

### (1) Meshrano Jirga...

KABUL - The Meshrano Jirga on Tuesday decided to summon top security bosses and the minister of refugees over the bad security situation and plight of Afghan refugees.

The Senate chairman expressed concern over the increasing insecurity in Helmand, Nangarhar and northern provinces. He asked the government to pay more attention to resolving the issue.

Muslimyar also criticised Pakistan's two-face policy of interference in Afghanistan over the past 14 years and reiterating statements of support for the peace process in the country.

He told the Ashraf Ghani administration to prevent the interference and irresponsible remarks of Pakistani officials regarding Afghanistan's affairs.

Taliban and Daesh were the enemies of Afghanistan and people's campaign against the groups were their inalienable right, the chairman remarked.

He also asked the government to intensify the fight against the Taliban and Daesh, as well as continue efforts till the militants were defeated comprehensively.

Muslimyar welcomed the decision of Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) leader Gulbadin Hikmatyar regarding joining peace talks.

"The participation of Hikmatyar's party in the process is good news. We are looking forward to Hikmatyar joining the reconciliation drive," he remarked.

Lawmaker from Helmand, Mohammad Hashim Alokozai, said the security situation in the province remained fragile and there was war going on there.

Some decisions of the unity government were the main cause of insecurity in southern Afghanistan, because certain networks wanted to remove influential security officials, said a public representative from Kandahar, Rahmatullah Achakzai.

Another senator, Mohammad Hanif Hanafi, said insurgents in Helmand had emerged stronger in the winter season and were in a better position to carry out attacks in the spring.

The MP from Takhar said Daesh had been expanding its presence with each passing day in Kunduz. If the government did not pay attention to the issue, the northern part of the country would face a big security challenge, he warned.

Afghan refugees were living in bad conditions in different countries, with Pakistani police detaining and beating them each day, Senator Farida Kochaialleged.

Meanwhile, Senator Anar Kali Honaryar pointed out the problems of refugees in Greece, Turkey and other countries.

The government should try to convince European countries not to expel Afghans who had gone there after spending large amounts of money, she demanded.

The senators decided to summon interior and defence ministers, the spymaster and the minister of refugees to the Senate's general session next week to answer queries from legislators. (Pajhwok)

### (2) US-Afghan ...

exhibition was first announced during the March 2015 visit of President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Dr Abdullah. Opened to the public on March 5, it will run through January 2017.

The exhibition portrays the transformation of the Old City district of Muradkhani in Kabul, from ruins to a thriving centre for the revival of Afghan arts and culture.

Afghan Ambassador Hamdullah Mohib said it was a proud moment for him that thousands of Americans came and saw what their country had invested in. "Afghanistan is making progress. This is the progress."

Addressing the select audience, Minister of Information and Culture Abdul Bari Jahan said the exhibition shows the other face of Afghanistan, which is brotherly and peaceful. "Our partnership with the Turquoise Mountain is a success story. I believe in the language of exhibition. It is the best way to show the beauty of Afghanistan." US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Olson, American Ambassador to Afghanistan Michael McKinley were also present on the occasion. (Pajhwok)

### (3) Over 600 ...

province of Nangarhar, which borders Pakistan. It reportedly plans to establish a base of operations within the province's mountainous

terrain.

Daesh, mainly active in Syria and Iraq, has been using a sophisticated social media campaign to woo the local militants, who defect from the main Taliban group.

Although Taliban leaders have warned Daesh against "waging a parallel insurgency in Afghanistan," the latter has been trying to expand its outreach there and is reported to have between 1,000 to 3,000 terrorists on its payroll.

Afghanistan is gripped by insecurity 14 years after the United States and its allies attacked the country as part of Washington's so-called war on terror.

Parts of the country have long been considered the Taliban militant group's bastion.

