

(1) US, Pak...

and the region," an official statement said.

U.S. and Afghan leaders also condemned the attack on a Pakistani university that killed 21 students, teachers and security guards on Wednesday and conveyed their sorrow and grief over the incident.

"Both the leaders appreciated the resolve of Pakistani nation in its war against terrorism and extremism," the statement said.

The four-way process is seen important in view of the formal participation of the United States and China, the two important countries which can play key role to push the peace process forward.

The Taliban have not formally shown reaction to the process however, with their unofficial websites and online media opposing the process. (Xinhua)

(2) Afghan Taliban ...

The conference is "aimed at finding a solution to the conflict in Afghanistan," now in its 15th year.

It is not part of the official peace process, which recently restarted after being derailed in July when the Afghan government announced that the Taliban's founder and leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, had been dead since early 2013.

The official, four-country initiative, involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States, is due to hold its third meeting in Islamabad on February 6. The meetings do not include Taliban representatives, but aim to lay the groundwork for an eventual dialogue between militants and the Kabul government.

Referring to itself as the "Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan," the Taliban said the group sought to take "healthy advantage" of the Pugwash initiative to "relay the legal demands of our nation and our just policy to the world directly."

The conference was "purely for research purposes with academic debates," it said.

Javid Faisal, deputy spokesman for Afghanistan's Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, told The Associated Press that no government representatives would attend the Pugwash gathering. (AP)

(3) NATO Chiefs ...

to the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF), review ongoing challenges and lay the groundwork for the way ahead in 2016, the statement added.

"These frank discussions will provide additional guidance for the months ahead, in light of the challenging security environment and the fast approaching Warsaw Summit in July", General Pavel, Chairman of the NATO Military Committee, emphasised during his press conference.

The year 2015 was a challenging year for the ANDSF, however they had demonstrated resilience and courage in combating the insurgency across the country, he said while recommended pursuing the ongoing efforts based on conditions on the ground. "It is important to gain a better regional understanding and situational awareness, but we also need to further enhance practical military cooperation tailored to the individual needs of the nations and of NATO", the Chairman concluded. (Pajhwok)

(4) Men's...

research has used a multi-method approach employed both quantitative and qualitative techniques to assess four different regions that manifested degrees of both conservatism and openness regarding gender issues and were satisfactorily secure, namely, Nangarhar, Takhar, Bamyan, and Kabul, both in rural and urban areas. The statement said the aim for the research was to explain how men's attitudes, perceptions and actions were influenced by socio-culturally constructed ideas of manhood, and how these factors further affected the interaction between men and women in Afghan communities.

The paper draws on perceptions of adult males and females and strives to address the issues connecting the notions of "manhood" to the violence against women, as well as the degree in which men tend to claim the "control" over women's life and their decisions. (Pajhwok)

(5) Insecurity ...

insecurity, problems of traders, lack of government support to the private sector and international transit caused a decrease in exports and revenue of the port," the official said.

He added most of goods trucks entered Kunduz without paying taxes under the transit system that caused the revenue to slump. On the other hand, traders complained they were facing security problems on the Kunduz-Sher Khan highway. One of them, Ziaur Rahman, said they did

not feel safe while traveling the road. Militants harassed businessmen on the highway, he alleged.

"Two weeks ago, one of my friends was stopped by militants in Dasht-i-Abdan area near Kunduz City. While trying to kidnap him, the insurgents managed to escape after policemen arrived at the scene," the businessman said.

Rahman claimed Taliban flags had been hoisted in Mullah Sardar and Boztimori areas, only two kilometers from the city. He argued traders would obviously feel discouraged in such a situation. "We are tired of this and ask the security organs to resolve our problems."

But the deputy police chief, Col. Mohammad Masoom Hashimi, said security forces had been guarding the highways. He asked businessmen not to worry about their security because the Afghan forces were there to ensure their protection. (Pajhwok)

(6) Latest Push...

representatives from Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US had increased the importance of the talks compared to the previous gatherings. "It seems that the international community has decided to end the war in Afghanistan and let the Afghans resolve their issues through dialogue instead of war," he said.

