

### (1) CEO's Office...

be fully transparent, he assured, claiming the panel had learnt a lot from past experience.

The Wolesi Jirga or lower house of the parliament had already rejected a presidential decree approving suggestions of the Electoral Reform Commission (ERC).

Earlier President Ashraf Ghani had decreed seven suggestions of the ERC and called for urgent measures to provide legal cover to the proposals aimed at reforming the electoral system.

The parliamentary rejection of the presidential legislative decree has halted the selection committee from doing its work after creating a legal vacuum. (Pajhwok)

### (2) Ghani Stresses...

Amid preparations for the third meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) of Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States, and China in Islamabad, Ghani stressed on practical cooperation of regional countries in the fight against militancy.

"We are a people of resilience and we will overcome [challenges]. Afghanistan will be the graveyard of Daesh and all the rest of them. Don't challenge us. We have a proverb that revenge is sweetest when it takes a hundred years," he said.

Meanwhile, NATO Secretary General, Jens Stoltenberg, reiterated their support for Afghanistan.

"We are focusing more and more on how can we build local capacity and how countries, which are effected themselves can increase their ability to defend themselves. And that's exactly what we now are doing in Afghanistan. NATO has ended our combat mission. So, we now have 12,000 troops in Afghanistan, who advise, train and assist the Afghans," he said. (Tolonews)

### (3) New Indian ...

strengthening of relations between the two countries was important for the Afghans.

He hoped they would have more friendly relations with India during the assignment of Vohra in Kabul. (Pajhwok)

### (4) Taliban Reaffirms ...

militants and Kabul, are expected to resume in Islamabad on February 6.

Earlier peace talks faltered last summer after the Afghan government announced Mullah Omar had been dead since 2013. That announcement prompted the Taliban to pull out of talks and led to a power struggle within the group over who would represent it.

Members of the Taliban's unofficial Qatar office are believed to be directly linked to Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, who officially assumed the top position after Omar's death was announced last year. He was previously Omar's long-serving deputy.

The Taliban first opened an office in Qatar in 2013, but when it hoisted the white flag flown during the Taliban's five-year rule of Afghanistan it sparked outrage from then-President Hamid Karzai and the U.S. The move derailed a previous round of peace talks and led to the Taliban office being officially closed in 2013. Members of the group have remained in the oil and gas-rich country, however. In 2014, Qatar helped American officials negotiate the release of captive U.S. Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl in exchange for five Taliban detainees sent to Qatar from the U.S. prison at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba.

In its statement from the latest Qatar talks, the Taliban said it is serious about peace should it succeed in its aims of ending foreign intervention in Afghanistan and establishing an "independent Islamic system." It said it is committed to "civil activities," free speech and "women's rights in the light of Islamic rules, national interests and values."

The group added that it wants good relations with the world "on the basis of mutual respect."

"We do not want to interfere in others' affairs, nor do we use our soil to harm others, nor allow others to interfere in our affairs," it said.

The Taliban ruled Afghanistan according to a harsh version of Islamic law from 1996 until the U.S.-led invasion launched after the Sept. 11 attacks. (AP)

### (5) MoD Contract ...

by the agreement would face the

law, the president was quoted as saying.

Second Vice-President Mohammad Sarwar Danish, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah, the ministers of finance, economy and justice and some other officials were present at the meeting. (Pajhwok)

### (6) Disabled, Martyrs' ...

concerned have been subjecting me to delaying tactics day," he alleged, saying he could not afford to pay the transport fare.

Mohammad accused the department employees of taking bribes from them some years ago. But several months ago, they stopped the illegal practice.

Meanwhile, the relevant officials confirmed their failure to release 20 million afghani payable to war-affected people. They said the process had been delayed for multiple reasons.

The department's acting director, Matiullah Matin, said 11,500 relatives of martyrs registered with his office were paid annually. He added 3,500-3,000 people with disability and 8,000-7,000 kin of martyrs registered with his department received their payments annually.

However, Matin admitted 814 relatives of martyred and 70 disabled people were yet to receive their stipends.

He linked the non-payment to the recipients' failure to visit the department, get registered or problems in their documents. Matin explained they had not paid the registered individuals for two years, because the Ministry of Labour, Social, Martyr and Disabled Affairs was yet to give them the go-ahead.

The database for registering disabled and families of martyrs was created last year. Most of those who did not receive payments had problems in their documents, the director concluded. (Pajhwok)

### (7) Germany to...

records of Kunduz' residents. "This difficult working environment is to some extent the result of a recent complex attack and the overrun of Kunduz by AOGs in September 2015."

In order to address these challenges, the German programme for regional capacity development (RCD) will provide equipment to introduce a computerized system for the department.

