said different panels of the house had discussed the draft budgets in their meetings. He listed the lack of development balance, a decline in revenue in the coming year, lack of attention to women and education and non-availability of a proper mechanism for the execution of projects as the main flaws.

The Finance Ministry says 287 billion afghanis have been set aside for the general budget and 178 billion afghanis for development spending. A sum of 150 billion afghanis, 32 percent of the total budget, would come through national revenue.

The remaining budget would be funded through foreign aid. Thirty-six percent of the budget will go to security, 21 percent to infrastructure development, 13 percent to education, six percent to agriculture and the rest to other sectors.

Under Articles 75 and 98 of the Constitution, the budget should be approved in line with the national development strategy and its implementation should pave the ground for the development of all parts of the country. (Pajhwok)

(5) Kazakhstan to ...

for HPS construction at the Kokcha river. The station will be able to satisfy one third of electricity demand in the state generating 450 mw of electric power. (Monitoring Desk)

(6) Gen. Nicholson ...

emphasized requirement of Pakistan-Afghan bilateral border security mechanism for which RSM can play important role. Later, General John Nicholson and General Qamar Javed

Bajwa, jointly visited Miranshah, North Waziristan Agency.

The visiting General was briefed by General officer commanding, on Operation Zarb-e-Azb and progress on the socio-economic activities including return of Temporarily Displaced Persons (TDPs).

Visitors were taken to Miranshah bazaar where they saw the development work being undertaken by the Pakistan Army.

General John Nicholson appreciated successful Operations conducted by Pakistan Army and acknowledged the requirement of bilateral border security coordination.

Earlier, on arrival at Miranshah, Lt Gen Nazir Ahmed Butt Commander Peshawar Corps received the visiting Generals. (APP)

(7) Uzbekistan...

ministerial political consultations. The diplomats addressed political, trade and economic, transport and communication and other issues during the talks.

The sides expressed mutual interest in deepening relations. (AKIPress)

(8) Pakistan-Based ...

Afghanistan. Meanwhile, some Afghan parliamentarians and interior ministry officials have also asked for military attacks to be increased on terrorists safe havens and hideouts in Pakistan.

"The fact is that the majority of sponsors operate in Pakistan and they give directions to the terrorists. The issue is that the terrorists basically focus on Afghanistan. Increased attacks on them (terrorists) will help us to be calm," said deputy spokesman to minister of interior Najibullah Danish.

"I can say it with guarantee that the terrorists are operating inside Pakistan and they are trained there. In order to eliminate the terrorists, we must tackle North Waziristan," said MP Abdul Hai Akhundzada.

U.S military findings reveal that from among 100 terrorist groups in the world, 20 of them operate along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border regions. An idea exists that Pakistan military's Zarb-e-Azb operation also failed to eliminate terrorist groups along the border between the two countries and many of them fled to Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

(9) NATO Deploys ..

and Baghlan in the north to Helmand in south and Farah in the west.

Afghan forces backed by coalition air strikes pushed them back on many fronts, though the rebels managed to briefly seize Kunduz city in the north and breached parts of Lashkar Gah city in the south.

NATO officially ended its combat mission in December 2014, but US forces were granted greater powers in June to strike at Taliban fighters as US President Barack Obama vowed a more aggressive campaign.

The US still has some 8,400 troops in Afghanistan. In early December, General Nicholson said the government in Afghanistan's capital Kabul directly controls about 64 percent of the country's population of 30 million, down slightly from 68 percent earlier in 2016. (Al-Jazeera)

(10) Cops Linked...

drug smugglers. Without providing figures, the police boss said the number of 'ghost' personnel had deceased in Sangin, Marja and Kajaki districts.

However, the provincial council's deputy head, Abdul Majid Akhundzada, said past security operations did not yield positive results.

He said Helmand's security situation needed a strong and united attention from government leaders.

The Taliban have been in control of six districts in Helmand. (Pajhwok)

(11) Families of

of security forces casualties.

Ruling out discrimination among the security personnel, President Ghani said the soldiers wearing the security forces uniform are all one Afghan.

In other parts of his speech, President Ghani warned the ill-wishers of the country and said they should not miscalculated Afghanistan, emphasizing that the last year's fighting season showed that Afghanistan was turned into their graveyard.

This comes as the casualties rate of the Afghan security forces sharply increased since they took full security lead from the coalition forces at the start of 2015. (KP)

(12) Justice...

constitution.