Although details of the Islamabad and Kabul meetings are yet to be known, but generally it is believed the main agenda was achieving long-lasting peace and stability in Afghanistan through direct talks with the Taliban.

Mutasim suggested that the root causes of the war in Afghanistan should be identified and necessary measures taken to remove them.

All the stakeholders should consider the peace talks as a chance and should try to seize the opportunity, he said. He feared if the opportunity was not properly utilised like the previous talks, the country would lead to anarchy and civil war. (Pajhwok)

(7) US Insists ...

sort of decisions about how the continuation of those talks and any sort of agreement that could be produced by those talks about whether or not that's in the interest of those countries to pursue - those are decisions that will be made by the leaders in those two countries, as it should be," he said.

But certainly the US would continue to play the role that it has played for some time now in supporting reconciliation talks that were led by those individual countries.

While responding to another query, Earnest said the US forces in Afghanistan have two missions. The first was to conduct counterterrorism operations to target the remnants of Al-Qaeda and other terrorists, operating in that region. And a lot of that is to prevent any sort of resurgence by Al-Qaeda or other extremist groups that want to try to plot against the United States (US) or the homeland, he said.

"The other thing that we've obviously been focused on is supporting the Afghan government and trying to enhance their capability to provide for the security situation in their own country. And as a part of those missions, we've been pretty aggressive in taking terrorists and extremists in Afghanistan off the battlefield, both to protect the United States, but also to protect our men and women who are serving in Afghanistan," he said. (Pajhwok)

(8) U.S. Gives...

California, in December.

A Pentagon spokesman, Capt. Jeff Davis, said there had been an adjustment to the authorization for U.S. forces in Afghanistan, but he did not give details on when exactly it was given. "As part of this mission, we will take action against any terrorist group that poses a threat to U.S. interests or the homeland, including members of ISIL-Khorasan," Davis said.

Davis said there had been "some" strikes on the group in recent days. The change in the authorization was first reported by the Wall Street Journal. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

According to the State Department, Islamic State-Khorasan was formed in January 2015, based in the Afghanistan-Pakistan region, made up of former members of the Pakistani Taliban and Afghan Taliban.

U.S. Army General John Campbell, who leads international forces in Afghanistan, has said Islamic State had coalesced over the last five or six months in Nangarhar and Kunar provinces and had been fighting the Taliban for several months. (Reuters)

(9) 'Van Attack ...

losing lives and sustaining injuries in line of duty in accordance with the private media regulatory law.

"We once again ask the government to terminate security officials who did

negligence in preventing the attack," the federation said.

Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah strongly denounced the attack and directed the officials concerned to assist the victims of the incident. (Pajhwok)

(10) Working on...

ing jobs due to the weak leadership. The reward and punishment system would be implemented in Helmand soon for reforms in the Afghan forces, he added.

He assured the security situation in Helmand would be improved soon as Afghan forces would permanently subdue insurgents. (Pajhwok)

(11) Afghan Women ...

involved.

Women have been absent from more than 20 rounds of informal Afghan peace talks spanning more than a decade, according to the New York-based Human Rights Watch. Women took part in two meetings with Taliban representatives last year in Oslo and Doha, but those were not sanctioned by Kabul.

There were no women in attendance at two rounds of talks held earlier this month by representatives of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China, which are aimed at reviving negotiations with the Taliban that broke down last summer after a single meeting when Kabul announced the death of the Taliban's longtime leader. The exclusion of women can be partly attributed to their limited representation in Afghanistan, where men hold virtually all top positions in government and the security forces.

But rights advocates also say President Ashraf Ghani, a Western-educated technocrat who has vowed to protect women's constitutional rights, has backtracked on promises to bring them into the process.

"The government has shown multiple times that it doesn't really take women's interests seriously enough," said Human Rights Watch researcher Ahmad Shuja. He said Afghanistan is obliged to comply with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1325, passed in 2000, which calls for women's participation in peace negotiations.

A U.N. study of that resolution published last year found that including women in peace negotiations makes it more likely that the process will succeed.

