

(1) US Wants ...

who has spent several decades dealing with Afghanistan and Pakistan-related issues in various capacities in the US government, said it was clear to all that many terrorist groups operated in Pakistan.

Even though the Pakistani government and security apparatus were trying to diminish terrorist strength in Pakistan, Lavoy said Islamabad had prioritised its fight against the outfits that target the country first and had placed less priority on the terrorists targeting its neighbours.

"We have been clear and I believe with India and Afghanistan, Pakistan cannot, and must not, discriminate between terrorist groups. It must view all terrorist groups as its enemy and must fight terrorism indiscriminately. We continue to work with Pakistan, encourage them to do so, and have offered to help with our capacity and willingness to do so."

The United States, he said, remained concerned about Al Qaeda even though it had been significantly disrupted because of continuous efforts in the Af-Pak region. "This was something President Obama talked about in his State of the Union and other addresses on the threat that both of these groups posed to the United States," he said.

Meanwhile, top South Asian expert Daniel Markey said the incoming administration needed to be tough on Pakistan.

"Trump's obsession with terrorism and his top policy advisors with military experience in Afghanistan (National Security Advisor-designate Mike Flynn and his picked for secretary of defense, Gen. James Mattis) will, sooner or later, expose fundamental differences with Pakistan," he wrote in the Foreign Policy magazine.

Pakistan's leaders were deluding themselves if they believed the congratulatory phone call between Trump and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, in which Trump reportedly called Pakistan a fantastic country, fantastic place of fantastic people, actually boded well for their relationship, he said.

"At worst, Pakistan is an enemy, a state sponsor of terrorism in all but name, a host to anti-Afghan, anti-Indian jihadi militants with American blood on their hands," he wrote.

"It is widely accepted in US policy circles that Pakistan's military and intelligence services prefer to maintain friendly ties with some terrorists for two reasons: First, they are useful proxies to destabilise Pakistan's neighbours, and second, they would also be deadly adversaries, if confronted head-on," he said. (Pajhwok)

(2) Taliban Attend ...

emerge as anti-government fighters. He said blamed the issue on lack of government attention to seminaries. He said most of the 70 seminaries were located in remote areas where the rebels were in control.

A seminary teacher in Mata Khan district, Maulvi Ahmadullah (not real name), said their seminary did not want to register because the government had never assisted them.

"Registered seminaries are in trouble, their students have never regularly received books and teachers their salaries in the past 14 years." The teacher said Taliban did not attend classes in his seminary but there were some other madaris where the rebels attended classes.

"The Taliban students fight in the day and return to the seminaries where they learn lessons and spend night."

Asmatullah, a student at 'Al-Jihad High School' in the provincial capital, Sharana, said seminary and high school students were at loggerheads. He said seminary students viewed school students as time-wasters.

The student urged the government to resolve the problem between religious and government schools.

There has been no word from the Taliban about the emerging problem that is also felt in some other provinces. (Pajhwok)

(3) Taliban Attend...

as the IEC secretary, Baday said. IEC officials said the secretary should meet conditions of the election law's article 12th besides having five years experience in human resources and financial and information technology management.

Appointment of secretary, announcing schedule for elections to Wolesi Jirga and district councils, providing voter lists, designating polling stations and distributing voter cards are primary duties of the IEC.

However, the IEC spokesman said they would start consulting civil society institutes, political parties and election observers in near future about different election issues such as minimizing polling stations.

After the consultations, suggestions and opinions of different people would be collected and needed steps taken accordingly. New IEC members officially started working one and a half months ago. (Pajhwok)

(4) Contract for...

28.5 kilometers road and building 328 meters of bridges.

Durrani said the projects would be executed through the National Rural Access Programme (NRAP) in Herat, Baghlan, Logar, Kabul, Kapisa, Laghman, Takhar, Kunar and Parwan provinces.

The minister added he had asked the companies to ensure quality, otherwise they would face action under the procurement law and their contract would be cancelled.

"We would closely monitor the performance of these companies during implementation of the projects that will provide jobs for many people from 102 to 600 days," he said.

