

(1) Afghans Have ...

country.

"A lack of commitment within the government's political leadership, weakness of the legal and judicial institutions and influence of powerful elements within government institutions are among the main issues which have undermined efforts to address the challenges," the poll reads.

"In our assessment we interviewed the educated people who have their masters (degrees)," said CSRS member Hikmatullah Zalad.

The report indicates that the High Peace Council (HPC) has failed to make a breakthrough in peace talks with insurgents and no tangible outcomes have been achieved.

"The lack of harmony between members of the peace council is the main reason of their failure for peace," said CSRS member Ahmad Bilal Khalil.

89 percent of the respondents said government failed to create jobs for Afghans while 71 percent raised doubts over government's economic strategy.

80 percent of respondents said that economic development in the country has deteriorated during the present government compared to the previous administration.

On security, 58 percent of respondents said that security is likely to further deteriorate in the country.

"I think the report provides a good guideline for those who do research in subjects related to peace, corruption, security and other issues," said university lecturer Mohammad Zubair Shafiq. The CSRS talked with at least 701 Afghans in the country's major cities.

Meanwhile, deputy presidential spokesman Shahhussain Murtazawi has said that the NUG has performed well in the economic sector and several trade and transit routes were opened since the formation of the present government.

"The national unity government has made a lot of gains over the past two years, you are aware that domestic investment in infrastructure increased and new trade and transit routes were opened. There are problems regarding corruption, however there is political will to combat the trend and also the Anti-Corruption Criminal Justice Center has taken some practical steps," said Murtazawi. (ToloneWS)

(2) Former

was transferred to his personal bank account," Turkistani said. According to reports, at least three million people are using drugs in Afghanistan and that MoPH is able to treat less than one percent of drug addicts. The public health ministry however said the budget allocated for addicts' treatment has also been embezzled.

A fact finding team recently reported major corruption instances in the MoPH, reports indicate. Commenting on this, chairman of Integrity Watch Afghanistan, Sayed Iqram Afzali, said: "Corruption has existed systematically, but the approach of fighting the phenomenon is not effective."

Turkistani meanwhile said they will continue to investigate Osmani's corruption case.

However, other officials at the ministry, requesting not to be named, claimed that Osmani's whereabouts is unknown. (ToloneWS)

(3) US, Pakistan...

Afghanistan. During Monday's meeting at the General Headquarters in Rawalpindi, Gen. Votel commended Pakistan's efforts and sacrifices in the war against terrorism.

He also highlighted the importance Pakistan accorded to its relations with the US, particularly cooperation on counter-terrorism and regional stability.

A day earlier, Gen. Bajwa had telephoned President Ashraf Ghani and suggested installation of a "robust border management mechanism and intelligence cooperation" to restrict the movement of terrorists. (Pajhwok)

(4) Afghan Troops ...

in Wata Pur District, (eastern Kunar province early Tuesday

morning," said the statement released by army's 201 Corps Selab based in the region.

The statement added that the joint operation by the army, police and intelligence agency personnel started in Shingam village and will cover all unclear pockets of the district in the province, bordering Pakistan.

The raid was aimed at improving security for the locals and ensuring rule of law and good governance in the district, according to the statement.

"The operation will continue until the district is cleared of militants' presence. The militants' bunkers and strongholds will be targeted and the achievements of the raid will be shared with the media soon," the statement noted.

The mountainous Kunar and neighboring Nuristan provinces have been the scene of heavy clashes between Taliban militants and security forces over the past couple of months.

The Taliban has been on rampage since the beginning of 2015 when the Afghan security forces assumed the full responsibility of security from the U.S. and NATO forces. (Xinhua)

(5) EU Co-Hosts...

multi-religious area and the EU is built on a high level of protection of basic human rights, according to the envoy.

"No one should be discriminated because of gender, race, ethnicity, religion or belief or sexual orientation. This is a universal principle that all societies - the EU as well as Afghanistan - should respect and strive for," Mellbin added.

The European Union and its member states in Afghanistan played an important role in championing human rights, including non-discrimination, the statement said. (Pajhwok)

(6) Refugees Poured ...

one and half decades, apart from 2002 when around 1.5 million refugees returned to Afghanistan.

According to Minister Balkhi, more than 1 million refugees returned to Afghanistan during the year and over 900,000 of them repatriated voluntarily.

