

(1) UN Seeks...

Bowden said he anticipated an increase in conflict-driven humanitarian needs.

"It is now one of the world's most long-running, protracted humanitarian crises, in which conflicts remain the main driver of humanitarian needs," he said.

"Last year, violence led to more than 300,000 people fleeing their homes for safety. That's a 160 percent increase over the year before. This year we estimate that a quarter of a million people will flee their homes due to armed conflict," Bowden added.

Taliban attacks

There has been no let up in Taliban attacks in Afghanistan over the past year and the insurgency's advances have sparked concerns of increased bloodshed when the traditional spring fighting season begins in April.

Bowden said Afghanistan is currently hosting an estimated 40,000 refugee families from neighboring Pakistan who fled the counterinsurgency army operations in the Pakistani border areas.

Moreover, the powerful earthquake that struck the northeastern province of Badakhshan in October left an estimated 130,000 people in need of humanitarian assistance, in a country prone to natural disasters, he said.

Donor nations

Chief Executive Abdullah said the government is hopeful donor nations will match commitments of previous years to assist and support the needs of the Afghan community.

Addressing Wednesday's event, German Ambassador to Afghanistan Markus Potzel warned, "It is essential that the most vulnerable Afghans receive appropriate life-saving assistance, quickly. If their needs are not met, Afghans will choose to migrate out of their country as a last resort."

Afghanistan is one of the world's poorest countries, with high levels of poverty, a lack of livelihood and income generating opportunities, chronic health problems, and poor infrastructure contributing to its humanitarian challenges. (VoA)

(2) Afghanistan...

and multilateral struggle against terrorism.

Rabbani appreciated the valuable cooperation of China in different sectors and asked for China's support for Afghanistan's full membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and membership in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Wang welcomed the request of Afghanistan's full membership in the SCO and AIIB and promised serious cooperation in this regard. (ANI)

(3) Afghanistan...

"The 2015 Corruption Perceptions Index clearly shows that corruption remains a blight around the world. But 2015 was also a year when people again took to the streets to protest corruption," said Transparency International chairperson.

Jose Ugaz remarked: "Corruption can be beaten if we work together. To stamp out the abuse of power, bribery and shed light on secret deals, citizens must together tell their governments they have had enough."

Overall, two-thirds of the 168 countries on the 2015 index scored below 50, on a scale from 0 (perceived to be highly corrupt) to 100 (perceived to be very clean).

In 2015, Afghanistan did better than North Korea and Somalia -- the worst performers. Denmark took the top spot for the second year running. The big decliners in the past 4 years include Libya, Australia, Brazil, Spain and Turkey. (Pajhwok)

(4) Afghanistan Fails...

brokers in check.

"Afghanistan's national unity government squandered important opportunities to tackle serious human rights problems," Patricia Gossman, senior Afghanistan researcher at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

"As reforms have slipped, so have essential human rights protections for detainees, women, and the media."

HRW said international donors, whose support is essential to the

government of one of the world's poorest economies, had to work more closely with Afghan authorities to ensure that human rights gains made since 2001 were not lost.

The section on Afghanistan, part of a 659-page report reviewing human rights practices in more than 90 countries, painted a bleak picture more than 14 years after U.S.-led forces drove the Taliban from power.

The brutal murder of 27-year-old Farkhunda Malikzada after she was falsely accused of burning a copy of the Koran and the flawed trial which followed threw into stark relief the failure to advance women's rights, despite repeated government pledges, the report said.

Hundreds of civilians were also killed in suicide and roadside bomb attacks last year. Islamist insurgents targeted judges, prosecutors and other government officials as well as journalists and Afghan and foreign aid workers. In addition, Taliban groups and others including Islamic State carried out kidnappings and "indiscriminate" attacks against civilians, the report said. (Reuters)

(5) US Renews...

reconciliation effort came days after the insurgent outfit set preconditions for resuming peace parleys with the Ashraf Ghani administration.

At Pugwash sponsored meeting in Doha, the Taliban negotiator supported freedom of speech and women's rights in light of Islamic teachings and sought a ceasefire, as well as the release of prisoners. Asked by Breitbart News for comment on Taliban's demands, the State Department spokesperson said: "The US continues to support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process as the surest way to ensure lasting stability in the region."

He supported President Ghani's call on the Taliban to join the peace talks. "The Taliban have a choice: to join good-faith negotiations or continue to fight a war in which they are killing their fellow Afghans and destroying their country..."

