

(1) Uzbekistan, ...

Abdulaziz Kamilov and Mohammad Ashraf Ghani discussed issues of development of relations between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in various spheres.

Kamilov also met with Chief Executive of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan Abdullah Abdullah. The sides discussed directions of the development of cooperation, as well as the implementation of joint projects in the sphere of energy, social and economic revival of Afghanistan, infrastructure facilities.

In January-October 2016, trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan amounted to \$429 million. The parties noted that the two countries have enough opportunities for boosting the trade turnover volume. Abdullah Abdullah thanked Uzbekistan for the construction and commissioning of the railway line between Hairatan and Mazar-Sharif.

Moreover, Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov met his Afghan counterpart Salahuddin Rabbani. They discussed issues of cooperation between the two countries within international organizations such as the United Nations (UN), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and others.

During the visit, entrepreneurs of Uzbekistan and Afghanistan signed contracts on supply of medicine and medical products, ambulances, wheat, electrical (household) appliances worth more than \$49.3 million.

Moreover, a protocol of intention on further development of cooperation in the sphere of transportation infrastructure, envisaging the participation of the Uzbek side in joint railway and road projects, a protocol of intention on creation of a joint commission on security issues and a MoU between the two countries' foreign ministries.

Uzbekistan and Afghanistan signed an agreement between the two countries' interior ministries on cooperation in the fight against illicit traffic in narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors. (Trend)

(2) Sartaj Receives ...

continuous efforts towards reconciliation process with the goal of achieving sustained peace in Afghanistan. (APP)

(3) Concerns Raised...

security forces. If government does not free these mines this winter then it will be difficult to do so in summer," Anwari said. "If Badakhshan's gold and lapis mines are taken back from the Taliban and come under government control our income will increase and job opportunities will be provided for our youths," Anwari added.

Meanwhile Badakhshan's deputy governor Gul Mohammad Bedar confirmed that the Taliban control at least two mines in the province.

"Taliban has access to Raghistan's gold mine. The extraction of that mine has been banned by the president but it is still being excavated illegally," Bedar said.

But Badakhshan police said that an operation to clear the mines of Taliban will be launched in the near future.

"We have preparations and soon we will conduct operations and remove the Taliban from the mines, which we will hand over to government," said Badakhshan police security head Mohammad Nabi Bayan.

The Badakhshan lapis mine has been extracted illegally by the Taliban and armed groups for several years. The semi-precious stone is then smuggled through Panjshir province to neighboring countries, especially Pakistan. (Tolonews)

(4) Afghanistan Improves.

established a high anti-corruption centre to try high-ranking officials as well.

In its 2016 report, Somalia, South Sudan, North Korea and Syria were perceived to be the most corrupt countries in the world. Somalia has held the undesirable title as the world's most corrupt country for the past ten years, with a score of 10 on the Corruption Perceptions Index 2016.

Countries with a lower score are deemed to be more corrupt, and are generally characterized by impunity for corruption, poor governance and weak institu-

tions, the report said.

Second from the bottom is South Sudan, with a score of 11. The third most corrupt country is North Korea, followed by Syria, a war-torn country which is presently seeing a massive outflow of refugees.

Countries in the Middle East suffered the worst declines on the corruption index, led by Qatar which fell 10 scores from the previous year due to scandals such as FIFA's decision to host the World Cup 2022 in Qatar amid reports of migrant workers abuse, Transparency International said.

The German lobbying group warned that more countries' scores fell instead of improving from the previous year, creating a "vicious circle between corruption, unequal distribution of power in society and unequal distribution of wealth," the report said.

The continuous cycle of corruption fueling social inequality has led to disenchanted citizens across the globe, who then turn to populist politicians, Transparency International said. "In countries with populist or autocratic leaders, we often see democracies in decline and a disturbing pattern of attempts to crack down on civil society, limit press freedom, and weaken the independence of the judiciary," José Ugaz, Chair of Transparency International, said in a media statement.

European nations were among the highest ranked on the Corruption Perceptions Index, occupying four out of the top five slots. Denmark and New Zealand were tied in first place as the world's cleanest countries, followed by Finland, Sweden and Switzerland. (Pajhwok)

(5) Taliban Earn...

Red Group, in southern Helmand province of Afghanistan to face the increasingly professional Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).

Reports regarding the establishment of the Red Group came amid concerns that the group is attempting to control of the key districts and cities of the province in a bid to shift part of its leadership council to Afghanistan.