"Constitutional amendment is one of the key items of the commitments made by the national unity government which is supposed to be discussed at a constitutional Loya Jirga. The constitutional Loya Jirga will focus on the position of the chief executive or premiership and the issue

is quite clear, a commission for the constitutional amendment was also agreed. But unfortunately work so far has not been done in this respect. But all these must happen in line with the constitution and not any other document or on the basis of any foreign dictation," said Abdullah on Thursday. Critics say that there has not been a firm commitment by the present government to conduct district council elections, a reluctance they believe that has created challenges in the way of the Loya Jirga.

No district council elections were held in the country over the past 10 years.

"Thirteen years have passed since the ratification of the Afghan constitution, there is a need for the constitutional amendment; one of its problems is the national unity government," said MP Mirdad Khan Nejrabi.

But critics have said that government's failure to hold district council elections has challenged the constitutional Loya Jirga.

Based on the Afghan constitution, members of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) and members of the district councils are supposed to be among the attendees of the Loya Jirga who are selected by the people. (Tolonews)

(13) Afghanistan,...

to MoCI, if India and Tajikistan join APTTA, trade relations between the four countries will increase by 70 percent.

"If India and Tajikistan also join ATIPA, it will benefit all four countries," said Mohammad Qurban Haqjo, deputy of MoCI.

However, the ACCI said in the past three years only Afghanistan has implemented the agreement. They said there was a need to discuss the matter with Pakistan and draw up a new agreement. (Tolonews)

(14) Drive Launched ...

grabbers, the spokesman claimed, promising the drive would go continue until all illegal constructions were pulled down.

Rightful owners would be provided with plots in the township, Khogyani added.

Mayor Hameedullah Afghan acknowledged plots for common welfare schemes had been grabbed by some people in the Qasimabad township.

Mohammad Siddique Dawlatzai, the Behsud district chief, hoped the township would get a legal framework after the grabbed lands were recovered. But provincial council member Zabihullah Zmarai discounted the campaign as a half-hearted measure. He alleged some lawmakers were behind land-grab and the drive would produce no results.

Powerful individuals have grabbed areas in Police, Siahshang, Shaikh Mesri, Chamtali and Qasimabad townships. They have refused to let common people get possession of the plots they have purchased. (Pajhwok)

(15) US Ramps...

role in Afghanistan. Since then, the U.S military has carried out near daily airstrikes on positions held by the country's nascent Daesh branch, and stepped up its efforts to help Afghan forces retain control over provincial capitals in other parts of the country.

Obama gave the U.S military legal authority to target Daesh in Afghanistan in January 2016.

The terror group emerged in the country two years ago as foreign forces were drawing down, establishing a foothold in several districts in eastern Nangarhar province.

Over the past year, the group's presence has spread to at least one other province, as it works to recruit members in other parts of the country.

Despite the increased military pressure, Daesh has managed to carry out a series of high-profile attacks targeting Shiite Muslims in Kabul, raising concerns about sectarian violence in the country. In June 2016, Pentagon officials said Obama had also expanded the U.S military's authority to attack the Taliban and help Afghan forces retain control over provincial capitals, which have come under increasing threat since the withdrawal of coalition troops. Also over the past year, U.S Special Forces have been dispatched to at least a half dozen provincial capitals to back up Afghan forces with airstrikes and other operations. Some 9,800 U.S troops are stationed in Afghanistan, most part of an international training effort. Another several thousand are part of a counterterrorism mission, though details on the operation haven't been disclosed. (Tolonews)

(16) Animal Diseases ...

Mohammad Kazim, a resident of the district, said his 15 animals died in a single night. He has now 200 animals. "I lost 15 animals last night. There are other farmers in our area who are also

facing problems in this regard." He asked the agriculture department to cope with the diseases with needed facilities.

Abdul Aziz, another farmer: "When a pregnant animal is infected with brucellosis, it may result in abortion." He said currently he had taken his cattle to Dasht-i-Laili area to vaccinate them against various diseases

Mohammad Karim Ibrahim, animals health director at the agriculture department, while confirming the prevalence of diseases in animals, said the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) based on the agriculture department's suggestion, had provided 60,000 doses of plague and brucellosis diseases vaccines in aid.

He said the agriculture department was currently busy administering vaccine from ICRC to cattle in Dasht-i-Laili locality of Qush Tapa district and Darzab district.

"We will share the problems Darzab cattle farmers face with the ICRC which will be asked for more help in finding a solution to the problem."

Ibrahim said steps had been taken to prevent animal diseases which were in initial stages. "It requires three years of regular implementation of vaccine to completely eradicate the problem."

Meanwhile, Kabul-based officials ICRC said the committee annually dispatched necessary medicines to veterinarians for treating cattle against various diseases and used vermicides to ensure good health and get increased dairy products.

They said the ICRC had also paved the way for training of hundreds of farmers in rearing livestock in a better manner.