Earlier in the month, however, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said Afghan military forces had flushed the terrorists out of some of Nangarhar's regions, asserting, "Afghanistan will be their graveyard." (Aljazeera)

### (4) President, ...

Jens Stoltenberg said he looked forward to working with them in the months and years ahead.

"As you work to build a safer country, you have a strong friend and a strong partner in NATO," he remarked, praising the government's efforts to promote a close partnership and cooperation between NATO and Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

### (5) Taliban's ...

in training and advising the Afghan security forces. Germany annually spends at least \$430,000 USD on different sectors in Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

### (6) EU, Sweden's...

Seventy-five participants, most of them Afghan journalists from across the country, engaged in the discussions. The event became a strong manifestation in defence of the freedom of expression.

The conference drew attention to the difficult situation for journalists and media workers in Afghanistan and honored all those who had been victims of violence, the Embassy of Sweden said.

In his opening address, Sweden's Ambassador Anders Sjöberg, commended the Afghan government on the new by-law on Establishment and Activity of Private Mass Media and called for its swift implementation.

Participants also underlined the work of female journalists particularly needed to be furthered and that it was crucial to provide insights into the situation of women and girls in Afghanistan.

The people of Afghanistan have in the last decade enjoyed a high level of freedom of the press and expression. These achievements needed to be protected and respected by all parties.

The organisers reiterated their continued support for strengthening journalists and media workers' security and freedom of expression in Afghanistan. There was consensus to further advance the development of the press. (Pajhwok)

### (7) ADB to Assist ...

discussed the bank's ongoing projects and expected contributions in the sector of Transport, Energy and Agriculture and Natural Resources. The two sides also talked about ADB's role in key national projects such as the Kabul Ring Road, TAPI Gas Pipeline, Energy Transmission and Generation as well as design and implementation of key Railway projects, regional connectivity, trade and transit.

The delegation assured Hakimi that ADB will be playing an important role in the implementation of key infrastructure projects in Afghanistan.

ADB has contributed \$4 billion to Afghanistan since 2002. (KP)

### (8) Concerns ...

Kunduz and Provincial Council members have asked government to stop Daesh activity in the province.

Local residents said Daesh insurgents move about at night in the area - and fly their flags.

"A number of people wearing black clothes and with Daesh flags move around at night on the streets of Chahardara," a resident of Kunduz, Jamaluddin said.

Amrudding Wali, a member of the provincial council said that "people who were previously linked to Jundullah insurgent group are now aligning themselves under the Daesh flag. This has raised concerns."

The residents and Provincial Council warned government that "if they do not stop Daesh activities, Kun-

duz will once again collapse."

This comes after Atta Mohammad Noor, acting governor of northern Balkh province, said two days ago that Daesh insurgents are trying to infiltrate the province.

He confirmed the presence of Daesh in Balkh and said security forces discovered documents during the Khorshid 21 military operation in the province. He said the documents show signs of the group's presence in the province and indicate Daesh was "trying to recruit people" locally.

He said an operation - led by himself - was launched in Kushende district of the province just over a week ago and ended on Saturday. Noor said the Taliban and Daesh insurgents were trying to establish bases in the province. (Tolonews)

### (9) Traders Warn...

northern and northeastern zones had rapidly increased over the past two years, he acknowledged.

He said the main problems of traders included red-tape in the customs department, taxation, corruption in government offices, lack of electricity and land plots.

One of the traders, Haji Mayel said most of their problems, including the taxation issue, were related to the central government.

The traders could provide work opportunities for the jobless if the government supported them, and fixed their problems with a sense of urgency, he believed.

Qasimi said that if the problems of traders were not resolved, they would be obliged to withdraw their investment from the northern zone. (Pajhwok)

### (10) ICRC Hints at ...

separate meeting with the visiting official, Abdullah praised ICRC operation in Afghanistan and welcomed the announcement by Maurer that the humanitarian organisation would increase its budget for Afghanistan by 10 percent this year to a total of \$90 million.