RCD will also provide support to the registration department in establishing a database for its archive. To make sure that the new equipment is made full use of, Afghan-German cooperation will train and coach the registration department's employees in how to use the new systems. Moreover, they will also receive training in customer service, time management and transparency to improve services to Kunduz' inhabitants. About 400 community elders from Kunduz, who are referring local residents to the registration office, will get information and receive training as well.

Because of the high influence elders have, they can best convince their communities of the necessity of having a Tazkira (national identity card). It also enables them to support people with their Tazkira application, which will save both time and money. As this document is a prerequisite to enroll at school as well as for getting a job, a passport or a driver's licence, this can have a positive impact on the lives of people.

At the inauguration ceremony, hosted by the Kunduz population registration department, Amruddin Wali, the Deputy Head of Provincial Council said: "The new database in combination with training of our employees will ease the work of civil servants in this department considerably. Both, the employees and the applicants, will save lots of time and government services will become more accurate."

In Kunduz' registration department, information boards will be installed which will provide information about the offered services and how to receive them, as a way of deterring corruption. These boards will also exhibit the different district offices' performance which might result in competition between them, therefore improving the quality of their services provided. (Pajhwok)

### (8) Ex-Jihadis...

an environment for Taliban to join the Afghan government.

The main office of the Grand Council of Afghanistan

Mujahideen would be established in capital Kabul and its branches opened in provinces, Zadransaid. However, a member of the council, Gul Qasim Jahadyar, said some members of the council had been involved in fighting against Taliban for years.

"If the Afghan government really wants peace then the High Peace Council (HPC) should be dissolved and former jihadi figures and ulema should be given to the task to lead the peace process," he said. "Some HPC officials are involved in war crimes. Peace cannot be achieved by such people. The peace process should be brokered by honest people," he said.

Political analyst and civil society activist Zahid Shah Angar said any foundation having former mujahideen and ulema as its members would have more influence on the society. He said the peace process would be effective if Ulema and former Mujahideen were given a major role in the process.

"I think any movement which represents public demands would be more effective whether it is an opposition party or any other movement," Angar said. The participants of the ceremony criticised the government for paying no attention to the role of Ulema and Mujahideen during the past 14 years. (Pajhwok)

### (9) MPs Interfering ...

Taliban had proposed changes in the curriculum in Hesarak, Khogyani and Sara Rud districts. He said the Taliban's suggestions were not much different from what taught in the curriculum at schools, adding that the rebels had demanded replacement of some subjects.

Ismailzai claimed some schools had been constructed with government funds and assistance from NGOs. The official said 30 of 63 closed schools had been reopened in the Shinwari district. (Pajhwok)

### (10) Mansoor's Participati

southern region, observed that the Afghan government, besides continuing the peace efforts, should also get military preparation in winter to face Taliban threats in the coming spring and summer.

"Taliban by staying away from talks, virtually bought time to regroup in winter and launch bloody offensives in the spring and summer," the officer said. The first round of face-to-face talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government under the mediation of Islamabad was held in Pakistan in July 2015.

However, Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor, who succeeded Mullah Mohammad Omar after his death was confirmed last August, termed the peace talks as "meaningless" practice and halted the process. Nonetheless, Pakistan, Afghanistan, China and the United States, in efforts to revive the stalled talks, have held two rounds of meeting earlier this month.

The third round of the quadrilateral talks is scheduled for Feb. 6 in Pakistan to revive the stalled talks and work out a roadmap to bring the Taliban outfit to the negotiating table and find a political solution to Afghanistan's lingering conflict.

General Raziq, who has been for the past few years fighting Taliban insurgents to evict them from Kandahar and Zabul provinces, said cautiously, "I am praying for the return of lasting peace through negotiation in its earliest." However, he said with observation that the Taliban's reluctance to participate in the talks would overshadow the ongoing peace process. Although the Afghan government is desperately working to bring Taliban to the negotiating table, the armed outfit militants and Haqqani network have yet to give the green light to join the peace talks. (Xinhua)

### (11) Perpetrators...

The president's special envoy for reforms and good governance, Ahmad Zai Massoud, said the attack was an attempt to silence freedom of expression. "We should continue on our path," he said. Former Vice President, Mohammad Karim Khalili, said militants want to hinder media. "They [militants] will never achieve their goals," he added. It is believed that "Black Wednesday" incident was aimed at silencing freedom of expression. The Minister of Information and Culture, Abdul Bari Jahani, said the militants wanted to damage

journalism and silence freedom of expression.

