

### (1) NUG Criticized ...

Meanwhile, Ibrahim Jafari, a member of the Natural Resources Monitoring Network said that due to the absence of a minister for the Mines and Petroleum Ministry, many contracts are signed without being thoroughly reviewed.

"No contract [in mining sector] is reviewed and assessed as it should be. The contracts which have been signed have not been reviewed and monitored thoroughly," Jafari stated.

The Presidential Palace (ARG) would not comment on the issue. However, ARG officials recently said addressing the issue of acting ministers and other positions is their topmost priority. (Tolonews)

### (2) Mullah Haibatullah...

took over the movement fighting to topple the Kabul government in May last year, after his predecessor, Mullah Akhtar Mansour, was killed in southwestern Pakistan by a missile fired from a U.S. drone. The Afghan Taliban has been weakened in the past by internal divisions and defections to rival groups like Islamic State, and, while senior militant sources said some new appointments would strengthen Akhundzada, there was no change in Helmand.

The southern province, much of it under Taliban control, provides the group with much of its funding through opium. Several Taliban sources said Akhundzada did not wield the same influence over Helmand that Mansour once did.

"Mullah Haibatullah is trying to consolidate his position and power, but is apparently moving forward extremely carefully," said a senior Taliban figure and ex-minister now based along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

The Taliban ruled Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001, imposing a harsh interpretation of Islamic law before being ousted by a U.S.-led military campaign. (Reuters)

### (3) Boroujerdi...

restoration of peace to Afghanistan, and said, "There is a need for dialogue among different political groups in Afghanistan; no other country should impose its decision on Afghan people.

Boroujerdi expressed the hope that Iran-Pakistan bilateral relations would be further enhanced, and said, "The two countries have supported each other during the times of crises."

The senior Iranian lawmaker underlined that Tehran and Islamabad have also agreed on closer cooperation in the anti-drug campaign.

In relevant remarks in early December, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif renewed his country's support for the National Unity Government of Afghanistan and its efforts aimed at restoring peace to that country.

"We welcome the recent achievement of the government in making peace with Hezb-e-Islami, and hope that an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process, benefiting from all capacities within the countries of the region, would move towards establishing lasting and comprehensive peace," Zarif said, addressing the sixth ministerial conference of the "Heart of Asia" which began in Amritsar, India. Iran is one of the most important donors to Afghanistan, which has kept its promises to help to the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country.

Iran has built several roads, power transmission lines, border stations and many other infrastructure projects to better link the two nations. Iran has also contributed more than \$50mln annually to Afghan anti-narcotics efforts during the last five years.

There are too many commonalities between the two friendly nations, including language, religion, culture and history. (FNA)

### (4) Daesh Sneaking...

provincial capital, that Daesh militants had recently started making trips to northern provinces from insecure districts of Ghazni.

"Daesh militants travel from Gilan and Nawa districts through Jaghori district of Ghazni and then sneak into northern parts," he said.

He said many areas of Ghazni would face with increased insecurity if the outfit continued movement to and from different parts of the country.

Matin said Daesh militants had permanent bases in Nawa district where the rebels travelled to other provinces.

Nawa district has been under Taliban control over the past 11 years.

The governor said his government would try by using all resources to neutralize threats posed by Daesh and other militants in Ghazni.

The Taliban have lied siege to Gilan district but the siege would be broken with an organized operation, the governor added.

Provincial council secretary, Hassan Reza Yousufi, told Pajhwok Afghan News that Daesh militants had recently emerged in Ghazni.

"Security situation would turn worse if the Afghan government does not eliminate the militant group," he said.

Rahimullah, a resident of Gilan, said Daesh rebels had appeared several times in Rasana area of the district.

"Their faces are masked and they carry black flags, they frequently make movements," he said, adding that local residents were gravely concerned about the group's emergency.

On the other hand, a Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, rejected the presence of Daesh in Ghazni.

He said Nawa district was under Taliban control and there were no Daesh fighter there.

"We do not allow Daesh because they are against Islam, Afghanistan would not be a shelter for Daesh," he said, adding that the rebel group was active only in two district of Nangarhar province where the Taliban were fighting against them. (Pajhwok)

### (5) Mol Raises...

ministry of interior, but a number of them are not at their assigned posts and are instead being used by government officials for personal reasons.

"Their main duty is maintaining security. But many police force members are working for people who do not need them and it is against the law. In the last two months we have started the process to re-deploy them to their assigned stations," said Sediq Sediqqi, spokesman for the MoI.

According to security departments, Parliament Members (MPs), provincial council members, prosecutors, high-ranking government officials and even powerful individuals use police for their personal work.

"In one of their (officials) cars you can see up to 10 armed men with different weapons and it is worrying," said Sayed Kamal Sadat, police chief of Balkh province.

However, this trend is not only found among police but also affects Afghan National Army soldiers and Afghan National Security Forces, said some officials.