It said negotiations that included women were 20 percent more likely to result in a deal that lasted at least two years, and that the longer the peace lasted, the greater the likelihood that it would continue to endure. It found that women broaden the debate, speed up the process and increase the involvement of different sectors of society.

"We know that when women are placed at the center of security, justice, economic recovery and good governance, they will be more direct recipients of a range of peace dividends including job creation and public services. This means that the pay-offs of peace will be delivered more rapidly to communities," the report said. Ghani's deputy spokesman, Zafar Hashemi, said the government "will continue to consult with women, just like we engage with representatives of all walks of life, as we move forward to end the conflict."

"The president has been explicit in his intention to preserve the rights and achievements of Afghan women; that is the guiding principle for Afghan officials who are engaged in the peace process," Hashemi said.

That hasn't been enough to reassure Mahboub Seraj. The director of the Organization of Research for Peace and Solidarity, which advocates for peace and rights, fears Ghani will keep women out of the process until the very end, after all the big questions have already been decided. (AP)

(12) Announcemen...

under a transparent system. SJM chief Ahmad Zaki told reporters here the incumbent election bodies had been accused of supporting a specific group in the previous elections. On Monday, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced the schedule for parliamentary and district council elections.

IEC chairman Yousuf Nuristani told a news conference that the panel had made all technical preparations to conduct the election process on October 15, 2016.

No one would be allowed to interfere in the election process or IEC affairs, Nuristani pledged. "We have also prepared a draft to reform the election system and have shared it with the government and parliament for approval," he added.

However, he said \$67 million was needed to cover expenses of the elections and the government was responsible to provide it. Romal Khuram, member of the SJM, alleged officials of the two electoral

bodies had intervened in the previous vote process and made it controversial.

The SJM also issued a statement saying the unity government should strive to protect the country's national interests.

It asked the two leaders not let the country plunge into a new political turmoil due to a controversial election system, calling for a clear roadmap to ensure transparent polls. (Pajhwok)

(13) 'West Should...

reporting in Afghanistan.

Lamb, who began reporting in Peshawar in 1988, marched up to the areas of Afghanistan where the 'mujahideen' was fighting Russian troops.

Through her book, Lamb argues that the US military intervention to oust power the Taliban in Afghanistan by fighting a long war, although well-intentioned, has turned into a defeat despite their victory because it left the country in a far poorer and deplorable condition than before.

"I want people to think more carefully before intervening in a country. Afghanistan shouldn't be forgotten. More people are dying there than any time in all the years of fighting. We should not forget that and in particular the situation of women," she said. The winner of Prix Bayeux, Europe's most prestigious award for war correspondents, the author said the many promises made to the women in Afghanistan by the Western countries have not come to fruition till date.

"A lot of promises were made after the Taliban government was removed in 2001. The West told the women of Afghanistan that they would be free and they would be able to run for office, or hold jobs and be able to speak at international conferences. (Agencies)

(14) Peace Strategy...

brokered by a third party, America, China or anyone else, he said, alleging differences within the administration and an unclear stance of militants had caused confusion.

"Since the (peace) process has made no progress, people no longer think it will have a positive outcome," he remarked, lamenting the heavy amounts of money spent on the High Peace Council (HPC) and its activities. Both sides should have a strong will for peace, the former minister stressed, warning that reconciliation would continue to elude the country in the absence of sincerity of intent on the part of negotiators.

Ever since it was established, the council had been unable to help the peace process because it was led by individuals unacceptable to the militants as neutral mediators, he claimed. "The government is yet to fill the HPC leadership post that fell vacant after Salahuddin Rabbani was made foreign minister a year ago. Then HPC secretary Masoom Stanikzai looked after the council's affairs for some time before being chosen as acting defence minister. Ahady insisted the quadri-lateral conferences on the resumption peace talks in Islamabad and Kabul were a failure, Pakistan was not honest in the process. The ANNF, including several political groups, was recently created by Ahady. It has already labelled the national unity government as unsuccessful, demanding fresh presidential elections. (Pajhwok)

(15) Kabul Rejects ...

investigating teams had collected enough evidence to support the claim. At least 21 students and teachers were killed and around 50 others wounded in the early morning attack on educational institute in the northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province.

