

### (1) Ghani Beats ...

Ghani after expressing gratitude to international community for supporting Afghanistan over the past more than a decade, beat the school bell and formally opened new educational year in his country. More than 8 million students, with some 40 percent of them girls, according to officials, are going to school in Afghanistan. (Xinhua)

### (2) Nicholson,...

Army's 75th Ranger Regiment as well as the 82nd Airborne Division. Following security transition from NATO-led troops, the Afghan security forces have achieved mixed results in their first year of the fight against the Taliban on their own. The first round of peace talks between Afghan government and Taliban representatives was held in Murree in July 2015. But the talks collapsed after the Taliban confirmed the death of their founder Mullah Omar.

The visiting commander appreciated success of operation Zarb-i-Azb and Pakistan's efforts for regional security. The military offensive is said to be in its final phase. (Pajhwok)

### (3) Iran, Afghanistan ...

for the health of Iranian Supreme Leader and President and wished the Iranian government and nation success and prosperity. President Rouhani, for his part, felicitated the Afghan government and nation and all the nations, celebrating Nowruz, on the feast, and underlined all-out expansion of mutual cooperation in various spheres, strengthening friendship, and upgrading Tehran-Kabul cooperation and relations at the bilateral, regional and international levels.

High-ranking Iranian and Afghan officials in a meeting in Tehran in January conferred on drawing a roadmap for the further development of bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries. The issue was raised in a meeting between Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and CEO of Afghanistan's National Unity Government (NUG) Abdullah Abdullah. During the meeting, the two officials also consulted on the latest developments in bilateral relations and the region, and underlined the necessity for more effective cooperation in fight against terrorism and extremism.

Zarif also stressed Iran's support for the Afghan government's efforts to establish security and move towards peace within the framework of all-inclusive talks among all Afghan groups. He also underscored the necessity for the implementation of all the agreements signed between the two countries in the past. (FNA)

**(4) Pakistan...** leadership fled to Pakistan. The Islamabad government threatened with drastic actions the Afghan insurgents based in its territory who refuse to initiate peace talks with Kabul actions. However, to date, the Taliban refuse to sit at the negotiating table with the Afghan authorities and instead announced their upcoming spring offensive. (Prensa Latina)

### (5) Steps Underway ...

economic integration for maintaining peace and prosperity in the region. He called regional connectivity the key to fast economic development. The government was focused on boosting regional trade and that was also the vision of the economic and trade policies of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's government, he added. Also on Monday, the Punjab Board of Investment and Trade (PBIT), in collaboration with the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI), arranged a conference at in Lahore. Punjab Minister for Industries Chaudhry Muhammad Shafiq was the chief guest on the occasion. Pakistan's Ambassador to Afghanistan Syed Abrar Hussain also attended the event. PAJCCI Chairman Muhammad Zubair Motiwala said: "If both official and unofficial trade volume is calculated, which currently is worth \$5 billion, Afghanistan is the third largest trade partner of Pakistan."

He stressed the need for exporting Pakistani automobiles, electronics, furniture, pharmaceuticals and other goods to the neighbouring country. He also suggested setting up free trade zones in order areas to enhance trade. (Pajhwok)

**(6) Noor, Dostum...** "I believe removing or tearing apart pictures of the VP is the handiwork

of miscreants and elements out to create a disturbance. But we will never allow anyone to create trouble by removing pictures."

Noor called Balkh a province known for fostering cooperation and proximity where dozens of political parties, including Junbish Millie, were operating. He said the Junbish leader's pictures could be seen in many parts of Mazar-i-Sharif. Hundreds of the governor's loyalists gathered in the Shaheed Zabihullah Square and chanted slogans in the support of Atta Mohammad Noor. They hoisted the national flag and portraits of Noor.

Ghausuddin, the organiser, told said Pajhwok Afghan News the rally had been arranged to demonstrate support to the governor for security. "We knew some people from other provinces came here and tried to create a disturbance. We will not allow anyone to destabilise the province."