"This issue is a big problem for police. Some (officials) commit robberies, murders and kidnappings. The international community's aid in the past 15 years has been wasted," Atiqullah Amarkhail, a former military officer said.

Military analysts also criticize government over the existence of ghost soldiers among police and national army troops.

"The money and weapons that are taken for the soldiers who are not active [ghost soldiers] can be used against the security forces and against Afghan people," Saleh Mohammad Registani, a military analyst said.

According to reports, Afghanistan should have 352,000 soldiers to defend the country, but the issue of ghost soldiers has raised serious concerns. This latest disclosure about the private use of security personnel now also adds to the challenges in the country. (Tolonews)

### (6) UN Reaffirms...

Government's commitment to unity and reform, which has secured long-term support from international partners in the areas of security and development.

"This support provides important opportunities for ensuring that Afghanistan can move toward stability, accountability and greater self-reliance," he said.

On the topic of elections, Mr. Jenča welcomed the reconstitution of the electoral management bodies as the impetus for moving forward with electoral reform and preparations for holding elections. He said the United Nations was ready to provide continued electoral assistance on the basis of the government's request.

Speaking about the prospect of peace in Afghanistan, the Assistant Secretary-General said the United Nations stood ready to assist in any efforts to support an Afghan-led and Afghan-owned peace process. He underlined the importance of regional cooperation to achieve durable peace and prosperity. "The

UN shares the hope for a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan, and remains committed to supporting the Government's progress to reduce poverty and improve the still vulnerable situation of Afghan women," he said. (Pajhwok)

### (7) Conference ...

around investigations are the main reasons for people's distrust in judicial institutions.

The delegates said they will continue their efforts to improve cooperation between the judicial institutions in a bid to speed up investigations and prosecutions.

"Insecurity, corruption and distrust in judicial centers are the reasons that people prefer to resolve their own problems and not to refer them to judicial centers," said Shams Islam Shams, head of a human rights organization.

The attorney general's official acknowledged there are problems and challenges in a number of judicial institutions.

The Supreme Court meanwhile said they are committed to resolving the issues and are trying to repair the loss of public trust.

According to representatives from the Supreme Court, people will learn to trust judicial centers once there is solid cooperation between the Supreme Court, the AGO and attorneys.

"If the three sectors cooperate with each other and hold coordinating meetings, then when people refer cases to courts, the judge and attorney will be present as they already are aware of the issue. Through this, people will get a positive picture of judicial institutions," said Shakila Shegarf, head of Women Judges Association at the Supreme Court.

The Supreme Court and Attorney General's Office did not comment meanwhile on the lack of courts and prosecutors in a number of districts around the country. However, they did accept the fact that people do not always seek out official justice for problems but instead turn to Jirgas, and sometimes to the Taliban to resolve their issues. (Tolonews)

### (8) Nimroz Customs...

combating financial corruption and waste of revenue were main reasons behind the increased revenue. Efforts were also being made to further increase the revenue in upcoming years.

Obaidullah, a businessman who imports electric items from China, said the length of route from Abbas dry port to Zaranj city, the provincial capital, was 300km less than the route to Islam Qala in Herat province. Businessman chose the shorter route for transferring of their goods and preferred the Nimroz route.

Nimroz customs department is one of Afghanistan's largest transit centers where more than 200 depart vehicles are loaded or unloaded on a daily basis. (Pajhwok)

### (9) Displacement...

The projects would complete until the end of 2018 and would provide electricity to 45,000 families, he said.

ADB representative, who also participated in the meeting, said, "We are very happy to help the Afghan people in producing and distributing electricity." The ADB representative asked the Indian companies to complete the projects on schedule. (Pajhwok)

### (10) Balkh Police...

called them baseless.

"Our colleagues are the servants of Balkh residents. They have never supported any criminals," said Afzal Hadid, head of Balkh provincial council.

"It was better if he [the police chief] named specific members of the council who are supporting criminals according to him. He should have made it clear," said a member of Balkh provincial council Shujaiddin Shuja.

Meanwhile, the head of Balkh rights activists, Abdul Hamid Safwat, said they are tired of vehicles driving around Mazar-e-Sharif city with blacked-out windows.

"Drug smuggling will not be prevented unless the roaming of these tinted-glass vehicles are banned in the city," he said.

Balkh police meanwhile said they do their best to prevent any kind of illegal activities in the province. (Tolonews)

### (11) Kabulis Uneasy ...

when shopkeepers give me old banknotes because some people do not take them," she said. Kabul residents asked Da Afghanistan Bank (DAB) to resolve the

problem. Haji Dad Gul, deputy head of Sara-i-Shahzada Money-changers Union in Kabul, confirmed that banknotes from one to 50 afghanis had turned old but said it was not a big issue to be worried about.