"Afghanistan believes that there is no good and bad terrorist and all of them have the agenda of killing innocent people and spreading terrorism," the statement said, adding a common strategy had to be formed to wipe out terrorists from the region. Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Raheel Sharif telephoned President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Resolute Support (RS) Commander and sought their help in tracing the perpetrators of the violent assault on innocent people. (Pajhwok)

(16) Pakistani Taliban...

operate from there. The army chief called Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Dr. Abdullah Abdullah and Commander Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, Gen. John Campbell and shared details with them about the attack on the university, the military said. "As investigations lead so far, Charsadda terror attack was being controlled from a location in Afghanistan through an Afghan cell phone by a TTP operative," a statement from the army's Inter-Services Public Relations said. The army chief asked for their cooperation in locating and targeting those responsible for the attack and bringing them to justice. Afghanistan has condemned

the attack at Bacha Khan University in Charsadda. "The terrorist attacks on a center of education amount to attacks on the future generations which are also contrary to all the Islamic and international principles," the Afghan Foreign Ministry said. (Xinhua)

(17) Turkey Urged...

president Haji Nasrullah Zaheer Pajhwok Afghan News that currently dried and fresh fruits produced in Kandahar were only exported to Pakistan and India because they lacked facilities to export them to the markets of other countries. He welcomed Turkey's decision to open a consulate in Kandahar and start flights between Turkey and Kandahar, saying the developments would result into increased trade between the two countries. He said the flights between Kandahar and Turkey would enable Afghan traders to take their goods to European markets via Turkey. Zaheer urged the Turkish ambassador to facilitate the trip of an 11-member group of Afghan traders to Turkey in order they could closely assess markets there and arrange packaging and standards acceptable to Turkish buyers. Deputy head of the chamber of commerce, Abdul Baqi Bina, said earlier Kandahar traders had to face problems in travelling to Turkey because they had to visit Kabul for two to three weeks to get visas. But he said the opening of the Turkish consulate in Kandahar would resolve problems traders faced in getting visas. He said Afghan traders would be able to import goods directly from Turkey to Kandahar and then Europe. The Turkish ambassador promised to make efforts at providing all facilities mentioned by the Afghan traders in exporting and importing goods. (Pajhwok)

(18) 19 Killed in ...

province. The motorcade was travelling from Kabul before being intercepted by militants in surrounding areas of Zurmat a couple of days ago," district governor Akhlas Khan told Xinhua on Friday.

"The truck drivers were also freed from Taliban custody. Most of the goods were untouched. On early Friday morning, the security forces escorted the convoy to continue its travel to the final destination in the province bordering Pakistan," the official added. (Xinhua)

(19) Fuel Prices...

purchased a kilogram of gas for 40afis yesterday," he said. In food items, the rates of sugar and ghee decreased. Food Traders Union head, Fazal Rahman, said that the price of a 49kg bag of Pakistani sugar decreased from 1,970afis to 1,900afis. He said the price of a 16-litre of Momin ghee tin dropped from 970afis to 950afis. But other essential items' rates remained unchanged. Rahman said 49kg of flour cost 1,440afis, 25kg of rice 1,650afis, registering no change in their prices compared to last week. (Pajhwok)

(20) NDS Arrests 8...

organizations and eliminate dozens of terrorists during special operations, they said. "Since the start of 1394 (Persian calendar) the NDS discovered 25 explosive laden cars, arrested 20 suicide attackers including seven plotters and ten fundraisers," the statement said. According to the Afghan intelligence agency, Taliban attacks on civilians indicates that the group has lost its credibility and they can not justify their crimes in line with Islamic principles. Afghan culture and humanitarian values. (Tolonews)

(21) National Outrage ...

of media for reflecting the truth and disclosing the crimes of terrorists, Afghans on Thursday said that the Taliban has long been opposed to the media and journalists in a bid to cover their crimes. They said that media acts as a voice and ear of the people and reflects the truth which doesn't suit the intention and objectives of the terrorists.

