

### (1) Regional Rivalries...

About Pakistani army chief Gen. Raheel Sharif's last visit to Kabul, the acting defence minister said the Afghan leaders in all meetings with Gen. Raheel had discussed three main issues including an end to the cross border shelling and making policies for peace talks. He said the Afghan Taliban who were willing to shun violence should be given political space and those not taking the path of peace should be rendered unable to carry out disruptive activities.

"Until the government's and people's stance is not clear about peace and stability, until people don't support their security forces and they don't struggle for peace, peace would continue to elude Afghanistan," he said.

Deputy Interior Minister Mohammad Ayub Salangi said they had designed operational plans against militants for winter and spring.

Regarding privileges for the police, he said salaries and allowances of police had been fixed on the basis of security situations in provinces.

The two security officials were able to convince lawmakers but the briefing by the NDS acting chief took place behind closed doors. (Pajhwok)

### (2) 2nd Round ...

"The participants emphasized the immediate need for direct talks between representatives of the Government of Afghanistan and representatives from Taliban groups in a peace process that aims to preserve Afghanistan's unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity," it added.

The delegations were led by Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai, Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhry, the U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard G. Olson and China's Special Envoy for Afghanistan Deng Xijun.

The first round of face-to-face talks between Taliban and the Afghan government was held in Pakistan in July but the second round was cancelled after the death of the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, was revealed. (Xinhua)

### (3) Govt. Warns...

two months, the Afghan people have to see some change," he said. "The Afghan people and politicians do not have the patience they had last year." The last round of talks began while Mansour was in effective command of the Taliban. Militants close to him have said they may consider joining but so far Rasoul's faction has ruled out participating in any process involving foreign powers.

But Karzai said time was pressing and concrete progress had to be achieved over the coming weeks, in time for the Persian New Year in March. The Taliban were not invited to the one-day meeting. The participants agreed to meet again in Kabul on Jan. 18, also without Taliban participation. Little else is known about the meeting, attended by senior officials of the four countries. Karzai's were the first public comments.

His remarks, however, echo earlier comments by a spokesman for Afghanistan's Chief Executive, Abdullah Abdullah, who said ahead of the Islamabad talks that the Pakistani side was expected to present a list of Taliban representatives willing to negotiate with Kabul. (AP/Reuters)

### (4) UN Mission...

Nicholas Haysom, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and head of UNAMA, was quoted in the statement as saying,

"We hope all parties will use this opportunity to engage in this process to bring an end to the terrible conflict in Afghanistan," he added.

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The UNAMA supports all efforts to establish a peace process and will continue to offer its good offices in any facilitative role, while respecting that any peace process must be Afghan-owned and led, according to the statement. Second round of QCG meeting is set to be held in Kabul later this month. (Xinhua)

### (5) Over 100 ...

community trying to get their goods through Pakistan. Therefore, analysts in economic affairs term Chabahar as a good alternative for Afghan traders instead of Karachi Port.

Beyond the purely economic benefits of the port, analysts said the project will also help enhance broader diplomatic ties between Afghanistan, India and Iran. (Tolonews)

### (6) The Netherlands...

of the men should be deported until the ruling becomes definitive. Last year, the Netherlands deported a 54-year-old man back to Afghanistan after 18 years living legally in the Netherlands, leaving his wife and children behind. (Dutch news)

### (7) US Pumps...

In other cases, dead soldiers and police remain listed among active participants, while senior police or army officials pocket the salaries of the deceased, said Attal, who estimates that some 40% of the registered forces do not exist, the AP reported.

US Lacks Accurate Location Data for Many Afghan Health Facilities

Helmand's former deputy police chief, Pacha Gul Bakhtiar, said the province has 31,000 police officers on its registers, "but in reality it is nowhere near that."

Afghanistan's government is ignoring the problem, Afghan lawmaker Ghulam Hussain Nasir told the AP.

"When we say we have 100 soldiers on the battlefield, in reality it is just 30 or 40. And this creates the potential for huge catastrophes when the enemy attacks," he said.

Afghanistan's security forces are entirely funded by the international community, at a cost of some \$5 billion a year, most of which comes from the United States. (AP)

### (8) AAF to ...

to the Cayuse Warrior configuration.