He said banknotes were usable until their colors were visible or their corners not cut off. "Moneychangers do not exchange worn notes so people should take such notes to ADB for exchange," he said.

However, he added moneychangers also could exchange old banknotes but with a little lower price. Carelessness in protection of banknotes and their low quality were reasons the notes turned old soon, he added.

Emal Hashwar, ADB spokesman, confirmed the quantity of 1 to 100 afghanis banknotes had increased in the market.

He cited frequent usage of banknotes one of the reasons, but rejected the claim of low quality. He said ADB was careful about banknotes as one to 100 afghanis notes had the capacity to be folded up 3,500 times.

He said there would be no problem if people returned their worn banknotes to the ADB for exchange.

About exchange of old banknotes at lower prices by moneychangers, he said, "No one has the right to buy old banknotes at lower price even with the difference of one afghani, it is a crime."

Hashor said ADB annually collected four to five billion old afghani banknotes and torched them. He said 220 billion afghanis were available for transactions. (Pajhwok)

### (12) Khost Airport ...

work closely. Mohammad Qadem Afghan, another provincial council member, claimed corruption was behind the low quality work.

He said Public Works Director Eng. Mamorshah has been appointed as the airport project coordinator against 90,000 afghanis salary.

"Mamorshah's duty is to report to the ministry about the quality of work before releasing money to the company working on the airport, but when he reported the low quality work and flaws in the construction, he was forced to resign under pressure from unknown circles," he claimed.

He said Economic Affairs Director Eng. Hameed Shah had replaced Mamorshah removal but he did not monitor the projects.

Project monitoring Mamorshah confirmed he had been in-charge of the project but had to resign due to personal engagements and his resignation had been accepted.

The incumbent project in-charge Eng. Hameed Shah also acknowledged the construction work's quality had been low but in the same breath called the issue as exaggerated.

The Airport construction company However, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Faiz Construction Company, Eng. Jamil Hamidi, denied the allegations as baseless, saying the airport's project had no problem in terms of quality.

"After some elements said the quality of the project was not good, we tested the materials used in laboratories which had no problem. No one should worry about it, as the project has one year guarantee and we are responsible for any kind of technical issue."

Hamidi said some elements deliberately intervened in the project and wanted to politicize it. Such elements were trying to create hurdles in the airport project without having any proof of bad quality work.

Eng. Jamil denied corruption in the airport project. He said the project's first phase which included construction of the runway, watercourses, parking and some other parts had been completed and would be soon prepared for flights. Pajhwok tried to have comments from the Khost governor's house, but contact wasn't established.

The need for airport in Khost A civil society activist, Sayed Marjan, said if the airport's construction works were of good quality, it would benefit Khost people.

He asked the central government to pay attention to the project's imperfections and ensure that passengers' desire of having a standard airport in their province was met.

"Every day, hundreds of passengers come to Kabul and then to Khost in cars and they get very tired due to the long journey. The airport will not only resolve passengers' problems but also help improve trade."

More than 100,000 Afghans from Khost work in the UAE and the ex-

patriates have expressed the wish of having an airport in their province as they could directly travel to Khost from UAE without landing in Kabul. (Pajhwok)

### (13) Addicts Under...

passing the bridge alone," said the woman, living 20 metres from the area.

The addicts either abused or stoned passers-by, she complained, saying the junkies also scared children and girls by running after them.

In addition, the drug-dependent people walked the streets and roads near Pul-i-Sukhta and created disturbance for children and girls, Jan added.

She asked the organisations concerned to pave the way for the treatment of the addicted individuals to address the worries of residents.

Saboor, another resident of the 6th municipal district, agreed dozens of addicts under the bridge worried area people constantly. He said the presence of addicts was having a negative effect on youth.

If the addicts were treated soon, he believed, their number would not increase. But if the negligence of the officials concerned continued, thousands of addicted youth could be seen in near future, he warned.

He confirmed harassment by addicts had increased to an extent, as children, girls and women could not cross the bridge alone. "Our street is full of addicts; our children couldn't come out or go to courses and schools."

He grumbled the presence of addicts also caused increased garbage and stink in the area. "Addicts sit wherever they want to urinate or defecate, filling the area with waste and stink."

Saboor called the presence of addicts in the area a huge problem for families and asked the Ministry of Counter-Narcotics to transfer them to rehabilitation centres.

However, the ministry said preventing the cultivation, smuggling and sale of drugs was a priority for the government. Efforts by the ministry, in coordination with other institutions, were ongoing to resolve the problem, it insisted.

Mohammad Hanif Danishyar, the ministry spokesman, said currently 116 rehabs were functional across the country and they were trying to increase their number and move addicts there.

He said they were also making efforts to spread awareness among families through mosque leaders and teachers to prevent children from becoming addicts.

According to the ministry, currently 3.5 million people are addicted to drugs in Afghanistan. Of them, 2.9 percent are women.