Ghulam Nabi Yaqubi, head of the Yaqubi Construction Company, promised they would focus on quality and completing their work on schedule. (Pajhwok)

(5) Ghani Urges ...

had strong relations with Saudi Arabia describing them as strong and essential. He said Afghanistan has good ties with other Islamic countries, including the United Arab Emirates.

On Pakistan he said Pakistan's best interest lies with the Afghan government.

On Daesh he said the group was a threat to the entire region.

"Unfortunately, when you look at the history of these groups you see that each lifespan is on average between 20 to 40 years and we need a minimum of 20 years to stop them," Ghani said.

"Are you concerned regarding foreign interventions in Afghanistan's internal affairs?" asked the newspaper.

In answer Ghani said: "Millions of Afghans resorted to neighboring countries at the beginning of the crisis and some moved to different cities in Afghanistan. By the end of 2016, one million Afghans returned to their country and we welcomed them."

He said: "Unfortunately, some countries differentiate between a good and a bad terrorist - those who conduct operations outside their countries are good terrorists and vice versa." (Tolonews)

(6) Afghan Children.

The fighting killed a record 8,397 civilians in the first nine months of 2016, and displaced half a million by November.

It called hunger one of the greatest dangers in Afghanistan, where more than a quarter of provinces had acute malnutrition rates above 15 per cent, classifying them above emergency thresholds.

Of the total of 1.8 million people needing assistance, at least 1.3 million are children under the age of five. As of September last year, only a quarter-million children had been admitted for treatment.

The report noted while fighting, a sudden increase in returnees from Pakistan and an economic slowdown affected the country, the food gap was also the result of floods and dry spells, a locust infestation and wheat rust. (Pajhwok)

(7) None of ...

inattention of government leaders were the reasons why none of Afghanistan's universities was included in the list.

They asked the MoHE to provide research facilities at the country's universities and keep sustained focus on promoting science and technology.

However, MoHE spokesman Faisal Amin said Afghanistan's universities would take time measuring up to international standards.

He argued educational foundations had been destroyed during four decades of war in Afghanistan and time was needed to restore the education sector back to its health. (Pajhwok)

(8) Track-2 ...

She underlined the need for dialogue to bring about peace. Afghanistan would not support any initiative that was against its national security, said the MP.

Ex-ambassador of Sweden to Pakistan and Afghanistan Ann Wilkens, while chairing the meeting as a regional expert, welcomed initiatives for normalising bilateral relations.

Having served in both countries as ambassador, she said she equally loved Afghanistan and Pakistan and wanted to see them as friendly neighbours.

While appreciating efforts by the Afghan military to deter Taliban-linked violence, she feared a possible spring

offensive and Daesh attacks in 2017." Another Afghan lawmaker, Khalid Pashtoon said the increasing momentum in Pakistan to make terrorist outfits weaker should also be commended. He added that there were no issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan at the people-to-people level.

He asked both countries to build on commonalities such as religion, cultural values, food, music, language etc. The main concerns on both sides should be considered to reach an acceptable conclusion.

Retired police officer Shoaib Suddle viewed the blame-game as the core issue, which other regional actors were trying to take advantage. "There is positive progress being made on the issue of border management."

"Border management becomes extremely important given the movement of goods and people between the two countries. This is also critical from the point of view of terrorists' movement across the two countries through the porous border."

Qazi Humayun, an ex-Pakistani ambassador, observed any dialogue on the future of Afghanistan should not be to its exclusion. Afghanistan's participation in such meetings was in its best interest, he said, referred to the Russia-China-Pakistan huddle in Moscow.

The participants urged the Pakistani government to simplify the visa process for enhanced people-to-people contact and increase cooperation in the field of health, especially the issuance of visas for patients in emergency cases at Torkham and Spin Boldak.

More scholarships were urged for Afghan students for educational and vocational programmes. Provincial governments in Pakistan may consider offering academic scholarships for Afghan students.

For cooperation in the area of arts and culture, scholarships for artists were sought and exhibitions of famous trade brands proposed on both sides. (Pajhwok)

(9) Afghan ..