If they opted for fighting, the Taliban continue to face the combined efforts of the Afghan security forces and their international partners, Toner added. (Pajhwok)

(6) Iran Boosts...

Nakhchivan Autonomous Republic), Pakistan, Afghanistan, Syria, and Iraq.

Iran seeks to become a major regional exporter of electricity and has attracted more than \$1.1 billion in investments for the construction of three new power plants. (FNA)

(7) Indian Cabinet

India has invested two billion dollars in aid and reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Addressing Afghan MPs after inauguration of the parliament building, Modi had complimented the people of Afghanistan and their elected representatives on consolidation of democracy. (Pajhwok)

(8) Afghanistan...

which is used for human smuggling in the country," said Mohammad Khan, the head of Sarai Shahzada - the main money exchanging center in Kabul.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Asif, a resident of Kabul, spoke out about reasons behind Afghans' migration to other countries, and said: "Most of the youth leave the country due to insecurity and unemployment. They leave the country to seek a better life."

"Government should encourage the young generation to avoid leaving the country and stay here. Also it should provide them with better opportunities inside Afghanistan," said Nawid, another resident of Kabul. (Tolnews)

(9) US Might ...

can't really leave," a senior Pentagon official with extensive experience in Afghanistan and Iraq has been quoted in the report as saying. "The local forces need air support, intelligence and help with logistics. They are not going to be ready in three years or five years. You have to be there for a very long time."

The report further states that

there is a broad recognition in the Pentagon that building an effective Afghan army and police force will take a generation's commitment, including billions of dollars a year in outside funding and constant support from thousands of foreign advisers on the ground. (KP)

(10) 2,060 ...

media and elders to encourage more students to appear in the entrance exam, but nearly half of the 12-grade graduates sat the exam due to a lack of interest.

Deputy Governor Abdul Ali Shamsi said the youth were being encouraged to pursue higher studies and some measures were taken this year to ensure the entry test was transparent. (Pajhwok)

(11) McCain Faults...

permanent US presence. The Taliban had bases in neighboring Pakistan, from where they staged attacks on Afghan forces and inflicted casualties on them, he noted, faulting Obama's strategy.

"The main thing is that we send the Taliban the message we are not leaving Afghanistan. But the president keeps telling them we are leaving; which can only encourage the Taliban," he remarked. (Pajhwok)

(12) 35 Areas...

At least 115 people, including 16 in Badakhshan, were killed and another 500 were injured in the quake. Seven residential homes were also collapsed as result of the disaster. (Pajhwok)

(13) Paktika Police...

but 20 of them were manning posts and the rest were ghost personnel.

He claimed salaries of the ghost policemen were pocketed by senior local police officials.

A resident of Janikhel district's Janikhel village, Syed Anwar, said there were policemen who had never seen their duty sites, but they regularly received salaries.

He said the ghost police personnel were the main reason behind insecurity in most parts of the province.

A security official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, confirmed the issue and said ghost police existed on the registers at many posts. He said the issue needed to be tackled urgently.

But Paktika police chief Brig. Gen. Zarawar Zahid rejected the claims as baseless, saying such policemen did not exist in the province. "Paktika is a border province and many problems exist here, but we have controlled these problems with the help of police."

He said every post had been deployed police as needed to maintain security and control problems.

Thousands of "ghost" security personnel are believed paid salaries across the country but they only exist on paper. (Pajhwok)

(14) Logar's Azra ...

and resident of Azra district, Abdul Wali Wakeel, told Pajhwok Afghan News that most of the land in the district was grown with cannabis.

He also confirmed the residents were earning millions of afghanis from the sale of the hashish crop. He said the district had been turned into a big centre of drug trade and smuggling.

"From the four eastern provinces, narcotics are brought to Azra district and supplied to the rest of the country from there," the public representative said.

He said the Taliban not only received millions of afghanis in ushr but they also took money from drug smugglers.

Wakeel said the government should take serious measures and prevent the cultivation of hashish and other illegal crops in the district.

A resident of the district, Gulabuddin, told Pajhwok Afghan News that hashish and other such crops had long been cultivated in the district.

"Our people earn much from the sale of these crops. Such income is not possible from other crops."

Taliban's spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid told Pajhwok that they had not received reports about the cultivation of hashish crop in Azra district.

However, he said if people had cultivated hashish, the Taliban would not want to enter a conflict with them at this stage of the conflict in Afghanistan. "First of all, taking ushr on hashish crop is not against Shariah."