The group also launched numerous attacks, including some major coordinated offensives, to seize control of the province but the Afghan officials said all the attacks were repulsed, although some senior security officials later said the group has managed to shift some of its leaders to Helmand together with their families. (KP)

(6) Half of Helmand ...

were registered in hospitals and as many at homes in Helmand last year, showing a decrease compared to the past, Tobagar said.

All problems concerning the public health have been shared with the authorities concerned on provincial and central governments level. He said the recent conflict in Helmand had little impact on the health sector.

Helmand has been the scene of violent clashes between government security forces and Taliban militants over the past three months.

Taliban have been able to capture a number of districts besides overrunning a number of areas in Lashkargah, the provincial capital. (Pajhwok)

(7) Pakistan Aims ...

Agriculture, and generation of electricity for the residents.

Pakistan and Afghanistan share at least seven rivers but have signed no agreement on how to jointly manage the water, this may become a major issue as ongoing power and irrigation projects upstream in Afghanistan on shared rivers may impact water flow.

Afghanistan is building dams on the Kunar and Kabul rivers - tributaries of the Indus, Islamabad, in turn, is building its own water storage and hydroelectric projects on the Kabul River and its tributaries, without consulting Afghanistan. (Agencies)

(8) Political Tension ...

quarters of the 2015-16, dropped to Rs9.28 billion during the corresponding period of the current year.

Similarly, Afghanistan's imports of rice, cement and other traditional items also went down during the current financial year. But medicine imports steadily rose to

Rs2.21 billion from Rs1.94 billion. "My entire mercantile perished twice at the border crossing due to the strict steps taken by the authorities on both sides," said Niaz Muhammad, a fruits merchant. "It is apparently due to the strain in the ties between the two states."

By the same token, Afghanistan's exports -- mainly grapes, apples, apricots, tomatoes, onions, palm oil, raw cotton, mineral coal, solar panels, submersible pumps, etc -- also saw a fall.

But Qurban Ali Khan said Afghanistan remained a major destination for Pakistani products. He linked the declining trade to the new border management system and other issues.

The strict visa regime, installation of scanners and other measures impeded the trade flow for the time being, he believed, hoping the situation would return to normal. (Pajhwok)

(9) Taliban Tell...

on about Afghanistan's history, its numerous defeats of invading armies and the reported corruption widespread in Afghanistan today. (AP)

(10) Eshchi Welcomes...

Dostum is addressed. "The order has been issued and now it is the authority of the Interior Ministry and other [relevant] organizations to arrest them [Dostum's guards]. My demand from the Attorney General's office and judicial centers is that they should suspend Dostum and ban him from leaving the country," he stated.

Meanwhile, the AGO's spokesman, Jamshid Rasuli, said they issued arrest warrants after the guards ignored previous summons. "The AGO has already sent three summons to them but they did not present themselves so now the AGO has sent out the arrest orders for nine of Dostum's bodyguards," he said.

The Interior Ministry would not however comment on what moves it will take to implement the AGO's order. Commenting on the issue, Ainuddin Bahaduri, a lawyer, said: "The reason behind the issue is convoluted because they would have thought that it will take a long time and a high investment in order to reach the bottom of the case; therefore, they changed the direction of the issue."

Eshchi accused the first vice president of illegally imprisoning him and ordering his guards to sexually assault him. (Tolonews)

(11) 4 Foreign,

elders and provincial council members. He added Afghan, UAE, NATO teams, as well as the Scotland Yard officials, were probing the assault in close coordination.

It was too early to say anything the result of the probe, because detainees were still being investigated, he said. Some materials collected from the site are being examined.

He said the government was serious about the investigations, whose result would be made public by the investigating teams. The attack had raised multiple questions, Gulzar said, insisting Afghanistan had been a victim of terrorism and needed global help in the war against terrorism.

While hailing the UAE reaction to the carnage, Gulzar claimed 98 percent of terror attacks in Afghanistan were carried out by Pakistan and the Taliban's Haqqani Network. He called the ongoing conflict a war among regional spy networks.

He insisted the Kandahar assault had been planned outside Afghanistan and explosives used in the blast were imported.