Today we find ourselves in a fragile situation but the army is no longer there with us."

The interpreters said they were currently in danger after taking risks alongside the French troops deployed against the Taliban insurgency.

They said they have seen their visa applications rejected once and sometimes several times without explanation.

"I would like to know why," said Habibullah Habib, 24, who was an interpreter for the French in the dangerous Kapisa valley northeast of Kabul.

Targets for IS and Taliban "Daesh (the Arabic acronym for the Islamic State group) and the Taliban are looking for us. If they find us they will kill us for working with foreign armies," he said.

Habib, who lives with relatives in Parwan province north of Kabul, said he had received several anonymous letters threatening him and his family with death.

"Sometimes I have to wear a burqa to go out on the street and go to work. My father wears a mask to go to the mosque, my brothers do not go to school any more," he said.

In 2013 and again in 2015, his visa application was refused.

"I get calls calling me a spy for working with foreign troops," said Noorzai Mohammed Amin, 50.

Some 700 Afghans worked for French army

A total of 70,000 French soldiers were deployed in Afghanistan between the end of 2001 and the end of 2014, of whom 89 were killed and about 700 wounded.

Some 700 Afghans worked with them in jobs such as mechanics, housekeepers and interpreters. One hundred of these have benefited from a process of "relocation" in France. Others have tried illegal emigration routes, sometimes at the risk of their lives.

A similar demonstration by Afghan interpreters was scheduled simultaneously on Tuesday in Paris. (RFI)

(10) Seizing ...

for further investigation. "Insurgents can be weakened if their source of funding is blocked."

He said police were making all efforts to intensify the anti-drug campaign by arresting smugglers. (Pajhwok)

(11) Senate Team ...

illegally smuggled timber in form of furniture in trucks. The provincial police chief had also stopped 57 timber-loaded trucks after their seizure. The lawmaker said until processed and unprocessed wood materials were not separated, concern about

its smuggling would increase. Alokozay said all problems were created by the council of ministers because it did not distinguish processed and unprocessed wood products.

According to the Meshrano Jirga delegation, the Kunar governor has twice asked the council of ministers to review its decision about processed and raw materials, but the council did not cooperate with the governor.

Alokozay said they met local officials, industrialists, factories' owners, representatives of protesters, local residents and transport representatives during their trip to Kunar.

"We found that local officials were not involved in illegal transportation of wood in Kunar," he said, adding that the issue had been shared with the Presidential Palace and wood transportation had been suspended until a decision from the president came.

However, he said deforestation and trafficking of wood to Pakistan was still ongoing in areas under Taliban control in Kunar.

Kunar governor Wahidullah Kalimzai told Pajhwok that a delegation from the Meshrano Jirga visited the province and returned to Kabul after meeting different people on Monday.

He said another delegation by the Presidential Palace also arrived in Asadabad on Tuesday.

The delegation would meet officials concerned about the dispute over illegal wood transportation, he said. An industrialist from Kunar, Khan Mohammad, said he requested the Meshrano Jirga delegation to respect the decision of the council of ministers and implement it.

"We are also against deforestation and illegal wood trafficking, it is the responsibility of our security forces to take action against it," he said. (Pajhwok)

(12) Refugees Leave ...

due to the extended process of applying for asylum. In a dull and overcrowded environment, a rising number of clashes between refugees and police has led to growing discontent among refugees, with many choosing to leave.

Not far off another refugee camp, nearly a dozen young refugees take shelter in an unfinished warehouse. The refugees, mostly from Afghanistan, have previously stayed in Moria.

Amir, one of the refugees, said he and his friends have stayed in the warehouse for a month, braving the cold winter temperatures at night.

They say they left the camp out of fear of another fire and were worried heavy snow might cause the tents to collapse. They were also concerned about disease or fever breaking out inside the camp.

The humanitarian group Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has previously warned about possible epidemic outbreaks in the Moria camp due to a lack of medical supplies.