Maurer, who arrived in Kabul on Monday afternoon on a five-day visit, urged parties to the conflict to respect the international humanitarian law, especially the protection of medical missions. (Pajhwok)

### (11) District ...

the country before they were ousted in late 2001, renewed armed insurgency, staging ambushes and suicide attacks, killing combatants as well as civilians.

On Monday, a policewoman was shot dead by gunmen in the country's southern province of Kandahar. (Xinhua)

### (12) Reforms Hold...

show resilience in protecting the people after taking full charge of security across the country. Stoltenberg added: "At a great cost, we have made great progress together in the fight against terrorism. We owe our deep gratitude to the brave men and women of our armed forces."

The alliance, training, advising and assisting the Afghan forces as part of the Resolute Support mission, would continue to provide them financial support, the secretary-general promised.

Stoltenberg is due to meet senior international community leaders and members of Afghan civil society. He will address Afghan National Defence and Security Forces and Resolute Support officials. (Pajhwok)

### (13) UNAMA ...

commitment of the Taliban to a possible peace process remained uncertain."

On the issue of electoral reforms, he said: "While recommendations for electoral reform were advanced by the Special Electoral Reform Commission, implementation stalled."

He went on to say that in the past three months, "the security situation was increasingly volatile as the conflict grew in intensity and scope, resulting in high casualties and displacement among Afghan civilians."

He said the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continued to face significant challenges in effectively countering the threats of insurgent groups across the country.

Haysom said that during the reporting period, tensions within the government continued to slow progress on key appointments, including with respect to positions essential to the delivery of the government's reform agenda and to addressing challenges in such areas as security, the rule of law and governance.

He said the political landscape grew more contentious with the

formation of political opposition groups, a trend continuing since the previous reporting period.

On the issue of security, he said the situation had deteriorated further in 2015. The United Nations recorded 22,634 security incidents, representing a three per cent increase compared with 2014 and the second-highest number since 2001.

"Since the issuance of my previous report, fighting has intensified in Helmand and Baghlan provinces, and Kunduz province has remained volatile," he said.

Of the security incidents that occurred in 2015, 70 percent were recorded in the southern, eastern and south-eastern regions. Ghazni, Helmand, Kandahar, Kunar and Nangarhar were the most volatile provinces, accounting for 49 percent of all security incidents, he said.

Armed clashes and improvised explosive devices accounted for 79 percent of all incidents, representing an increase of three per cent compared with 2014 and reflecting the overall higher level of insurgent activities during the year.

Despite the Taliban's announcement of 24 April 2015 as the start of the spring offensive, there was no clear change in the incident pattern during the spring, unlike in previous years, or, for that matter, throughout 2015 as fighting continued unabated, he said.

Haysom went on to say the Taliban expanded its territorial reach in 2015, temporarily capturing 24 district centers in the north (in Badakhshan, Baghlan, Faryab, Jawzjan, Kunduz, Sari Pul and Takhar provinces), in the west (in Badghis and Farah provinces), in the east (in Nuristan Province) and in the south (in Helmand and Kandahar provinces), in addition to temporarily seizing the provincial capital of Kunduz.

"This represents a significant increase compared with 2014, when the Taliban captured only three centers. Even though most district centers were quickly retaken by pro-government forces, several remained under Taliban control for weeks."

"Tensions associated with Mullah Mansoor's succession as the new Taliban leader after Mullah Omar's death did not slow the insurgency's anti-government initiatives," he added.

In addition, he said reports indicate a substantial increase in casualties among the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in 2015.

"Critical shortcomings continue to hamper the forces in effectively addressing the threat posed by anti-government elements, including insufficient recruitment, high attrition rates and insufficient logistics and planning and air support and coordination."

Haysom said insufficient recruitment and high attrition rates posed particular challenges to the sustainability of the forces.