The majority of the refugees have returned from Pakistan after becoming a victim of the security and political upheavals, specifically after they were forced to return following a deadly attack on Peshwar school and the recent incursions along the Durand Line.

The United Nations refugee chief urged Pakistanis asked the Pakistani authorities late in June last year not to blame Afghan refugees for terrorism in their country.

The call by UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi followed amid growing public calls for their deportation and worsening relations between the two neighbours.

Warning that the roughly 2.5 million Afghan refugees in Pakistan risked becoming a "forgotten" crisis, Grandi called on the international community to invest more funds to help them. "My appeal is that, not only to the authorities but also to the local population: refugees as you know are not terrorists," Grandi said during a visit to a repatriation centre outside the north-western Pakistan city of Peshawar. (KP)

(7) IEC Consultation ...

weak in the past and said if the IEC gave more role to parties, political groups and candidates in overseeing election process it would somehow ensure transparency.

Calling security another important condition for the election, he said that the election would be more transparent if the list of all voters were available. (Pajhwok)

(8) 40 Percent...

High School, said: "Our family allow us to go to school in difficult circumstances. But our school is without a building, a problem for us. In cold and hot weather, studies are affected."

Another student at Haroonkhel High School said: "Our school has no building and is shifted from one place to another." He said students often left school in the middle of the day, as the absence of a proper building made it hard to maintain discipline.

Abdul Wali Wakeel, a provincial council member, said it was a huge embarrassment that 40 percent of Logar schools were without buildings after 16 years of democratic rule and huge aid flows.

"The common people are ready to send their children to school and donate land for the construction of educational institutes. But the government has failed to do its part -- a disservice to the nation," Wakeel commented.

Saleem Saleh, the governor's spokesman, acknowledged that some schools in the province were without buildings. He confirmed receiving a list of schools sans buildings from the education department. Special attention would be paid to the issue this year, he promised.

The problem was discussed with education ministry broadcasting department head Kabir Haqmal, who said Logar was a lucky province where 40 percent schools were without buildings. More than 50 percent schools in other provinces faced similar problems, he explained.

He, however, said the Ministry of Education (MoE) planned to construct buildings for all schools across the country. Both time and funds were needed for such projects, he said.

Currently 307 schools, including 15 seminaries, are functional in Logar, where 150,000 students, including 35,000 girls, are enrolled. (Pajhwok)

(9) Hekmatyar...

prisoners of the party, he said, "About a month back, the HIA shared a list of its 488 prisoners with the government and the government also reviewed the list, we hope the first group of our prisoners would be released in the next few days," (Pajhwok)

(10) Farah Airport...

added Al Gharafa was working for the economic development of Afghanistan, where more projects would be launched in near future.

Governor Mohammad Asif Nang welcomed Al Gharafa's assistance and said the organisation had constructed a mosque in Farah City, where 6,000 people could pray at a time.

He said Al Gharafa had signed an investment contract worth \$160 million with the Afghan government. The money, according to the governor, would be invested in agriculture, environment and urban development. (Pajhwok)

(11) Heavy Snowfalls

usual. The roads are closed every year. We are prepared. At least 23 avalanches occurred in the nine districts this year, but there were no casualties," said Hamayun Dihqan, head of Natural Disasters Management Authority in Badakhshan.

Badakhshan governor Gul Mohammad Bedar meanwhile said they will continue to address the residents' challenges. (ToloneWS)

(12) Hundreds of ...

Hamidullah Nawroz, told Pajhwok only a limited number of youth were able to succeed in their risky mission, with many losing their lives.

He asked families not to let their children fall into the hands of human smugglers. On the other hand, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said police were trying to arrest human traffickers.

MoI spokesman Seddiq Seddiqi claimed dozens of human traffickers were detained last year. Poverty, lack of job opportunities and unclear future are the reasons behind illegal migration. (Pajhwok)

(13) Badakhshan ...

did not have an exact estimate of the land usurped and refused to name the grabbers. But he said efforts were underway to get back the land containing historical sites through legal means.

He said 22 ancient sites -- five in Faizabad and the rest in different districts -- were registered with the agriculture department.

Reconstruction work on the Hakim Naser Khesro Balkhi tomb, Mullah Barat Seminary in Yamgan district, Mir Yar Baig's mausoleum in Faizabad and 11 old shops was underway.