The EU plans to relocate 66,000 refugees in Greece to other European countries by the end of 2017. However, only 7,700 were relocated over the past 10 months. Around 11,000 refugees remain on Greek islands by the Aegean sea. (Tolonews)

(13) Senior Mo...

allegedly misappropriating \$154,000. In the second case, the court sentenced an Attorney General Office official to two year and six months in jail over the embezzlement of 25 million afghanis. (Pajhwok)

(14) Pakistanis among ...

Taliban were killed and seven others wounded in the clash.

Mujahid also rejected the presence of Pakistanis in the Taliban ranks in Khashrud battle. (Pajhwok)

(15) First Private...

promoting culture and spreading information.

Besides Abor television channel and government-run Radio Television Afghanistan, Hanzali, Ghazali, Nariman and Samim private radio stations as well as Khabarnigar, Mashal Hedayat, Sayda-I-Badghis and Nariman journals also operate in Badghis. (Pajhwok)

(16) 16 Insurgents...

but they were defeated.

Asmatullah, who lives in Sarband village of Greskh, told Pajhwok Afghan News the clash took place last night but he had no information about casualties. Separately, five rebels were killed yesterday during a security forces' operation in the Garamsir district's Shamlan area. A vehicle belonging to the militants was also destroyed, said a spokesman for the 215 Maiwand Military Corps in Gasramsir, Lt. Mohammad Rasool Zazai. The security forces suffered

no casualties during the operation, Zazai said. The Taliban have not yet commented on both the incidents in Helmand where they control six of the 13 districts.

Over the past three months, areas near the provincial capital, Lashkargah, have been the scene of fierce clashes between security forces and Taliban militants. (Pajhwok)

(17) Hundreds...

Fazal Hadi Fazalzai, said the aid was distributed to war-displaced households that were currently living in in Jalalabad, the provincial capital.

The aid was comprise of 100kg of flour, 10 litres of ghee, three sacks of rice, shampoo, soap and other household materials.

Thousands of families have been displaced from remote districts of Nangarhar to the provincial capital, where they are living in harsh economic conditions. (Pajhwok)

(18) Alleged Killer ...

The death penalty was awarded in line with Article 395 of the criminal law five months after the innocent minors were slaughtered in Shamsahor locality.

Days after the appalling incident, police captured the killer named Khyber. Resident of the locality expressed happiness with the death sentence and stressed implementation of the verdict. (Pajhwok)

(19) Afghan Telecom...

workers were installing a communications pylon when attacked by the Taliban.

Abdul Salaam, the company's local director, confirmed one of its employees was killed and a second wounded in the Taliban attack.

The insurgent movement, however, has not yet commented on the incident. (Pajhwok)

(20) Afghanistan War ...

Tuesday and the funeral will be paid for by the Canada government this week.

The Canadian Forces said Desmond joined the military in 2004 and deployed to Afghanistan from January, 2007, to August of that year. The Afghanistan mission was his only overseas tour. (Tolonews)

(21) 9 Taliban ...

Some weapons belonging to the militants were also sized by security forces, he said, adding the detainees involved anti-state activities in different parts of the district.

Taliban have not yet commented about the incident. (Pajhwok)

(22) 6 Afghans ...

on a mobile phone. The victim was also threatened with a knife.

The five were ordered to pay damages of 250,000 kronor (27,600 dollars) to the victim whose identity was shielded by the court. (KP)

(23) Obama to Trump...

display during the current presidential transition," said Obama, referring to Trump's threat to withdraw from the Paris Agreement to combat climate change.

However, he said that trends toward a clean-energy economy that have emerged during his presidency will continue "and that the economic opportunity for our country to harness that trend will only grow."

Obama noted that between 2008 and 2015 the US economy grew by more than 10 percent while emissions of carbon dioxide emissions from the energy sector fell by 9.5 percent, a result that "should put to rest the argument that combating climate change requires accepting lower growth or a lower standard of living." (Xinhua)

(24) Kremlin Deplores...

Department spokesman John Kirby said the additions followed "extensive research" and targeted individuals with "roles in the repressive machinery of Russia's law enforcement systems, as well as individuals involved in notorious human rights violations." (AFP)

(25) Trump Lifts...

conflict of interest, and may need to forego salary for his new position.

