

(1) BRICS Summit...

Islamic State, Jabhat al-Nusra and other terrorist organizations. The five-member grouping also underlined its commitment to support the Afghan government in its efforts to bring peace and stability while expressing "deep concern at the persisting security challenges in Afghanistan and significant increase in terrorist activities" in that country.

"We affirm support to the efforts of the Afghan government to achieve Afghan-led and Afghan-owned national reconciliation and combat terrorism, and readiness for constructive cooperation in order to facilitate security in Afghanistan, promote its independent political and economic course, becoming free from terrorism and drug trafficking," according to the leaders.

Stabilization of Afghanistan should be through an effective Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and for this commitment of regional countries and wider international community is inevitable, the BRICS opined, adding that the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission should support the ANSF and should also engage multilateral regional organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Collective Security Treaty Organization, and the Heart of Asia Conference.

(2) Afghanistan ...

ongoing insurgency and conflicts have been hindering the efforts to stamp out the infectious disease in the mountainous country. (Xinhua)

(3) Journalists...

may not be properly reported," said Sharifi. "But the Taliban have a record of destroying media houses and threatening and killing journalists. (Pajhwok)

(4) Some Circles ...

help keep Afghanistan's beleaguered government afloat for the next four years, despite growing reluctance to pour more money into a corruption-plagued country wracked by conflict.

The Afghan government is estimated to only be capable of meeting 20 percent of its budget, and about 39 percent of the Afghan population lives on less than \$1.35 a day. Abdullah said that the government also pledged to the international community it would fight corruption and work for good governance and spend the money transparently.

On refugees, he said that the government has discussed the issue with Iran and Pakistan and that there is coordination among them for the return of the refugees to the country. (Tolonews)

(5) Civilians, Officials...

million afs, Wakeel Nasir, a Wolosi Jirga member, 300,000 afs and Abdul Rahim Ayoubi, another member of the assembly, owes 254,000 afs to DABS. Tawhidi said government institutions should pay their unpaid power bills from their budget in accordance with President Ashraf Ghani's order, if not their next year's budget would be approved according to the government's decision.

Muhibur-rahman Momand, DABS head for Kabul, who attended the gathering, said total figures of government departments reached one billion and 600 million afs, commercial institutions owed more than 785 million afs and public owed 947 afs to the power utility. Tawhidi said over the past two years electricity connections to residences of people who failed to pay their power tariffs had been cut off, forcing 65 percent of them to pay their dues; but the remaining with support from within the government forcibly re-connected their power lines.

Tawhidi said the power utility was busy preparing lists of defaulters in provinces and their names would be disclosed to the media by next week. (Pajhwok)

(6) ANSF Blunt ...

Last week up to 100 soldiers and police were killed in a series of ambushes as they tried to escape to the provincial capital from positions encircled by the Taliban for days. The NATO-led military coalition has several hundred troops based in Helmand. The troops, mostly American, are largely confined to an advisory role but U.S. air strikes have been used to help the Afghans. General John Nicholson, the top commander of U.S. and coalition troops in Afghanistan, has vowed to do everything to keep Lashkargah from falling to the Taliban.

But some Afghan elders have questioned if the efforts are sufficient, as thousands of residents have fled the latest fighting and Taliban control or contest most of the province. (Reuters)

(7) Anti-Poppy ...

alternative to the crop. "The report mainly focuses on prospects of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan and finding ways for its reduction or complete eradication," he said. Fishstein said agriculture had a complex system, therefore donor countries, charity organizations and the Afghan government should focus more on agriculture and help farmers identify better alternatives to poppy.

The report said a comprehensive assessment of national priority programs, diversity in cultivations and incomes collected through it, finding alternative to poppy, investment for development in rural areas, identification of activities that fuel opium production and distribution of land plots to poor farmers could reduce the poppy production in the country.

The report also suggests that generating job opportunities also could play role in reduction of poppy production. (Pajhwok)

(8) Inefficient...

president to remove and disqualify such ministers." First deputy speaker Haji Zahir Qadir, who chaired today's session, said: "You lawmakers are responsible to summon ministers about their low spending and make decision about their fate." He said setting a level for spending development budget was a treason and injustice to the nation. "There is enough money for implementation of development projects, but inefficient authorities have failed to spend them", Qadir said.

"After reports published by permanent commissions, we would make a decision about the ministers who failed to spend their development budget," he said. (Pajhwok)

(9) Children in...

follow their cases, they are being kept here and their cases have not been processed," said one of the detainees.

"It is now seven months that I live here, but so far the second court has not convened its session to issue its verdict," said a detainee.

"Children under the age of 18 are supposed to be kept here in the reform training center, but there are claims that some detainees above the age of 20 are being kept here to decrease their terms," said Mir Fayazuddin Amini, head of Children's Reform Training Center. Those kept at the center are being held on various charges including murder, theft, insurgency and moral crimes. Rights groups have said that these children should be categorized on the basis of their age and crimes. (Tolonews)

(10) 8 Rebels Dead ...

passengers by the group. Haji Mohammad, a local elder, said the Taliban who came from Dand-i-Ghor to Dhusi district had created disturbance for the people and posed security threat to the district. Hailing security forces Mohammad said the Taliban were badly defeated and troops should continue their offensive against the group to completely clean the area from rebels.

Maj. Gen. Amir Gul Hussainkehl, deputy police chief, said the Taliban were defeated in the province and no more had

the ability to launch attacks. (Pajhwok)

(11) 62 Insurgents ...

the recently reconciled 62 insurgent group, including Maulvi Abdul Wahab, Raees Mohammad Gul, Qari Noor Mohammad, Maulvi Nawadeen and Qari Amuruddin. They had been serving in Taliban ranks for three years and were active in Shiram area of the province.