"In January 2016, the number of Afghan National Army troops reached 88 per cent and the number of Afghan National Police personnel 77 per cent of the levels projected for August 2016. At the current rate, recruitment cannot compensate for the losses generated by absenteeism and casualties, particularly within the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police," he said.

He said that in addition to the conflict between government forces and anti-government elements, violence occurred between other armed groups on Afghan territory, including the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan Province (ISIL-KP) - Daesh.

"Composed primarily of former Taliban members, [Daesh] remained limited in its presence to the Achin, DehBala and Chaparhar districts of Nangarhar province. Recent operations by the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, supported by international military air strikes, as well as attacks from the Taliban, led to the concentration of Daesh in remote locations near the border with Pakistan," he said.

Between 1 December 2015 and 15 February 2016, the United Nations recorded 4,014 security-related incidents across the country. This represents an 8.3 percent decrease compared with the same period in 2014 and 2015, although it is noted that in 2015, January and February recorded the highest totals for those months since 2001.

Consistent with previous trends, armed clashes accounted for the majority of security incidents, at 57.4 per cent, followed by improvised explosive devices, at 19.2 per cent. Targeted killings continued at a high level. From 1 December 2015 to 15 February 2016, 154 assassi-

nations, including failed attempts, were recorded, representing a 27 percent decrease compared with the same period in 2014 and 2015.

"During the reporting period, 20 suicide attacks were reported, compared with 30 in the same period in 2014 and 2015," he said.

Meanwhile, Haysom noted that Afghanistan and Pakistan sought to enhance their relations in the past three months.

In December, President Ashraf Ghani and the Prime Minister of Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif, jointly inaugurated the fifth Heart of Asia Ministerial Conference in Islamabad. In the Conference declaration, participant countries focused on countering security threats, promoting economic connectivity and strengthening confidence-building measures, urged the Taliban and armed opposition groups to enter into peace talks with the Government of Afghanistan and called for a collaborative regional security and counter-terrorism approach. India agreed to co-chair the 2016 conference. (Tolonews)

### (14) Taliban District...

personnel and was under interrogation, he added.

Taliban have so far issued no comment regarding the arrest of their designated district chief.

Separately, an Afghan National Army (ANA) soldier was killed and another wounded as their vehicle hit a roadside bomb in Khashrod district of southwestern Nimroz province.

The Khashrod district chief, Mohammad Hashim Noorzai, said the ANA vehicle was also destroyed in the roadside bombing in the Dehmazang locality.

Without disclosing exact numbers of casualties, Taliban fighters claimed that all aboard soldiers were killed in the explosion. (Pajhwok)

### (15) 4 Policemen...

policemen in the firefights.

A provincial council member, Baryalai Nazari, also verified Khanshin's capture by the insurgents. He gave no further details.

But the governor's spokesman, Omar Zwak, said clashes were still underway between Afghan forces and the rebels. "The district is still under Afghan forces' control; they are fighting against the militants," he added.

Taliban's spokesman Qari Yousaf Ahmadi also said fierce clashes took place in the district last night. He added the Taliban had gained control of the district centre and several other areas. Some arms and ammunition were also seized by the militants, Ahmadi claimed. (Pajhwok)

### (16) Afghan Air ...

forces do not stand alone, Stoltenberg said "NATO and our partners have been working side-by-side with them for over a decade."

"At a great cost, we have made great progress together in the fight against terrorism. We owe our deep gratitude to the brave men and women of our armed forces. And we pay tribute to all those who have fallen in the line of duty. Their sacrifice will not be forgotten," Stoltenberg added.

This comes as the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) expects to start 2016 more capabilities as compared to the previous years in suppressing the anti-government armed militants, amid optimism with the growing capabilities of the Afghan Air Force (AAF), both in terms of equipment and manpower.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Marine Corps Gen. Joseph F. Dunford said earlier this month that the addition of MD-530 helicopters and A-29 Super Tucano light attack fixed-wing aircraft to Afghan Air Force will make a difference as integration of aviation assets into the Afghan combined arms campaign will receive more attention this year.