Lynn Tilton, Chief Executive Officer for MD Helicopters, said "The MD 530F has played an integral role in building the capabilities of the Afghan Air Force and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces since the first aircraft arrived in Shindand in 2011."

"In both training and combat configurations, the fleet has consistently maintained a mission launch rate of greater than 97%. This reliability - coupled with ease of operation, proven close air support and close air attack capabilities - stands as a testament to the legacy of this iconic airframe," Tilton added. According to MD Helicopters, the Afghan Air Force (AAF) fleet currently consists of 16 MD 530F Cayuse Warrior helicopters, with the mission equipment including:

1. Rhode & Schwarz M3AR tactical radio communications solution,
2. Aviatech tactical communication antennas,
3. DillonAero Mission Configurable Aircraft System (MCAS) and fixed-forward sighting system,
4. Kinetic Defense ballistic armor panels,
5. FN HMP400™ .50 caliber gun pods from FN Herstal,
6. 2.75" rocket capability.

The 12 new Cayuse Warrior Scout Attack helicopters will be delivered to meet the needs of the 2016 fighting season.

"We are extremely proud of the Cayuse Warrior's performance during the 2015 fighting season," Tilton concluded. "We are honored to have been selected, once again, to deliver this enhanced aerial fires capability to the U. S. Army and Afghan Air Force, and are forever-humbled in faithful service to the warfighter and their

efforts to defeat the insurgency and ensure a democratic future for their country." (KP)

### (9) Suicide Bomber ...

in the immediate aftermath. It was not densely packed at the time of the explosion, according to a police officer working there, but small groups of tourists had been wandering around.

"This incident has once again shown that as a nation we should act as one heart, one body in the fight against terror. Turkey's determined and principled stance in the fight against terrorism will continue to the end," Erdogan told a lunch for Turkish ambassadors, in a speech broadcast live on television. (Reuters)

### (10) Pakistani ...

three civilians were wounded in the incident.

The security forces eventually gunned down the attackers who had been holed up in the 4th floor kitchen of the building.

Meanwhile a legal institution and a civil society activist's institution in Balkh praised security forces for their efforts to end the attack. They sent a thank you letter to the police chief in line with this.

"Balkh civil society activists expect that security forces act seriously in order to prevent attacks like that on the Indian consulate, attacks on the Balkh attorney general's office or burning of telecommunication antenna in Chamtal district or similar incidents," said Sayed Mohammad Yazdan Parast a civil society activist. (Tolonews)

### (11) US Has ...

faulty airstrike, which killed between 20 and 30 people -- including medical personnel and patients.

Sources said in November that the strike was the result of technical and human error, and led military officials to conclude that the clinic was a Taliban compound. The inspections were conducted between July and November. Sopko said inspectors were aided by a knowledge of the area and assistance from locals in the Kabul area.

A different MSF facility in Yemen was struck Sunday.

Six hundred Afghan medical facilities were funded by the \$260 million Partnership Contracts for Health (PCH) program between 2008 and 2015. (UPI)

### (12) 300 Afghan...

holding high school or university degrees with the sophisticated, cutting edge leadership skills to enable them to transform their lives, their communities, and their nation.

"These young women are trained, and they possess the savvy and the passion to work towards a stronger, more secure, and more inclusive Afghanistan," said LidaHedayat, speaking on behalf of USAID Mission Director Herbie Smith. Hedayat runs the Women's Leadership Program.

"As we all know, education plays a crucial role as the hallmark of a civilized society, is the engine of our economy and the foundation of our culture," says Minister of Women's Affairs DelbarNazari. "It is my sincere hope that the knowledge and skills gained through this program will enable its graduates to have a great impact on Afghan society."

Women's Leadership Development is one of four programs under the five-year Promote umbrella. Promote aims to build on the gains Afghan women have made over the last decade by providing 75,000 educated women between 18 and 30 from across the country with leadership skills to advance into decision-making positions in the political, economic and social sectors of Afghan society. (Wadsam)

### (13) Three Afghan...

refugees a day - mostly Afghans.