Pul-i-Sukhta is a notorious bridge situated west of Kabul, where hundreds of addicted persons live and do drugs. In front of the bridge, some addicts gather in groups and do drugs while others inject narcotics to each other. A number of these individuals are facing a looming death.

Kabul health officials, together with other organisations concerned, have shifted a number of addicts to secure areas. But there are still hundreds of women and men addicts living under the bridge. Below the bridge, some addicts gather in groups to do drugs. Others inject drugs to each other. Many of the individuals are faced with a looming death. (Pajhwok)

### (14) Taliban Attack ...

in southern Afghanistan where the Taliban insurgents and militants belonging to other insurgent groups are actively operating in a number of its remote district.

The Afghan security forces launched an operation in this province earlier in the month of December last year amid ongoing efforts by the militants to stage attacks in some key parts of the province. (KP)

### (15) Gold, Flour ...

same and firewood prices also stayed stable during the week. Sayed Islam, a firewood seller in Charahi-i-Shahid area, told Pajhwok Afghan News 560kg of peeled oak firewood was counted for 6,800 afghanis and the same quantity of cedar for 6,600 afghanis.

Abdul Hadi, a worker at Wazir Abad Pump Station, said price of a litre of petrol remained unchanged at 46 afs and diesel at 42afs.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Siyar, a gas seller in Kolala Poshta, also confirmed the rate of gas remained steady at 50afs per kilo.

Gold prices also rose. Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in Timor Shahi area, said the price of one gram of Arabian gold increased from

2,200afs to 2,250afs and the Russian variety from 1,700afs to 1,750afs.

According to money exchangers' union in Sara-i-Shahzada, one US dollar accounted for 68.80afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees for 613afs against last week's rates of 66.84afs and 614afs. (Pajhwok)

### (16) 12 Taliban...

National Army (ANA) and police forces.

He said eight militants were killed and five others wounded during the clash. Some weapons belonged to the rebels were also seized by security forces during the battle.

A Taliban spokesman, Qari Yousuf Ahmadi claimed inflicting heavy casualties to the security forces in Arghandab district but he had no exact figures.

He rejected Taliban's casualties in Afghan forces operation.

On the other hand, three Taliban militants were killed in a clash in Pashtun Zarghoon district of western Herat province.

Local security officials said that the bodies of two militants were remained on the incident scene. (Pajhwok)

### (17) Taliban Fighters ...

have killed 21 armed fighters and injured several others.

Taliban militants who have been fighting to overrun their former stronghold the poppy growing Helmand province with Lashkar Gah as its capital 555 km south of Kabul haven't commented on the report. (Xinhua)

### (18) Three IS ...

said Shir Aqa Faqiri, spokesman for 201 Corps in the eastern region.

According to Faqiri, there were no casualties on civilians or security personnel. (Xinhua)

### (19) Trump Says...

on Russia should continue until Russia fully implements its commitments to the 2014 Minsk Agreement.

"As far as the U.K. is concerned on sanctions for Russia in relation to their activities in the Ukraine, we have been very clear that we want to see the Minsk Agreement fully implemented," May said. (Xinhua)

### (20) Brexit and...

supported Britain's move to leave the EU, calling it a "wonderful thing" on Friday during a meeting with British Prime Minister Theresa May. (AFP)

### (21) British PM...

and cyber warfare as it is to fight more conventional forms of war," May said.

The British leader added that she will also continue to encourage other European leaders to deliver on their commitments to spend 2 percent of their country's GDP on defense "so that the burden is more fairly shared." (Xinhua)

### (22) Syrian Forces ...

accusing the rebels of the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front of severing the flow of water to Damascus.

The battles were penetrated with a few pauses, in which efforts were being exerted to reach a deal with the rebels. However, all previous efforts had failed without achieving its intended goals, as the rebels of Nusra were reluctant to leave the area, insisting on rendering flat all efforts to defuse the tension in that area.

It's worth mentioning that several rebel groups were stationing in Barada Valley, with most of them establishing reconciliation with the government, except Nusra, which is designated as a terror group by the UN and excluded from a currently-underway cease-fire that began on Dec. 30. (Xinhua)

### (23) Security Council...

process, the lack of capacity of the national security forces, the limited authority of the state over all of the CAR territory, and the persistence of the root cause of the conflict," the resolution said. (Xinhua)

### (24) Britain's May ...

important but complicated NATO ally, came amid pressure at home to condemn Turkey's clampdown on civil liberties since the government crushed a coup attempt in July. "I am proud that the U.K. stood with you on the 15th of July last year in defense of democracy," May said, as she and Erdogan delivered brief statements to the media following their talks.

"And now it is important that Turkey sustains that democracy by maintaining the rule of law and upholding its international human rights obligations — as the government has undertaken to do," she said. (AP)