The delivery of the first batch of Light Attack aircraft to the Afghan armed forces formally concluded in mid January this year in the presence of the Afghan defense officials. (KP)

### (17) Father-Son...

for peace in Afghanistan. Every Afghan feels his/her responsibility. This shows the commitment of these two gentlemen who have crossed seas to come all the way to the US and are travelling throughout the country to send a message of peace," Afghan Ambassador Hamdullah Mohib said.

Over the weekend, the duo would be joined on a bike by Special Representatives for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Olson over the

historic Potomac River.

"We hope to spread a message of peace and solidarity with Afghanistan and those who have fled the war for safety," Nangarharisaid. "Unfortunately, Afghanistan has lost its true identity because of terrorism. People think Afghans are terrorists but they are not involved in terrorism. Afghanistan has a very negative image abroad," he remarked.

"We would like to promote it with something positive," he said adding that his interaction with the people in both Europe and the United States his helping him spread the message," he added.

As part of their peace journey, Nangarhari and his son have travelled through Bulgaria, Serbia, Hungary, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Germany, Denmark, Norway, Holland, Belgium, France and the United Kingdom. (Pajhwok)

### (18) Two Russian...

medium- and long-range missiles. Russia started an air campaign in Syria on Sept. 30, 2015 at the request of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. On Feb. 27, a tentative ceasefire deal, brokered by Russia and the United States, came into force between the Syrian government and the opposition groups in the country. (Xinhua)

### (19) Russian Military ...

lowed Syrian government ground troops to retake swaths of territory, further securing the Syrian government's position.

Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said Monday that the Russian air force carried out 9,000 sorties in its five-month-long campaign, killing 2,000 rebel militants, including 17 field commanders. (Xinhua)

### (20) Turkish ...

reiterated his condemnation of the Ankara attack, saying Azerbaijan will always stand by Turkey in its fight against terror.

The car bomb attack in Ankara's central Kizilay neighborhood Sunday evening hit a major public transportation hub, killing 37 people and injuring more than 100 others. (Xinhua)

### (21) Abbas Says...

the international community. "Palestine is also holding intensive and deep contacts with various international parties to ear enough support for holding the conference and find a mechanism to resolve the Palestinian question," said Abbas. (Xinhua)

### (22) Undersea ...

International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) to provide direct access to Central Asia.

India thus seeks to use the undersea gas pipeline to import natural gas from Turkmenistan. (PressTV)

### (23) Greece Calls ...

Europe. The refugees have been trapped in Greece for over a month due to the gradual border closures along the Balkans. In a bid to offer free news and useful information to the refugees and migrants so that they will not rely on "irresponsible individuals or conman," Kyritsis told local media that the Greek national news agency AMNA will launch an Arabic edition of its website on Wednesday. (Xinhua)

### (24) Austria to ...

the coming weeks a system of registration and controls similar to those at Spielfeld will be introduced," Doskozil told reporters. Measures at Spielfeld include barriers to manage large crowds and a roughly 4 km (2.5 mile) fence. (Reuters)

### (25) U.S. Relaxes...

20-22 to Cuba, 90 miles (145 km) from Florida's coast. Not sitting U.S. president has visited Cuba in the last 88 years. The latest package marks one of the most significant changes since Obama announced this historic opening to Cuba in December 2014 after decades of hostility between the two countries. (Reuters)

### (26) China Hopes...

consensus reached between the two heads of state and enhance cooperation in fighting terrorism, cyber crime and pursuing Chinese fugitives and their illegal assets," Meng said. (Xinhua)

### (27) WB Group ...

access borrowers' credit histories, evaluate loan risks, and make lending decisions more quickly. It will also spur a regional integration of Tajikistan's credit reporting service providers into one platform. (Asia-Plus)