Nasrullah Stankzai, a professor at Kabul University, sees foreign hands behind the incident. He said with such attacks they [foreign countries] are trying to achieve their political and military goals in Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

### (12) Soybean ...

soy cookies, and other products. Soy can easily be incorporated into traditional Afghan meals as well. Based on NEI findings, after the harvest season, there is a low amount of soybeans available in the market. Soybeans are either eaten by Afghan farmers or stored as seeds for the following year's cultivation. NEI processes soybeans in seven provinces of the country -- Parwan, Kapisa, Takhar, Kunduz, Nangarhar, Herat and Kabul provinces.

The factories are producing soy flour, soy cookies, soy nuts, soy milk for humanitarian aid, Tofu and other products. This year, NEI will produce commercial soy milk for the large scale Afghan market. The soy milk factory will produce daily 40,000 single serving size pouches or 2,050,000 liters per year. The soy milk pouches will have a 10 month shelf-life without refrigeration. Another of NEI's factory in Kapisa processes 600 MT of soybeans annually and produces 60 MT of crude soy oil.

The wholehearted involvement of the Afghan population and local farmers has helped popularize the production and demand of soybean in 2015. (Pajhwok)

### (13) Lack of Electricity,...

villages of the district through 110 development councils under the National Solidarity Programme (NSP).

Though the district chief called as beneficial the creation of the ALP force in area of security, but some residents did not agree with him. Residents of Gangora and Niaz areas accused the local police of intimidating residents and taking bribes under various pretexts.

A resident of Gangora area, Mohammad Juma, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the ALP deployment had overcome Taliban's threat, but the force sometimes created problems for local residents.

He alleged the ALP personnel used to arrest people over petty issues, fabricate charges against them and demand money in return for their release.

But the district chief said he had not yet received any complaints against the ALP force. He said if common people registered their complaints against the ALP personnel, legal action would be surely taken.

Abid confirmed some powerful individuals had occupied grazing lands belonging to Kuchi tribesmen, but did not go into details.

Residents said powerful individuals had occupied many meadows and their repeated complaints in this regard fell on deaf ears.

A Kuchi tribesman, Sarkhel Arab Khan, said more than 25,000 acres of grazing lands belonging to Kuchi tribe had been grabbed by powerful individuals in Bahram Gor, Bahram Shah, Yak Kundah, Sad Mesh and Aqsa areas of the district.

He said they had moved courts against the powerful land-grabbers, but there had been no verdicts for the last few years.

The district chief confirmed the occupation of grazing lands by powerful individuals and said serious efforts were underway to reclaim the swaths.

After a break lasting five years, farmers in Balkh have returned to cultivating poppy crop in their fields in various districts, including Sholgara.

Sirajuddin Abid did not rule out the poppy cultivation but he also did not explicitly confirm the issue.

"We are concerned about poppy cultivation. We have held meetings with farmers and tribal elders in this regard, but we are yet to see the crop standing in fields."

According to Abid, there are 50 schools in the district, in which 34000 students both boys and girls are enrolled.

Of the schools, 18 have no buildings and some are faced with the shortage of professional teachers.

About health facilities, the official said there were 11 health centres

in the district and called for construction work on a -50bed hospital in the district centre to be expedited.

He said construction work on the hospital was launched two years ago and so far 60 percent had been completed and the rest should be completed soon.

Satisfied with the security situation, the district chief said the lack of electricity remained the major problem. (Pajhwok)

### (14) Migrants Defy ...

in Serbia. An Afghan migrant RasoulArwani said that he has passed through major difficulties on his way to Europe.

UN figures show that last year more than a million refugees crossed the Mediterranean to Europe.

The UN has warned that more refugees will flock to Europe this year as well. (Tolonews)

### (15) Young Man...

but the reason of his death is yet to be known.

In Baghlan, National Directorate of Security (NDS) officials captured 130 kilograms of hashish in Khinjan district on the northern highway, Governor Abdul SattarBariz said.

He said two smugglers were also arrested who wanted to shift the contraband to capital Kabul. (Pajhwok)

### (16) Afghan Handball ...

the ongoing week. Foreign media reported that at least 45 people, including 17 children, have died after their boats sank near two Greek islands, making January the deadliest on record for deaths of migrants and refugees in the Mediterranean.

The deaths occurred off two small islands in the eastern Aegean. The highest death toll came when a wooden sailboat sank off Kalolymnos. The coastguard recovered 34 bodies and rescued 26 people. The number of those missing is not known, although between 70 and 100 people were thought to be on board.

At the same time, a wooden boat carrying 49 people sank after crashing into a rocky area off Farmakonisi, to the north of Kalolymnos. Forty people scrambled to shore, one girl was rescued, but six children and two women died.