Last week, Kandahar police chief Gen. Abdul Raziq told reporters tens of suspects, including security officials, had been arrested in connection with the attack. He said initial investigation showed the explosives had been placed inside couches. Raziq accused Pakistan's main intelligence agency of plotting the attack and said the blast was planned months ago. The Pakistanis wanted to kill the entire leadership of Kandahar, he alleged. (Pajhwok)

(12) Rights Watchdog ...

moved swiftly, turning a blind eye to the dangers," HRW said. According to a recent UN civilian casualties report, attacks by the Taliban and other insurgents

in 2016 targeting civilian demonstrators, educational and religious facilities, and the media were "the deadliest since 2001." Between January and September last year, the UN recorded over 2,500 civilian deaths and over 5,800 wounded.

HRW says the deportations should halt at least until the Afghan government has a clear vision of how to deal with the forced return of Afghan refugees from Pakistan and Iran.

More than 620,000 Afghans were displaced by conflict last year while around one million registered refugees and undocumented Afghans were forced to return from Iran and Pakistan in 2016.

Germany took in 890,000 migrants in 2015 and received 280,000 asylum seekers in 2016, prompting widespread public concern about domestic security and the integration of refugees and other migrants, as well as boosting support for the right-wing Alternative for Germany party. (Agencies)

(13) Thousands of...

said until free sale of drugs was not prevented and the rehabilitated people were not provided job opportunities and their treatment was not properly conducted, the number of addicts would further increase.

Meanwhile, Nangarhar public health director Dr. Najibullah Kamawal confirmed the lack of rehabilitation facilities for drug addicts in the province. He said 400 addicts were being treated at the 300-bed rehab centre but yet thousands of others awaited their treatment.

Provincial council member Zabihullah Zamari blamed security personnel for the situation, saying until drug trade continued, the issue would persist.

"We have informed the police headquarters about freely selling of drugs in the city and they haven't been able to prevent it. They at times arrest some persons but that is not enough."

Police spokesman Hazrat Hussain Mashriqiwal said if police had committed negligence, people had also not helped them in this regard. He said police would take action if people informed them about drug sale.

Experts say poverty, joblessness, low level of education and open sale and purchase of drugs are reasons behind the increasing number of addicts. (Pajhwok)

(14) Jawzjan ALP...

his colleagues had been killed by militants and they were currently unable to thwart attacks due to lack of advanced weapons.

"While fighting against the Taliban, we are faced with lack of equipment. We want the relevant organs to equip us to protect our area," he continued.

Jumma Khan, a resident of Jarqadoq village who previously served as an ALP member, said he had resigned his job due to what he called inadequate support from the government.

"We recently lost eight of our colleagues in a clash with militants because we did not receive support from the government despite promises of reinforcements," he added.

But Brig. Gen. Rahmatullah Turkistani, the Jawzjan police chief, said the ALP personnel in the district had no problems and they received enough support.

He confirmed Taliban militants occasionally opened fire at ALP posts in the district but the rebels were unable to pose a serious challenge.

"We have the ability to conduct operations in all 10 districts; we have enough equipment to help in operations in neighbouring provinces such as Balkh, Sar-i-Pul, Faryab, Baghlan and Samangan," Turkistani said.

Around 400 ALP members are deployed to different parts of Qush Tapas. (Pajhwok)

(15) Battle Leaves ...

since Tuesday during which the Taliban besides suffering the casualties also lost territories to the security forces.

Without mentioning possible casualties on security forces, the statement added that the operations against militants would continue.

Taliban militants who have been fighting the government forces in the poppy growing Helmand province over the past several years, are yet to make comment on the situation. (Xinhua)

(16) Police Arrest...

special Afghan court for jurisdiction of major drug cases, the Counter-Narcotics Criminal Justice Task Force of Afghanistan (CJTF) said in the statement. Some 4,800 tons of opium were harvested in 2016 in Afghan provinces where government security forces had little presence, according to Afghan officials. (Xinhua)

(17) Herat Ladies...

customers, such as providing cooked meals.

"Recently a number of women started cooking food and deliver it to customers as per their requirements," Freshta Ahmadi, a member of the group said.

Members said they have also used the page to sell land and houses. (Tolonews)

(18) Taliban Weapon ...

ammunition, according to the BNA, belonged to Qari Burhan and Qand Agha, the top commanders of Taliban militants who have been operating in Katak-khail and Padkhawab Shana villages on the outskirts of provincial capital Pul-e-Alam over the past several months.

Taliban militants who are active in parts of Logar province have not commented on the report. (Xinhua)

(19) Four Insurgents...

details nor information about casualties among security forces. The Taliban has not yet commented about the clash. (Tolonews)

(20) Heavy Snowfalls...

as they are closed now. Badakhshan residents always face a shortage of food and other facilities due to road closures in winters," said Sayed Omar Bahir, a civil society activist in Badakhshan.