Separately, hundreds of people took to the streets at around 11:00am in support of the VP. They carried portraits of Dostum, former president Burhanuddin Rabbani, Ahmad Shah Massoud and President Ashraf Ghani. Kanishka Turkistani, head of Junbish's youth wing, said the peaceful rally, which was taken out from the vice-president's house, would terminate at Gungar Square, where a giant portrait of Dostum was shredded recently. (Pajhwok)

**(7) Retreat in ...** the security situation in Helmand and other parts of the country. Lt. Gen. Abdullah Khan, head of the army chief office staff, said: "Last year, the enemy was unable to capture Helmand and we guarantee they would not be able to do this year." He said four battalions of the 215th Maiwand Military Corps had been reorganised and were fully capable to respond to the enemy attacks. Answering questions from Senators about the retreat of security forces, Abdullah Khan said the Ministry of Defence had removed 50 percent of check-posts which could be attacked by the enemy. The move was aimed to avoid the loss of security men, he said.

Khan said had security forces not left their check-posts, they would have been besieged by the enemy and would have been finally lost. About rocket attacks from across the Durand Line, Khan said security forces had been ordered to respond to the attacks in future. He said the issue of rocket attacks had been formally conveyed to the leaders of the unity government. Lt. Gen. Abdul Rahman Rahman, senior security affairs in-charge at the Ministry of Interior (MoI), said: "Necessary orders have been issued regarding the rocket attacks from across the Durand Line."

He added the Afghan security forces would do everything they had in their disposal to respond to rockets fired by the Pakistani forces. Abdul Matin Baig, deputy head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), was also present at the session, but he briefed lawmakers behind closed doors. (Pajhwok)

**(8) Europe Ma...** aid and trade as incentives for foreign governments to take back migrants. A joint discussion document, which was sent to ambassadors on March 3, warns of escalating terrorist violence in Afghanistan, which resulted in 11,000 civilian casualties last year, and a failing economy. In order keep flows at their current levels for 2017-20, the EU plans to host an international donor summit for Afghanistan. The initiative is aimed to raise enough aid to the impoverished country. The document says: "It is critical that substantial progress is made in the negotiations with the Afghan government on migration by early summer, giving the member states and other donors the confidence that Afghanistan is a reliable partner..."

The unity government, highly aid-dependent, is unlikely to prevail due to security, economic and political challenges, in the absence of continued high levels of international assistance. Last year, around 176,000 Afghans claimed asylum in the EU. About six in 10 are eligible for refugee status, a rate that has risen. They account for a quarter of asylum-seekers landing in Greece. (Pajhwok)

### (9) 'Afghanistan...

from irrigated lands, 30 percent form rain-fed land and 60 percent of the market is occupied by agricultural products. Zamir said 80 percent of the population's economy relied on agriculture and stressed more attention to the vital sector's development. Energy and Water Minister Eng. Ali

Ahmad Osmani, who also addressed the conference, said: "Water is the huge need of human beings and it has no alternative. Neither the land nor human beings can live without water. Discussion on water is discussion on life and death."

He said currently Afghanistan did not face a shortage of water but a lack of water management needed to be addressed. Ezzatullah Amid, a university teacher, said access to clean water was the primary right of human beings. He said over two million people in the world suffered from water-borne diseases due to non-availability of clean drinking water. (Pajhwok)

**(10) Afghan ...** director of Afghan Red Pomegranate, signed the largest contract in his company's history to export Kandahar pomegranates to South Korea, according to a USAID statement. Sumaria Rahmati of Herat Saffron confirmed a deal of \$700,000 from a Saudi buyer and she expects to execute it within two months. "More and more international buyers are seeing the quality of Afghan produce. New and profitable markets are opening for the country every year as a result of events like this," said Hanif Sufizada, private sector director at the Ministry of Agriculture.

Mustafa Sadiq, of the Omid Bahar Fruit-Processing Company, said Gulfood provided a great platform for Afghan producers and processors to introduce their agricultural products in international markets and to expand their business. (Pajhwok)

### (11) Balkhi Vows....

dealing with challenges as important, the minister said all of his ministry's performance was being assessed based on presidential orders and he was on the brink of bringing reforms. Balkhi promised completion of 634 projects that remained incomplete from the past years. He also mentioned his ministry's achievements during the past one year and said 22 million books printed inside the country last year would be distributed to school students during the current year. Balkhi said 100 Afghan writers were also given jobs to correct writing mistakes in school books printed in the previous years. The books after correction would be reprinted and distributed to students, he added. About teachers' problems, the minister said teachers were paid special attention in the past one year, when four teacher training centers were built in Khost, Sar-i-Pul, Kunar and Kabul provinces, increasing the number of these centers to 274. He said 1,107,000 new students, including 41 percent of them girls, would be enrolled in schools this year. The education minister said 590 education centers, 168 seminaries, 24 schools and institutes and 11 teacher training centers would be established during the new academic year. He said the construction of two special schools, one for talented girl students and another for boys, was also in the pipeline this year. (Pajhwok)