Attacks on German women, allegedly by migrants, during the New Year's holiday have put pressure on German Chancellor Angela Merkel and her

open-door migrant policy

The number of migrants turned back has risen from about 60 per day in December to 200 since the start of the year, authorities said, adding that Germany's tighter border control could be a knock-on effect from Sweden and Denmark tightening their borders.

Most of the rejected migrants have been Afghans who did not want to apply for asylum in Germany but in Scandinavia, they said. Others are from Iraq, Iran, Morocco, and Algeria.

Last week, Sweden, a favored destination for many migrants, started imposing controls on travellers from Denmark. Denmark in turn introduced spot checks on arrivals from Germany.

Austria meanwhile has tightened controls on its border with Slovenia, sending back 1,652 migrants since January 1, police said. (Tolonews)

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### (15) 22 Militants ...

Gereshk district in the country's southern province of Helmand Monday, according to a separate statement by the ministry.

Afghan security forces have pressed on clearing the militants in restive provinces as Taliban militants have been attempting to take territory and consolidate their positions during the winter in the Central Asian country.

The militant groups have yet to make comments. (Xinhua)

### (16) Close to 19,000...

the lives of almost 3,000 individuals. At least 53 people are already thought to have died while attempting to reach Europe so far this year, most of them (47) in the Eastern Mediterranean route separating Turkey and Greece.

Latest estimates indicate that at least 3,711 migrants lost their lives in 2015 while crossing the Mediterranean Sea, up from 3,279 in 2014. (Xinhua)

### (17) Afghan Refugee's ...

intensified, he and his brother found themselves caught between the two sides of the bloody conflict.

"The Taliban wanted to recruit us to take revenge for our family members who were killed," Passarlay said. "And then the U.S.-backed Afghan government wanted us to work for them ...

"If we had done either of those things, we would certainly have been killed." Fearing for her sons' lives, Passarlay's mother paid a human smuggler thousands of dollars to transport the boys as far as Italy.

Passarlay says he was "terrified" to leave his country and his family, but the journey took an even more harrowing turn when he lost his brother at the Peshawar airport.

Alone and reliant on human smugglers, Passarlay forged on, travelling from country to country in search of safety and his brother.

"The sad reality is when I took this journey, I went through so much hardship," he said. "I actually experienced hell. I was at the mercy of human smugglers, traffickers and agents. Some of them were nice but the majority of them were pretty heartless."

Passarlay was arrested and imprisoned in multiple countries. At one point, he made it to Bulgaria, but was eventually sent back to Turkey, and then to Iran, where he was forced to "restart the journey."

"Not only was I not treated as a child, but I wasn't even treated as a human being," he said.

Passarlay says the most difficult part of the whole ordeal was crossing the Mediterranean

an Sea.

Like thousands of other desperate migrants and refugees, Passarlay made the dangerous crossing in a small, overcrowded boat.

He arrived in Europe alive, but he says the memory continues to haunt him.

"Last year about 4,000 people drowned in the sea," he said. "It keeps me awake. It bothers me. It saddens me."

Passarlay eventually learned his brother was in Britain, and he made his way to the U.K., where they were reunited.

Even after finally reaching his destination, however, Passarlay says he struggled to cope with his experiences and suicidal thoughts.

"Things became so bizarre. Things became so complicated. I just felt I was unwanted," he said.

Today, Passarlay says he's trying to make the most of his life and his opportunities to make a difference in the world.

"Thankfully, here I am. I'm alive," he said. "That's why I wrote the book, to give a message of compassion and love that we need to do more."

Passarlay praised Canada's efforts to welcome refugees, and urged the western world to have compassion for refugees making the same desperate journey he did.

"More and more people are fleeing violence, conflicts and wars," he said. "We need to continue that path of welcoming refugees." (Monitoring Desk)

### (18) Iraqi PM ...

killed, around 50 people were wounded.

After the attack, IS posted an online statement saying it targeted an area where many Shiite Muslims are known to gather and warned of "worse" to come. The Associated Press could not immediately verify the authenticity of the statement, but its language and phrasing is consistent with past IS claims of responsibility. Later Monday, back-to-back suicide attacks in the Shiite-dominated town of Muqadiyah, about 60 miles (90 kilometers) north of Baghdad in Diyala province, killed at least 24 people and wounded 52. And in a crowded area in southeast Baghdad, a car bomb explosion killed at least five people and wounded 12 others. (AP)

### (19) Ongoing War...

some form of military activity. "Children make up at least half of the 2.3 million people estimated to have been displaced from their homes," UNICEF representative in Yemen Julien Harneis said in a statement. "1.3 million children under five face the risk of acute malnutrition and acute respiratory tract infections. And at least 2 million children cannot go to school," he added.