"Media reflects the voice of the society, the enemies of Afghanistan strive to cut off this voice, but media will never surrender to the conspiracies," Kabul resident Rohullah Amiri said. Afghans have blamed the government for not been able to thwart such attacks, stressing that the insurgents can't reach their targets without the support of certain elements within the country.

They called on the government to step up efforts and formulate an inclusive security measure to ensure the safety of the people. (Tolonews)

(22) Cancer Diagnostic...

would be able to treat 1.5 million patients a year. At the provincial level, 3.6 million people will receive care. Of the 120 health facilities across Nangarhar, eight clinics have been closed due to insecurity in Shinwari districts of the province, he said. Up to 15,000

rickshaws in Nangarhar consumed used auto-mobile oil, which caused respiratory problems, the official explained. (Pajhwok)

(23) Interior, Defense

forts to ensure the safety of media organizations and their employees," he added.

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry said the attack on TOLO TV staffers is a war crime.

The Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said primary investigations reveal that a large amount of flammable and explosive substances were used in the suicide blast to increase the casualties.

"The attack [on TOLO TV employees] shows that the Taliban has no respect to humanity. They [Taliban] want to quiet the voice of the freedom of expression in the country," he added. (Tolonews)

(24) UNSC Denounces...

the lives of civilians, also aims at the right of all Afghans to freedom of expression. The 15-member body reiterated their serious concern at the threats posed by the Taliban, Al-Qaeda, Daesh or so-called Islamic State (IS), illegal and armed groups to the local population, national defense and security forces, and international presence in Afghanistan. Underlining the need to bring perpetrators, organisers, financiers and sponsors of these reprehensible acts of terrorism to justice, the Security Council urged all states to cooperate actively with the Afghan authorities in this regard. (Pajhwok)

(25) NGO Condemns...

of media workers killed up to date in 2016 to 13. PEC added that the other six more journalists being killed were two Iraqis, two Pakistanis, AlmgiddMojalli in Yemen and the French-Moroccan photographer Leila Alaoui in the terrorist attack in Ouagadougou. "We warned at the beginning of the year that the environment is very risky. Civilians and journalists are targeted by terrorist groups all around the world. It is a very worrying situation", Blaise Lempen, PEC Secretary-General, noted. (Xinhua)

(26) Syria Opposition ...

part in the Geneva talks on time. The office of U.N. envoy Staffan de Mistura said he was still aiming "at rolling out the talks" on Jan. 25, and would be "assessing progress over the weekend". Russia said the talks could be delayed until Jan. 27 or 28 because of the disagreement over who would represent the opposition. (Reuters)

(27) UN Works ...

be sent. He also confirmed that the special envoy will brief the Geneva press core on Jan. 25 and inform on the progress and assessment of the talks to be held in Geneva's Palais des Nations. (Xinhua)

(28) Refugees Represent...

we are in a much better situation than we were in last June." Deficit target of the Greek government for 2018 and 2019 should be set, and reforms should remain on track, especially in the financial sector, he said. (Xinhua)

(29) Kevin Rudd ...

favorites for the post. Media reports said on Friday that the Turnbull government believes it would be able to avoid nominating any candidate if Rudd remained an outsider in the race. (Xinhua)

(30) US to Push...

blamed European countries for the crisis of the Syrian refugees. According to al-Assad, Europe was not dealing with the cause of the refugee crisis. (Xinhua)

(31) Poland Clouds...

but alliance diplomats say there are no such plans. Britain is providing nearly 1,000 troops for two NATO exercises later this year, as well as 1,000 personnel in four years' time, when Poland will lead the new NATO rapid-reaction spearhead force. But the subtlety of the language used to promote the new NATO deterrent policy in the east is an opportunity for Poland's new conservative government. Warsaw, which is hosting the NATO summit in July, has called for a permanent NATO troop presence in the past and the new government has intensified those demands. (Reuters)

(32) Iran-IAEA ...

the nuclear agreement, dubbed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), is being done in a routine mode, Zakharova said. The Russian diplomat also noted that further development of Iran's nuclear program and international cooperation with Tehran should be carried out strictly in the framework of the JCPOA and the Council's Resolution 2231 (2015). (PressTV)