### (12) U.S. Commander ...

deeply apologise for the events" that led to the bombing, Nicholson said. "I grieve with you for your loss and suffering; and humbly and respectfully ask for your forgiveness," added Nicholson. A U.S. investigation found that the Oct. 3 air strike was a "tragic and avoidable" incident, primarily caused by human error. The U.S. military has disciplined more than a dozen personnel, including officers following the strike. MSF, known as Doctors Without Borders in English, has in the past publicly cast doubt on the idea that the strike could have been a mistake. The brief capture of the Kunduz provincial capital was arguably the biggest victory for the Taliban militants in the 15-year war since they were toppled by U.S.-led forces in late 2001. Afghan security forces, who suffered a record number of losses last year, have been struggling to contain Taliban militants who are fighting to topple the government of President Ashraf Ghani. Violence is at its worst since the departure of most foreign combat troops from Afghanistan in 2014 as the country is bracing for the start of the spring fighting season. (Reuters)

### (13) Ghani ...

besides expressing sympathy with the government and people of Belgium, described terrorism as common threat to the region and the world at large and called for joint fight against the menace. Similarly, Afghan government chief executive, Abdullah Abdullah in

an online statement posted on his Twitter account, also condemned the bloody bombings in Brussels, in its strongest term. (Xinhua)

### (14) Conflicts in ...

Southwestern Asia. "We have found that in places like Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts may threaten crop wild relatives originating in those regions," Castaneda-Alvarez, one of the authors of the article, said. She explained that the wild relatives of almonds, oats, cherries, barley and wheat are threatened in the regions, which also may influence the stability of global food processing. A crop wild relative is a wild plant closely related to a domesticated plant, which constitutes an important resource for improving agricultural production and for maintaining sustainable agro-ecosystems. Wild crop species often have valuable characteristics as tolerance to disease or drought, so their loss will limit the ability to adapt to high temperatures, more saline soils and other circumstances that can be attributed to climate change.

Security in Afghanistan has become fragile following the withdrawal of NATO forces in December 2014 and an ensuing spring offensive by militants, including the Taliban and the Islamic State (Daesh). The situation in Iraq deteriorated as the United States withdrew its troops in 2011, as local militant groups tried to take up arms against the central Iraqi government. Currently, vast territories in Iraq and neighboring Syria have been occupied by the notorious Islamic State militant group, which is outlawed in Russia and many other countries. The Daesh is known for its excessive brutality, beheadings of hostages and terrorist attacks carried out by Daesh affiliates worldwide. (Monitoring Desk)

### (15) UN Strengthening...

department. The equipment which includes incubators, baby warmers, defibrillators, sterilizers, ventilators, electrosurgical and cardiograph machines are designed to reduce mother and child mortality. Min-Whee Kang, Head of UNICEF's central region field office, said the equipment — which will be used in the provincial hospital and three district hospitals in remote areas of the province — is key to saving lives in critical cases. "We hope to see a gradual improvement of survival rates and a decline in mortality rates of new born and mothers," said Ms. Kang. At the same time, in light of attacks on access to healthcare facilities, UNAMA has reminded all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan of their obligation to always respect the provision of healthcare, never to harm medical personnel or patients, and to ensure that the protected status of medical facilities is respected. Mark Bowden, the UN's Humanitarian Coordinator and the Secretary-General's Deputy Special Representative for Afghanistan, said medical facilities, medical personnel, and those who are receiving treatment, for disease or conflict-related injuries, must never be placed at risk, let alone subject to attack. "The work that humanitarian and medical personnel carry out must not be restricted, and all parties to the conflict must abstain from actions that may place these persons or facilities at risk," said the UN envoy. (KP)