A large number of Afghans have so far drowned in sea waters after embarking on the dangerous journey to Europe through smuggling routes.

According to reports, nearly 160,000 Afghans have reached Europe in 2014 through smuggling routes and have applied for asylum. (Pajhwok)

### (17) French President...

parade, celebrating 66 years since the country adopted its constitution.

High on the agenda is India's desire to purchase 36 Rafale combat planes for its air force, which Modi had announced during a visit to Paris in April, touching off several rounds of negotiations over pricing, offsets and servicing. (AP)

### (18) Kerry off to...

summit, U.S. officials say, Kerry will make the case to the leader of the -10nation bloc to present a unified stance in dealing with China on the disputes, which have grown more intense as China continues to construct man-made islands and airstrips in contested areas.

The United States and governments with rival claims with China in the disputed region, including the Philippines and Vietnam, have expressed alarm over the Chinese construction, saying it raises tensions and threatens regional stability and could violate freedom of navigation and overflight.

But ASEAN unity has not always been possible as China wields great influence among some of its smaller neighbors, such as Cambodia. Cambodia held the ASEAN chair in 2012 and blocked the group from reaching consensus on the South China Sea issue and has frequently sided with China on the matter. A senior State Department official accompanying Kerry in Asia said the U.S. had heard from regional leaders that problems related to Cambodia's chairmanship "left a black mark on ASEAN and are not to be repeated." The official said the U.S. believed that Laos would do a better job in balancing ASEAN interests with China. (AP)

### (19) Syrian Govt...

family has governed Syria for more than four decades, has said he will only step down if voted out.

"We are not going to give today what we did not give over the past five years," said al-Hilal late Saturday, during a visit to troops in areas they recently captured from insurgents outside the capital, Damascus.

"This year will be the year of victory for Syria because of the heroic acts and sacrifices by its army and people," said al-Hilal.

Also Sunday, the government newspaper, Tishrin, said in an editorial that the Geneva talks should only bring in negotiators with genuine plans for rebuilding Syria, and not "representatives for the agendas terrorist-supporting countries that seek a seat for terrorism at the dialogue table."

Tishrin was referring to Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Qatar, who are strong backers of the opposition that is trying to remove Assad from power. (AP)

### (20) Germany...

for asylum in other European countries.

The ministry said that so far this year, despite winter, about 2,000 refugees had arrived every day. Police now had the capacity to register 3,500 refugees a day at the borders, the ministry said. (AFP)

### (21) Iraqi Christian ...

want to help on a voluntary basis. A protest in northern Greece calling on the government to grant safe passage to refugees across the land border to Turkey has ended.

The rally was attended by about 700 people and stopped about 200 meters from the Turkish border.

Human rights groups and local activists say the fence and police patrols along Greece's -200kilometer border are forcing asylum-seekers from Syria and other conflict areas to pay hefty sums to smugglers and risk their lives to reach Europe by sea. (AP)

### (22) US Says ...

ard and Poor's unexpectedly cut Poland's credit rating a notch earlier this month - Warsaw's first-ever downgrade, saying the new government has weakened the independence of key institutions and the rating could fall further. (Reuters)

### (23) Vietnam PM...

Ngoc Hoang, a Central Committee member and deputy chair of the party's propaganda and education commission, state-run newspaper Tuoi Tre reported Sunday.

The move, while not completely unexpected, exposed the deep division between Trong and Dung. It was all the more striking as it was revealed during the ongoing party congress to choose the new general secretary and other leaders in the Politburo, the collective leadership that will govern Vietnam for the next five years.

Dung is favored by the business community, which feels that he will continue the economic reforms in the country at the same pace that have helped Vietnam attract a flood of foreign investment and helped triple the per capita GDP to 2,100\$ over the past 10 years. He is also seen as being more solid in standing up to neighboring China, which has been displaying aggressive territorial ambitions in the South China Sea. Trong on the other hand is a stolid, conservative party apparatchik who is not seen as being too imaginative on economic reforms, and being too soft on China.

Before the congress opened on Thursday, it appeared that Trong had suppressed Dung by keeping him out of the official list of candidates for the new Central Committee, a key panel that will elect the Politburo. He also invoked a rule that prohibits the 175 members of the committee, where Dung has influence, from nominating anyone else. (AP)

### (24) Syrian Army ...

entered Rabbah from its western outskirts, namely from the town of Rawda. The source added that the army is now in the central part of Rabbah. The military units will continue to advance to capture the town of Kinsabah, after which it will reach the western countryside of the northwestern province of Idlib, another bastion of the al-Faterh Army rebels, or the Conquer Army, which constitutes of several jihadi groups such as al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front. (Xinhua)