The Agha Khan Cultural Foundation is supporting the reconstruction work, which will be completed in 90 days. He said a

survey of old Pul-i-Khashti had been conducted by the Foundation and the rehabilitation work would start soon.

Badakhshan is a mountainous province with lush green valleys, bordering Tajikistan, China and Pakistan. The province is rich in natural resources such as azure, ruby and gold besides having several historical sites. (Pajhwok)

(14) 16-Year-Old ...

not want anything from government except to arrest the murderers and to pour fuel over them and set them alight.

Mohammad Azim, a relative of the victim, said the family was very poor but had no enemies. Just two days before the incident, the victim's father left to work in Iran, he said. On learning about his daughter's death, he returned home.

Meanwhile Faryab human rights commission condemned the incident and said it was shocking. They called on judicial organizations to ensure justice is served. According to them, in the past year, 32 cases of violence against women have been registered - including 27 murders and five rape cases. (ToloneWS)

(15) 63-Year-Old ...

six sons and four daughters and all of them are educated. But he said none of his children's graduation ceremonies were as exciting as his own.

Abdulwadol said he will continue his education as he wants to get his master's degree.

He did however have to share his graduation day with one of his sons - who on the same day graduated from the engineering faculty at a university in Pakistan. (ToloneWS)

(16) Afghan Detainee...

when he was then transferred to Afghan authorities.

Mr Mohammed was subsequently tried, convicted and sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment for offences relating to the insurgency in Afghanistan.

However, Mr Mohammed claims British forces held him for an unlawful amount of time and he is seeking damages.

'A partial victory' Under International Security Assistance Force procedures, suspects were allowed to be detained for a maximum of 96 hours - or four days - after which time they had to be released or handed over to Afghan authorities.

In November 2009, the UK government adopted its own policy under which ministers could authorise detention beyond 96 hours - if it was believed a suspect could provide new intelligence.

However, in 2014, High Court judge Mr Justice Leggatt found that while Mr Mohammed's arrest and initial detention for the initial 96 hours had been lawful, he had then been unlawfully held for a further 106 days.

Mr Mohammed's lawyers successfully argued in court that the UK's policy on detention had breached his rights under the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

The MoD then challenged that ruling.

The Supreme Court judgment said that even if it can be shown the MoD contravened the ECHR in detaining Mr Mohammed for longer than 96 hours, it would not necessarily entitle him to damages.

BBC defence correspondent Jonathan Beale said the case was now likely to go back to court as the MoD has to show there was an imperative security reason to detain Mr Mohammed.

However, our correspondent said the Supreme Court's ruling would be seen as a "partial victory" for the government. (BBC)

(17) Afghan Boy...

He says he now looks forward to reuniting with his parents settled in Denmark, though it might be difficult to sever his bonds with his newly adopted home.

Zaheri quickly managed to learn Turkish at the primary school which he was enrolled in while awaiting the processing of his application to travel to Denmark. Zaheri and his brother were entrusted to their uncle since his parents took their other three children and made their way to Europe as illegal immigrants

last year. The uncle took Zaheri and his brother and followed the same path two months later.

They managed to sneak into Turkey from the country's eastern border and were able to reach as far as Pasinler, a small town in the eastern province of Erzurum where below-zero temperatures are prevalent for most of the year.

After he fell ill, the young boy was unable to travel any longer and the others in the group decided to abandon him near a gas station.

The boy was almost freezing to death when a passerby noticed him and took him to the hospital where he received treatment. Zahiri was later reunited with his uncle who returned to Erzurum to find him after the boat he was traveling on in an attempt to reach Europe from Turkey's Aegean coast sank.

From his uncle, he learned his parents found asylum in Denmark.

Hasim Ozcan, who heads the local immigration authority in Erzurum, says the young boy's story "deserves to be put on film." He and others learned the full extent of the story when an Afghan family living in Erzurum helped interpret the young boy's words who spoke nothing other than Pashto.

"He had almost lost his fingers to frostbite when we found him with an older boy. They told him people would help them and they would return to take them," he related.

"We further learned about his story when his uncle returned. He was sent to a home for children [who lost their parents] and with the aid of his uncle, he managed to contact his parents. They had video calls but they will reunite physically next month," Ozcan says. (ToloneWS)

(18) 2 Men Caught...

Jawzjan. Investigations were underway from the detainees and the issue would be seriously followed, Turkistani added.