Azra is an insecure district which borders Kabul, Nangarhar and Paktia provinces.

The road between Azra and Pul-i-Alam, the provincial capital, has been closed over the past 14 years and residents of the district travel through Nangarhar to reach Kabul and Pul-i-Alam. (Pajhwok)

(15) Refugees Critical...

We want the Danish parliament to think again about this new law because this is dehumanizing us," said 27-year-old Hiwa from Iraq.

"I'm so sorry about these new rules and it's really bad that the Danish parliament they come out with difficult and harder and harder rules. That's not a good decision," added Shagira, 29, from Afghanistan.

Trampoline House's manager Marten Goll, said there was a sense of "hopelessness" among the refugees.

"Many refugees they flee to Denmark and the West because they believe in human rights and democracy and they believe that they will find it here. It's kind of what the West is always telling, that the West is a beacon of democracy and human rights and respect for the singular individual and now with these laws it's obvious that our politicians do not respect this for people who do not have Danish passports," he said.

The Liberals Party government has just 34 out of 179 seats in parliament and depends on support of rightist parties, including the anti-immigration Danish People's Party (DF), to pass laws. The dissenting voices came from small left-wing parties, including from Red Green Alliance.

But the bill passed with an overwhelming majority, backed by the main center-left opposition party Social Democrats, highlighting a shift to the right in Denmark's political landscape thanks to DF's popularity and rising concern over refugee numbers. (Tolnews)

(16) UN Hands...

million people (23% of them Afghan refugees) benefited from 62 humanitarian projects.

Indrika Ratwatte, UNHCR Representative in Pakistan, inaugurated and handed over the improved facilities to the provincial authorities during his day long visit to Chaghi -- home to 27,000 Afghan refugees. He was accompanied by UNHCR Deputy Representative Johann Siffointe and others.

Pakistan has been home to millions of Afghans for the past three decades and, although more than 3.9 million have returned home, since 2002 around 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees still live in Pakistan.

RAHA is a multi-year joint initiative launched in 2009 between the government of Pakistan, represented by the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (SAFRON) and the Economic Affairs Division (EAD) in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Statistics, a consortium of UN agencies, a number of government and non-governmental organisations.

Since its commencement in 2009, more than 10 million people including Afghan refugees and Pakistani citizens have benefited from some 3,500 RAHA projects implemented across the country, costing some \$175 million. (Pajhwok)

(17) 10 Rebels Killed...

personnel were killed and seven others wounded during clashes. He admitted injuries to only three militants in the operation.

Mujahid did not comment on the rocket strike but said three government tanks and 10 motorcycles had been destroyed during clashes.

Mohammad Hassan, a resident of Saqzkol village, said Afghan forces advanced in daytime but left the areas at night, when the Taliban return to the villages. (Pajhwok)

(18) UNMAS ...

is heavily affected by mines and unexploded ordnance. A total of

109 known minefields cover an area of 68 sq km. Another six high explosive training ranges cover 338.7 sq km.

The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan, of which DAFA is a valued member, comprises over 43 organizations and employs 10,500 Afghans.

UNMAS condemned the breach of the understanding that deminers were neutral, humanitarian workers providing a service to communities in Afghanistan. "The Mine Action Programme of Afghanistan will not be deterred from this important work by such attacks, which violate the most basic principles of humanity." (Pajhwok)

(19) Kunduz Residents ...

the city. A resident of Nawabad locality of Kunduz City, Khalid, said muggers entered his house last week when he was out of his home and took household items worth more than 400,000 afghanis. "On the one hand, we are afraid of Taliban and on the other we are not secure from armed robbers and abductors. When my house was robbed, police did not come to ask about the incident," he said. Another inhabitant of the city, Fairoz Ahmad, said three days ago, three robbers came to his shop and took 25,000 afghans and his cell phone by force. (Pajhwok)

(20) Leader of ...

Rahimzoda said during the Monday press conference.

Amriddin Tabarov, also known as Mullah Amriddin, was a field commander from the United Tajik Opposition front during the 1992-97 civil war in Tajikistan.

In the late 1990s, Tabarov opposed to an agreement on peace and national accord between the Tajik government and the opposition.

Together with militants from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), he moved to Afghanistan and then to Pakistan.

Later, news surfaced that a group loyal to Mullah Amriddin broke away from the IMU and formed a separate group, Jamaat Ansarullah.