Zarina, a resident of Aulad village of Darzab district, said: "I am a livestock farmer and herdsman and it is our livelihood. We always use milk, beef and other products of cattle and this is we get infected with animal diseases." She said she caught different diseases and first suffered from anorexia and dizziness, then arthritis and legs pain and finally lost her child in womb.

"When I visited a doctor he said I was infected with an animal disease that caused the stillbirth." She said many women in her area suffered from similar diseases and their children were born dead.

Dr. Khalil Haidiri, an official at the public health department in Jawzjan, said animal diseases were seen in people living in remote areas, but brucellosis disease which transmitted to humans from animals was mostly seen in women.

He didn't provide figures for such patients, but advised people to keep washing hands with soap after milking and using animal meat to lower infection chances. He confirmed some women infected with animal diseases had stillbirths.

Stillbirths and animal diseases grip Darzab district despite vaccination programmes each year by the agriculture department to maintain animals' health. (Pajhwok)

(17) Afghan Golfers...

Afghan female golfers also played in the tournament. Although they fared well, they were not able to bring home any medals.

"Female golfers attended the championship from three countries, unfortunately we did not win medals, because the level of the competition was very high, but my recommendation to the girls is to work hard and make a name for Afghanistan as we did," said female golfer Laila Sajjadi.

Imran Ali also won a bronze medal for Afghanistan in 2012 while Nasir Darzab of Afghanistan also won a bronze medal in 2009.

Apart from host Bangladesh, golfers from Afghanistan, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, and Malaysia competed in the four-day event. (Tolonews)

(18) 10 Militants ...

provinces in northern Afghanistan where the Taliban group launched several attacks this year as part of their spring offensive to capture the strategic Kunduz city.

In the meantime, the Afghan forces are busy conducting their clearance operations in the vicinity of Kunduz city and other districts of the province. The Ministry of Interior (MoI), earlier said top Taliban leader who was leading the deadly battle in northern Kunduz province was killed during an ambush of the Afghan security forces.

According to (MoI) "A top Taliban commander named Mullah Firoz Jahadi along with five other armed Taliban killed in Aab Band district of Ghazni province in an Afghan National Police ambush." (KP)

(19) Truck Drivers ...

National Police (ANP), the Afghan Local Police (ALP) and public uprising members were also snatching money from them.

"We are being asked for money by

any armed on the highways," he said. If asked for the reason they replay. "You have to maintain the security and you (drivers) should give us money." He said police were taking 200 to 300 Pakistani rupees from small cars and 500 to 1,000 from trucks.

A resident of Andar district, Lal Mohammad, said he had several times seen police were taking money from drivers.

Lal Mohammad said that people have often complained to the officials concerned, but none of them had taken any practical action.

A number of other residents also complained about the issue.

Ghazni police chief, Brig. Gen. Aminullah Amarkhel said that police had no right to torture people or take money from them. "I visited many districts after we received complains in this regard, the problem has been resolved. I also gave my phone number to drivers to report to me whenever they face such issues in the future."

He said a policeman who took money from people in 3rd police district of Ghazni city, has been fired and introduced to judiciary organs, he said.

He stressed people should help him in arresting such individuals in order to bring reforms to police ranks. "I ordered all commanders to arrest such kind of police and imprison them." Amarkhel said.

A civil society activist, Rahmatullah, said if policemen who were involved in such activities punished, it would learn a lesson for others.

"I think in most cases the checkpoints' commanders are involved in such issues, the commanders should be warned to correct themselves." (Pajhwok)

(20) 4 Security ...

security personnel wounded, he said. The injured security forces were being provided treatment in the district's hospital and their health condition was stable, said Barat Khan.

He added Taliban also suffered casualties in the battle but had no exact figures.

The Taliban militants captured some check-posts of Afghan Local Police (ALP) personnel and seized some weapons and ammunitions. Militants have not commented about the incident. (Pajhwok)

(21) Afghanistan ...

coherent proposal would be prepared and be dispatched to the cricket body after a review by the ACB head.

Mashal recently took charge of ACB and made multiple pledges including the expansion of the Kabul Stadium and establishment of quality cricket academies in five zones of the country. (Pajhwok)

(22) 6 Rebels Dead...

operation was just on time, asking the government to continue the operation until all areas of the district were cleared.

The operations in Baghlan-i-Markazi and Tala-wa-Barfak districts, conde named 'Shafaq 31', are launched as the 6th and 5th municipality districts of Pul-i-Khumri, the provincial capital, are reportedly being controlled by the Taliban and they have a big hand in the areas.