Meanwhile, local officials said at least 23 avalanches have occurred so far in the districts but that there have been no casualties.

"It is 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.

"We have (supplies) stored in the districts," he added. (Tolonews)

(21) UN Calls...

of General Assembly Peter Thomson called on the international community to "generate unstoppable momentum" in the early years of implementation of the agenda. (Xinhua)

(22) UN, NGOs...

movements caused by the crisis have not been seen since World War II.

Filippo Grandi, UN High Commissioner for Refugees, said that Syrian refugees and host communities needed international support more than ever. (Xinhua)

(23) Russia Prepares...

the Syrian government and opposition, Russia, Turkey and Special Representative of the United Nations Staffan de Mistura took part in the talks. (Xinhua)

(24) Trump Speaks...

U.S. considers India a true friend and partner in addressing challenges around the world," the White House said in readout of the call.

The two leaders also discussed the security situation in South and Central Asia during their conversation and resolved that India and the U.S. will "stand shoulder to shoulder" to fight global terrorism, the White House said, adding that Trump has invited Modi to visit the U.S. later this year. (Xinhua)

(25) Trump Expected...

expected to be strengthened by seeking an end to "sanctuary cities" where local law enforcement officials refuse to cooperate with federal immigration authorities. (Reuters)

(26) German G20...

the foreign ministry provided Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier is elected to the largely ceremonial role of German president next month. SPD veteran Brigitte Zypries is expected to take over as economy minister, moving up from her position as deputy minister. (Reuters)

(27) Sharif to be...

court as before, in the 2011 Meemogate case. The prime minister should remember that this court gave him the relief to come back to Pakistan by ending his exile, Advocate Asif recalled.

"This Panamagate hearing has become the focus of the world and any declaration against the prime minister will only strengthen democracy," the counsel argued, prompting Justice Sheikh Azmat Saeed to ask, "Have you completed political speech?" (Monitoring Desk)

(28) Nuclear Deal ...

against Iran, which, in turn, put limits on its nuclear program.

Araqchi further said the Americans have said themselves that it has been "the worst bruise to their pride" to see that Iran and Russia sit and decide if Washington should partake in the Syria conflict resolution talks. (Presstv)

EU Reform Urgent to Fight Protectionism, Populism: Portuguese PM

LISBON - Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa defended the need for EU reform on Tuesday to fight against protectionism and populism.

"Building the euro is building Europe and defending the euro is defending Europe, defending a Union that has guaranteed peace and prosperity between European countries for 60 years," Costa said during a seminar at the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon.

The conference held in Lisbon, entitled "Consolidating the Euro. Promoting convergence," took place on the same day when the Supreme Court in Britain ruled that the British prime minister could not start the process of leaving the EU without first gaining approval from the British Parliament.

Costa pointed to the dangers of a rise of inequality in Europe and ruled out the idea that the reform of the euro zone would lead to less discipline or more exceptions between member states.

Measures he mentioned to reform the euro zone include ensuring "the European Stability Mechanism evolves in the direction of the European Monetary Fund" to deal with sovereign debt.

He argued that the euro is one of the main achievements of the process of the European construction.

"Pro-European leaders cannot be paralysed before the rise of nationalism, protectionism, populism and xenophobia," he pointed out. "The EU needs a new virtuous cycle of growth and convergence. Europe can only face current challenges if it is united." (Xinhua)

Dutch Minister Calls for Int'l Fund after Trump's Anti-Abortion Ban

THE HAGUE - A Dutch minister called on Tuesday for setting up an international fund for safe abortions and contraceptives after U.S. President Donald Trump decided to ban U.S. funding of abortion in other nations.

Trump's decision has far-reaching consequences, said Dutch Minister of Development Cooperation Lilianne Ploumen.

"Banning abortion does not lead to fewer abortions. It leads to more irresponsible practices in back rooms and more maternal deaths," said the minister in a press release.

"Together with other countries and organizations, we have very much succeeded in recent years. The U.S. decision threatens to undermine these results. We must not let this happen," added Ploumen.

The minister said she will take the initiative for an international fund to provide women in developing countries with access to good information, contraception and abortion.

"We need to compensate for this financial blow as much as possible, with a broad-based fund by governments, businesses and civil society organizations, so that women can remain in control of their own bodies," said Ploumen. Trump on Monday signed a ban on federal money going to international groups that perform or provide information on abortions. (Xinhua)