Jamaat Ansarullah became known in Tajikistan in September 2010 when a mined GAZ-24 car rammed the building of the Sughd Region police department on organized crime in Khujand, the second biggest city in Tajikistan. The suicide bomber killed two police officers and wounded at least 20.

In May 2012, the Supreme Court of Tajikistan banned Jamaat Ansarullah as a terrorist organization financed by Al-Qaeda. (KP)

(21) 7 Daesh Men...

Fazal Ahmad Sherzad told a press conference police had handed over 340 weapons seized from rebels over the past few months to the Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) programme.

Over the past 10 months, police and other security personnel conducted 271 operations that led to the seizure of nearly 1000 different types of weapons in different parts of the province, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(22) NDS Seizes ...

Kabul-Ghazni highway but luckily the cache was seized and several terrorist activities prevented," the statement adds.

Although, the press release does not contain exact date of the achievement but it is normal that NDS release statements after recent activities. (KP)

(23) ALP Commander ...

gunmen on Tuesday night in the Baghlan-i-Markazi district.

He said police were investigating the incident but so far no one had been arrested.

Zabihullah Mujahid, a Taliban spokesman, confirmed the killing and said Gul Alias Salar was from Zamankhel area of the district and was a military commander. (Pajhwok)

(24) Only Syrians...

delayed by a stalemate over the make-up of the opposition delegation.

Members of the Syrian opposition's so-called High Negotiations Committee (HNC) were meeting in Riyadh on Wednesday to decide whether to attend the UN-brokered talks.

The HNC has asked de Mistura to send the full list of proposed participants before making its decision.

Asked whether the UN envoy had complied, Mattar said there were "no pre-conditions" attached to joining the talks, suggesting the HNC would not be able to view the guest list before deciding whether to come to Geneva. (AFP)

(25) Opposition....

High Negotiations Committee (HNC) also called for the lifting of sieges on blockaded areas.

The HNC, which has convened in Riyadh to decide whether to go to Geneva, is seeking clarification from de Mistura.

"We sent the questions. We are awaiting the response," said an opposition source, who confirmed the letter's authenticity.

Opposition officials have long insisted they cannot agree to negotiations before their conditions are met by the government and its allies as a gesture of goodwill.

Monzer Makhous, an HNC member, said: "We are still in discussion. We are still waiting for de Mistura's response. I can't say if the discussions will be finished today or not. I have mixed feelings."

Another HNC member said de Mistura must clarify the aim of the talks. "There is a problem we would like to clarify with de Mistura. Is the main aim of these negotiations for them to be held or to succeed?" Riyadh Naasan Agha told Al Jazeera TV. (Reuters)

(26) Israel Feels...

Nations are nothing new, Israel's closest allies, the United States and the European Union, have publicly expressed their own frustration with the policies of Netanyahu's right-wing government. (Reuters)

(27) Refugee Integration...

years," Schweitzer told Berliner Morgenpost newspaper, adding that to improve their chances of training and employment, asylum seekers must learn the German language quickly.

"They must bring their own integration commitment," he said. If successfully integrated into the labor market, refugees are expected to alleviate the shortage of skilled workers in Germany, the biggest challenge faced by German companies. (Xinhua)

(28) Spain Leads

Baltic Sea, NATO said in a press release.

NATO Baltic Air Policing missions have been carried out since 2004 with NATO Allies deploying their interceptors and staff in the Baltic States in a four-month rotation. (Xinhua)

(29) "Serious ...

not being systematically checked for the authenticity or against crucial security databases," said the draft report.

According to the Commission, the draft Schengen evaluation report for Greece, drawn up jointly by Member States experts and Commission representatives, will now be sent to the Schengen Evaluation Committee which will give its opinion. (Xinhua)

(30) PYD Kurds ...

Mistura has reserved them a place, he means to invite them at a later stage," Interfax news agency quoted Gatilov as saying.

Russia has said it would be unfair to hold the talks without the Syria's powerful Kurdish faction which controls wide areas of northern Syria, as well as other individuals it believes represents Syrian society. (Reuters)

(31) Cameron to...

to hold talks with their leaders on his renegotiation, but has now canceled that trip to meet Juncker. "The prime minister will travel to Brussels on Friday for a bilateral with president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, to discuss the UK's renegotiation of its membership with the EU," the spokeswoman said in a statement.

"He will therefore no longer be traveling to Sweden and Denmark."

Cameron's office said he had no plans to meet Tusk on Friday but would likely do so ahead of the February summit. (Reuters)