According to media reports on Monday, Ivanka, who has also played a role in the transition period, is not expected to take up any position in the incoming administration. (Xinhua)

(26) Iraqi Forces ...

Furqan neighborhood, but the troops repelled their attack, killing some 30 militants and destroying two of their vehicles carrying heavy machine guns, the source added.

In the southeastern front, the Iraqi federal police and army soldiers freed the neighborhoods of Domiz and Palestine after days of heavy street-to-street fighting against IS militants, while the battles contin-

ued in the nearby neighborhoods of al-Salam and Sumer, leaving dozens of IS militants killed and destroying three booby-trapped vehicles, the statement said. (Xinhua)

(27) New Anti-Russian ...

office could take more steps to obstruct the work of the new president Donald Trump.

He added that the Obama administration experienced "anger for its candidate's loss in the presidential election and the desire to seek out those responsible for the defeat anywhere, but not at home."

The U.S. intelligence community, including the Central Intelligence Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the National Security Agency, has recently published a report alleging Russia's involvement in activities, including hacker attacks, aimed at promoting Trump to the presidency. Washington expelled 35 Russian diplomats last month.

The Kremlin had rejected such accusations and expressed Tuesday its readiness to further cooperate with the United States.

"The sanctions remain an element which affects our bilateral relations extremely negatively, but at the same time even in conditions of sanctions, without doubt, Moscow would welcome and be ready for any opportunities for dialogue," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti. (Xinhua)

(28) Turkey, Iraq...

from both sides, including the energy, economy, trade, foreign, defense and transport ministers.

The visit is seen as a new beginning in ties between the two neighbors following months of crisis over Turkey's military camp in Bashiqa region of Mosul, which purportedly aimed to train local Sunni groups in the fight against the Islamic State (IS). A recent ceasefire deal in Syria that Russia and Turkey, along with Iran, brokered also eased normalization between Ankara and Baghdad, the expert said, recalling one of the differences of two countries were on Syria.

Turkey and Iraq were on different sides, as the Iraqi administration, acting with Iran and Russia, has lend support to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, while Turkey insisted al-Assad to step down and supported Syrian rebels since the crisis erupted in 2011, he said. (Xinhua)

(29) Greece under ...

explained that many heated spaces were open during the cold snap.

Authorities are also assessing the situation of the more than 62,000 refugees and migrants currently stranded in Greece. They are accommodated in dozens of facilities across the country. About 15,000 people are living in overcrowded hotspots on the northern Aegean Sea islands which have been hit hard by the cold front in the past few days. (Xinhua)

(30) Belgrade Migrants...

snow gripped Serbia and much of Eastern Europe last week.

Inside the warehouse, migrants have lit up fires to warm up. Some have put up tents inside the sprawling complex and wrapped themselves in blankets provided by aid groups.

Some migrants say they can't sleep at night because of the cold.

Turkish officials say that a mosque canopy has collapsed in Istanbul because of heavy winds and snowfall, killing one person and injuring several others. The collapse occurred during a funeral service in the Atakoy neighborhood near Istanbul's main airport. Bulent Kerimoglu, mayor of the Bakirkoy district where Atakoy is located, told reporters more than 10 people were injured. (AP)

(31) Conservatives ...

European Council and the European Commission, the Socialists and Liberals balked at giving it the last remaining EU top job. Liberal group head Guy Verhofstadt suffered a body blow Monday to his hopes to become president - just days after announcing his candidacy - when his party rejected a plan to join forces with Italy's biggest opposition party, the populist Five Star Movement.

Weber said Verhofstadt's overture to Five Star "has completely changed the picture ... the EPP has been a reliable partner and we simply want others to do the same." (AFP)

(32) Iran Ready...

Field to Iraq in 2013. Based on the agreement, Iran would start exporting 25 million cubic meters (mcm) a day of gas to Sadr, Baghdad and al-Mansuriya power plants through the 270-kilometer pipeline. The amount would increase to 35 mcm/d during summer. The project is estimated to bring in an annual \$3.7 billion for Iran. (Daily Iran)