Asadullah, a resident of Shebrghan, said that detention of two arms sellers would have no positive impact over the security situation as they would be soon released and once again turn to illegal activities such as arms sell to the Taliban.

He demanded strict action against these people and said they should be punished without delay so they may not get involved in illegal activities again. (Pajhwok)

(19) Moscow Willing...

promise and attempting to introduce double standards in the war-torn Syria.

Moscow considered it appropriate to invite representatives of the new U.S. administration to the upcoming intra-Syria talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, Lavrov said, adding that he hoped the new administration would accept the invitation.

"This will be the first official contact between Russia and the Trump administration," he said. (Xinhua)

(20) Britain Can't...

help make Brexit a "great thing". Trump also predicted in the interview that other countries would follow Britain's lead in leaving the EU. (Xinhua)

(21) UN Envoy...

be part of constitution, he added. Kobler admitted that there is a lack of a political will to implement the LPA signed in December 2015 in Morocco, brokered by UN.

The international community wished that LPA, as a framework, could bring stability and help to combat a growing Islamic State presence in Libya.

"There was the true will to implement it. Now we have seen that this political will is not everywhere," regretted Kobler. He promised to continue his efforts to bring "those who resist in the temptation of the Libyan Political Agreement" on board. (Xinhua)

(22) Turkish Airstrikes ...

to the terrorist organization. A total of 2941 improvised explosive devices and 43 mines have been destroyed since the beginning of the operation, the military added. The Turkish Armed Forces

launched the Euphrates Shield Operation last August against both IS and the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), the military wing of the Syrian Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD).

Turkey regards the YPG and the PYD as terrorist organizations due to their links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). (Xinhua)

World Bank, EU Representatives to Visit Tajikistan

DUSHANBEH - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Tajikistan reports about the visit of the foreign delegation scheduled for January 17-25.

The World Bank delegation headed by Vice President Cyril Muller will arrive in the country on January 17-18.

The EU Special Representative for Central Asia, Ambassador Peter Burian, is expected to visit Dushanbe on January 23-25, said the Foreign Ministry. (AKI)

As Peace Talks Loom, Syrian Refugees See Little Future in Going Home

ASTANA - Syrian rebel groups announced Monday that they will attend next week's Russia- and Turkey-brokered Syria peace talks in Kazakhstan, giving a boost to hopes that a current cease-fire can be hardened into a more enduring agreement.

The talks are intended to build on the two-week cease-fire with the goal of ending a six-year conflict that has left more than 300,000 people dead, caused billions of dollars of destruction, forced more than half the Syrian population from their homes, and contributed to the greatest refugee crisis in Europe since the end of World War II.

But the fate of the estimated 11 million displaced Syrians is unlikely to be addressed, leaving their destiny on hold.

For many Syrian refugees, an eventual return to a country devastated by war and still ruled by the regime of President Bashar al-Assad is an unappealing prospect. Instead, these refugees, some of whom have spent more than three years away from their homes, say they have no future in Syria and are looking to settle elsewhere. "Syria is like a broken pane of glass. It cannot be put back together. The sectarian divisions are too deep. I want to go to Britain," says Mortaz Khallaf, a 32-year-old law graduate from Aleppo in northern Syria. Khallaf is the shawish, or manager, of a small refugee camp set among a plantation of spindly poplars on the edge of this village in Lebanon's Bekaa Valley. (AP)

U.S.-Latam Relations Uncertain under Trump Administration: Brazilian Experts

RIO DE JANEIRO - With U.S. President-elect Donald Trump to take office this week, the future relations between the United States and Latin America remain highly uncertain, according to Brazilian analysts.

Last week, Trump held his first full-fledged press conference since July, during which he talked about policy plans after his inauguration on Friday.

"What surprised me is that Trump's vision of international economic relations belongs to the 18th or 19th centuries," said Mauricio Santoro, a professor of international relations at the State University of Rio de Janeiro. "To believe you can only enrich yourself at the cost of your neighbor is a folly that ignores centuries of empirical evidence and the own path of the U.S.," he added. In Santoro's opinion, Trump made it clear during his campaign that his vision for Latin America "begins and ends with Mexico." Santoro believes the U.S. president-elect will focus more on domestic affairs, not on the international arena.

The main U.S. concerns about Latin American countries will still be issues like the fight against drug trafficking and migration, said Oliver Stuenkel, a professor of international relations at the Getulio Vargas Foundation. (Xinhua)