**(16) Nearly Half ...** that a number of schools have no buildings," the education director said. Of the total 305 schools and religious seminaries across Logar, 118 lack buildings and another 70 are without boundary walls and students of schools lacking own buildings are taught in rented houses, according to Stanikzai. He said schools in many areas were without water wells and students had to face problems. The director said he had all these issues discussed with the Ministry of Education and the governor's house and efforts were underway to resolve them. All schools in Logar province were open and there was no problem in this regard, Stanikzai concluded. A resident of Panjpai area of Kharwar district, Ziarmal, told Pajhwok Afghan News all schools in the district were operational, but some schools lacked buildings. Obaidullah, a third class student at Haroonkhel middle school in Pul-i-Alam, the provincial capital, said: "Our school has no building of its own and we are shifted from one rented house to another each year. It makes our going to school difficult." The provincial council's deputy director, Mohammad Qasim Khoshiw-

al, told Pajhwok Afghan News it was responsibility of the government to provide every facility students needed for education. "The education's quality and process has been good in Logar. We have inspected all the districts, there is no ghost school as well." There are some 135,000 students, including 50,000 girls, enrolled to schools across Logar province. (Pajhwok)

### (17) Govt. Urged...

Commission (IEC), meanwhile questioned government's resolve in bringing about reforms. "I am not confident that reforms will be brought. The government does not have the strong political will to bring about electoral reforms," he said. Manavi said that government is taking these steps under public and donor pressure. According to a political agreement signed between President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah when establishing the National Unity Government (NUG), government is required to bring about electoral reforms. However, the first presidential decree on electoral reforms was rejected by parliament. The president then signed another decree on electoral reforms. However, no practical steps in this regard have been taken so far. (Tolonews)

### (18) Security ...

the raid in the Shoraki area and alleged that "foreign invaders," a reference to the U.S.-led military coalition in Afghanistan, also took part. He said eight civilian prisoners were taken away while another seven were killed in the military action and five were wounded. Local Afghan security officials have also confirmed involvement of foreign troops but the NATO-led Resolute Support mission has not yet commented. Afghan forces have raided four prisons in Helmand in the past three months and freed dozens of detainees, including members of the national army and police force. Many of the 14 districts in the province have fallen to the Taliban in recent months, prompting the United States to redeploy hundreds of troops to Helmand to help Afghans defend the provincial capital of Lashkargah. Late last month, the Afghan military raided a Taliban prison in Helmand and freed 35 people, including women and children. (VoA)

### (19) Taliban's Plan...

The Taliban, who have laid siege to Marja district, are currently in control of Baghlan, Dishu, Musa Qala, Khanshin and Nawzad districts of Helmand over the past four years. (Pajhwok)

### (20) Nationwide ...

said the capital of northern Kunduz province fell to insurgents for a few days in 1394 before they were driven from the city by governmental forces. At least 1,200 soldiers and 800 sergeants were graduated on Tuesday from the KMTC, Gen. Shaheem said. Addressing the graduates, the army chief said they enjoyed political, social and international support and had a large number of combat aircrafts. He also said the international community had pledged financial and technical assistance to the Afghan forces till 2020. KMTC Commander Brig. Gen. Aminullah Patyani said the newly graduated soldiers were ready to serve in every part of the country. The graduates completed two and a half months training, he added. He told the graduates that their success lied in treating people and colleagues nicely. Ihsanullah, one of the graduates, told Pajhwok Afghan News that Afghanistan was his house and he was ready to defend the country even at the cost of his life. He said he learned military tactics and using different light and heavy weapons during the training. (Pajhwok)

### (21) Herat Farmers ...

us training and give us improved seed to enable us to harvest good products," said Hafizullah, another farmer. Meanwhile, the provincial directorate of agriculture, irrigation and livestock said that it has provided \$25 million USD's worth of help to local farmers. "We gave \$25 million USD in assistance to farmers last year. However, it is not enough and we want to address the problems faced by all farmers in the province," said Faqir Ahmad Bayangar, the provincial director of agriculture, irrigation and livestock. (Tolonews)

### (22) Zazai Maida...

ministers, police and intelligence officers. "We face a very real terrorist threat right across the different countries of Europe and we have to meet that with everything we have," he said afterwards, as he announced extra security. (AFP)

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### (25) Thousands...

arrived in the beautiful valley with his family and set up a tent where they brought traditional food and seven types of fruits with them. The six-member family arrived in a car playing traditional music and spring related songs. "We came to Gulghundi Valley because here is security. Parwan has a good weather and we are here to see different flowers and enjoy," said Ahmad. (Pajhwok)

### (26) Brussels Attacks...

officials confirmed. Another explosion was later reported at Maelbeek metro station which is within hundred meters from the European Union complex. (Xinhua)

### (27) Greece Beefs...

(Tribune) daily. On Tuesday noon, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras held an emergency meeting at his office with Defense Minister Panos Kammenos and other officials. Gerovassilis said during a regular press briefing. (Xinhua)

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