Elsewhere, at least six insurgents were killed and another 12 wounded during a clash with government forces in Baharak district of Badakhshan province, Col. Sakhidat Haidari, crime branch chief at provincial police headquarters, said.

He said the clash erupted at around 6:30pm on Sunday night in Yardar area of the district. The clash lasted until 9pm. The insurgents despite aggressive attacks weren't able to break the strong defence line of security forces and were subsequently forced to retreat to Wardooj district.

Government forces suffered no casualties in the clash, however three individuals of the public uprising forces superficially sustained injuries.

There has been so far no word from Taliban in this regard. (Pajhwok)

(23) Trump Agrees...

of alleged Russia's interference in the U.S. presidential election last year.

"We assess Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the U.S. presidential election," the report said, adding that Moscow's goals were to undermine public faith in the U.S. democratic process. (Xinhua)

(24) Trump Has ...

assets and place his investments in a blind trust, which means something his family would not control. That's what previous presidents have done.

Trump has given no indication he will go that far. He has said he will not be involved in day-to-day company operations and will leave that duty to his adult sons, Eric and Donald Trump Jr. The president-elect has not addressed the ethical minefield of whether he would retain a financial interest in his

Trump Organization. (AP)

(25) British PM...

going to be a member of the EU. Our thinking on this isn't muddled at all." May has reiterated her view that she will trigger Article 50, the two-year exit process before the end of March. May told Sky news' politics show Sophie Ridge on Sunday that she does not see the decision between trade and immigration during Brexit talks "as a binary issue."

"We will, outside the European Union, be able to have control of immigration and be able to set our rules for people coming to the UK from member states of the European Union," she said.

"We also, as part of that Brexit deal, will be working to get the best possible deal in the trading relationship with the European Union. Anybody who looks at this question of free movement and trade as a sort of zero-sum game is approaching it in the wrong way." (Xinhua)

(26) Iraqi Forces...

militants and destroying a vehicle carrying heavy machine gun, the source said.

In the southeastern front, the Iraqi federal police and army soldiers continued their heavy street-to-street fighting against IS militants in the neighborhoods of al-Salam, Palestine, Domiez and Sumer, recapturing several buildings and killing some 25 militants, according to the statement.

In the northern front, the army soldiers backed by international aircraft fought sporadic clashes during clearing operation to many of the 168-building residential compound of Hadbaa, which were freed in the advance which occurred for the time on Friday in the northern edges of the eastern side of Mosul, the statement said, adding that the clashes left some 10 militants killed and three booby-trapped vehicles destroyed. (Xinhua)

(27) Turkish President...

as an extension of the PKK, which has waged a three-decade insurgency for Kurdish autonomy in southeastern Turkey and has been behind a spate of recent bombings.

"I believe we will accelerate dialogue when Mr Trump takes office," Erdogan told a conference of Turkish ambassadors. "I believe we will reach a consensus with Mr Trump, particularly on regional issues."

Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told the envoys he believed Trump would not make what he called the same mistakes as the outgoing U.S. administration. Washington should extradite Gulen and end cooperation with the Syrian Kurdish YPG militia. (Reuters)

(28) UN Appeals...

of international humanitarian law to deny people who are vulnerable, as a result of displacement, conflict or war, humanitarian assistance," the agency's outgoing Syria head Matthias Schmale told AFP. UNRWA said tens of thousands of Palestinians who have fled to Lebanon and Jordan also needed aid to make ends meet. "Some Palestinian refugees who have not asked for UNRWA funds before are looking to us today to help them cover their most basic needs," said Hakam Shahwan, the agency's ad-interim Lebanon director. (AFP)

(29) Philippines...

agreements would allow troops of both countries to conduct military drills, exchange personnel, observe military activities. Lorenzana said Moscow and Manila started hammering out the agreement in 2014 but was not finished. "It didn't progress so we are going to finish it," Lorenzana said, adding the agreement "is almost finish." He said that when the agreement is signed then military personnel from both countries can observe military exercises, or send students to our schools and vice versa to gain military experience. "It's an exchange of visits," he said. (Xinhua)

(30) China, Uruguay ...

high consensus and willingness among different political parties of Uruguay to develop relations with China." He called on both sides to take the talks on Monday as a new starting point to further promote bilateral exchanges. (Xinhua)

(31) Iran to ...

the first such consignment since the deal came into force a year ago. The diplomats, whose main focus is Iran's nuclear program, demanded anonymity Monday because they are not allowed to discuss the program's confidential details. They spoke ahead of a meeting this week in Vienna of representatives of Iran, the United States, Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany to review Iranian complaints that the U.S. was renegeing on sanctions relief pledges included in the nuclear deal. (AP)