Health, water and sanitation services have also been affected by the conflict pitching Houthi rebels against a Saudi-led coalition, meaning that the needs of an increasingly desperate population are not being met. (Xinhua)

### (20) Syria Army...

Defence Forces militia seized seven hilltops encircling Salma, then advanced into the town's southeastern suburbs.

Citing a military source, SANA said government troops had fought through "dense forests" and rugged terrain to reach Salma.

"Army units are combing the area... to clear explosive devices and mines left by the terrorist groups," the agency reported.

If the government recaptures Salma, which has been held by opposition forces since July 2012, army units would be able to push further into rebel-held territory in JabalAkrad, Abdel Rahman said.

Opposition forces in Latakia province -- including Al-Nusra -- are largely based in the northern and northeastern areas of JabalAkrad and Jabal-Turkman. (AFP)

### (21) Critical Aid...

Carried out by the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, the International Committee of the Red Cross

(ICRC), UN agencies and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), further deliveries are expected to take place this week in these locations as well as to Zabadani which is situated close to Madaya. According to estimates, some 4.5 million Syrians currently live in besieged and hard-to-reach areas because of the ongoing conflict which erupted in 2011 in the country. (Xinhua)

### (22) Obama to Sum...

mandate, according to Obama's chief of staff, Denis McDonough.

The nuclear deal with Iran, resumed diplomatic relations with Cuba, contributions to the global climate pact and an Asia-Pacific trade deal will be touched upon. For the widely watched gun-control bids, many expect the president to give a share of his speech to the topic before a captive Congressional audience. (Xinhua)

### (23) Refugee Crisis ...

under way this autumn. The government's political framework states clearly that "all parties will be summoned to negotiations during spring 2016 with a view to lowering income tax." According to the government, the move would help Danish companies retain their skilled employees who are considering taking jobs in countries where taxes are lower. (Xinhua)

### (24) Union Peace ...

November 2015, he told the opening ceremony.

Attending the opening ceremony of the peace conference were also Vice President SaiMauk Kham, Parliament Speaker U Shwe Mann and U KhinAungMyint, Chairperson of the Committee for Rule of Law and Tranquility of the House of Representatives Aung San SuuKyii and Commander-in-Chief of the Defense Services Senior-General Min AungHlaing, among others. Hundreds of representatives from stakeholder groups of the government, parliament, military and the eight ethnic armed groups that signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Accord (NCA), as well as political parties and other players, are present at the conference. (Xinhua)

### (25) N. Korea ...

a senior research associate at the California-based Middlebury Institute's James Martin Centre for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS). South Korea's military said on Saturday North Korea appeared to have modified the video and edited it with Scud missile footage from 2014 although an official told Reuters that the ejection technology might have improved since the May test. The CNS analysis shows two frames of video from state media where flames engulf the missile and small parts of its body break away.

"North Korea used heavy video editing to cover over this fact," Hanham said in an email.

"They used different camera angles and editing to make it appear that the launch was several continuous launches, but played side by side you can see that it is the same event".

North Korean propagandists used rudimentary editing techniques to crop and flip old video footage of an earlier SLBM test and Scud missile launch, the video analysis showed. (Reuters)

### (26) Thousands of ...

and 98 percent of them voted for industrial action. The British government wanted to establish a "seven-day National Health Service (NHS)" and proposed to introduce a new work contract for junior doctors, who believe the new contract would reduce protections for them. The British Medical Association (BMA), the trade union and professional association for doctors and medical students in Britain, had tried to negotiate a new contract for junior doctors with the government, but failed to reach an agreement. (Xinhua)

### (27) Xi Calls for...

their supervision over implementation of the Party Constitution, in addition to the Party's policies and decisions, so as to ensure decrees issued by the CPC Central Committee are obeyed, Xi said. (Xinhua)