The governor said the reconciling men turned in 32 Kalashnikovs, two machine-guns, three pistols, two rocket launchers, four carbines and other military equipment. Maulvi Naeqebullah, the provincial peace committee head, said insurgents who were hell bent on fighting against government if killed did not deserve any reward and were killing themselves for nothing. Salahuddin Charikzada, a member of the provincial council, thanked the insurgents for joining the peace drive and called their decision a step towards peace in the province.

Maulvi Abdul Wahab, one of the reconciled commanders, said he would fight against the country's enemies along with security forces to achieve peace and ensure security. According to local officials, 100 insurgents have joined the peace and reintegration process in Sar-i-Pul this year. (Pajhwok)

(12) Taliban in a...

this week had nothing to do with Haibatullah as the three commanders were not his supporters and did not see him as a credible leader of the Taliban movement.

According to analysts, Pakistan's recent efforts to reunite the Taliban had not yielded positive outcomes and instead these efforts have expanded the power struggle within the hardline movement.

"This was a politically motivated move by Pakistan. Pakistan wanted to show the foreigners that they act against the Taliban on their demand," said former Taliban governor Sayed Akbar Agha.

"Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada is a trusted element of Pakistan's ISI. If anyone opposes Akhundzada's guideline and refuses his ideology or enters negotiations on his own, Pakistan will act against them," said a former diplomat to Pakistan Ahmad Saeedi. In a new development, a disident Taliban faction led by Mullah Abdul Rassoul has indicated they will consider entering peace negotiations with the Afghan government.

"Mullah Abdul Rassoul has shown an interest for negotiations. Then we have to work in this respect and talk with the international community particularly the US and also with Pakistan," said Mohammad Amin Weqad, member of the Afghan High Peace Council. "After the successful military operations carried out by the security forces in foiling the Omari operation, the successful conclusion of Brussels Summit, the successful outcome of negotiations with Hizb-e-Islami and the recent political developments in the region, peace supporters in the ranks of Taliban have also expanded," said Tawab Ghorzang, spokesman for the National Security Advisor. Earlier this week Pakistani officials announced that at least three senior Taliban leaders, including Ahmadullah Muti, also known as Mullah Nanai who served as Taliban's designated intelligence chief, Sulaiman Agha, Taliban's designated governor for Daikundi province and Mullah Sani, also known as Samad Sani, head of a religious school and a well-known Afghan businessman, who have links with the Taliban, have also been taken into custody in Pakistan's southwestern Baluchistan province. Pakistani media reported that Mullah Nanai was arrested at a madrassa compound in Quetta city, the provincial capital of Baluchistan.

Mullah Nanai, who is originally a native of southern Kandahar province, has served in some key positions within the group. He worked as deputy head of the Peshawar commission, minister of public works, Balkh governor and Herat governor in the Taliban

regime (1996 to 2001). Previously, Pakistan launched similar crackdowns against a number of influential Taliban leaders in that country, including the dramatic detention of the group's top commander Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar. However, Pakistan never showed willingness to hand over them over to the Afghan government - a move that raised serious questions on Pakistan's counter-terror policy. According to reports, Pakistan is faced with increasing pressure from the international community over its controversial role in the war against terrorism.

Bilateral ties between Kabul and Islamabad have also been strained over Pakistan's reluctance to target Taliban's hideouts in Pakistan, reports indicate. (Tolonews)

(13) 1 Dead, 4 ...

has been killed during the Afghan Local Police (ALP) attack in Alishang district, the spokesman said.

He said Commander Saleem was earlier member of the ALP and surrendered to the Taliban with a check-post in Badpakh district. (Pajhwok)

(14) Americans ...

Afghanistan, including Russia, China, India, and Iran and find ways of addressing the issue of radicalism with these countries, insisting that these countries are also affected.

According to Karzai, Pakistan should also be engaged in a manner to help ease to compete against extremism. However, he said the US and Pakistan lack interest in stopping Afghan war and stall progress of Afghan peace talks.

The former Afghan President also added that Taliban can't be defeated in war and only peace talks can bring the civil strife of the Afghan nation to an end.

He said the Afghan people can reconcile with Taliban emphasizing that 'they are Afghans like us but poppy growing is a real curse'.

Karzai also warned the Taliban group that they will not be able to overrun the whole country and will manage to seize a few provincial capitals. The other issues the former President pointed were Pakistan's desire dominance in Afghanistan and US drone strikes that prevent in seeking peace and are making Taliban fight harder instead of forcing them to start talks. (KP)

(15) Europe Pressing...

the increased cross-border traffic, countries are struggling to deal with those they have rejected for asylum. Until now, many people inside Europe illegally have been able to remain in a limbo that can stretch for years. But that old, lenient model - which has commonalities with that in the United States - is giving way to mounting anti-immigrant pressure. (The Washington Post)

(16) Exit Polls ...

circumstances where I cannot protect people's lives and live as I have promised," Yoneyama was quoted as saying to his supporters on Sunday, with reference to major concerns in the area over the plant's checkered safety record.

The Kashiwazaki-Kariwa power station, located in the towns of Kashiwazaki and Kariwa in Niigata Prefecture, on the Sea of Japan, was central to Yoneyama's winning campaign, with incumbent Governor Hirohiko Izumida, who was not seeking reelection, also voicing skepticism over the safety of the plant's restart, likely adding support to Yoneyama's bid, local observers said.

Yoneyama, a doctor as well as lawyer, who was backed by the Japanese Communist Party (JCP) and two other smaller opposition parties, saw off a challenge from former mayor Tamio Mori, 67, who was backed by Abe's pro-nuclear Party-led coalition, albeit in a tight race. (Xinhua)

(17) Putin Hopes...

When asked about the anti-Russia sanctions, Putin said that rather than solving issues in Ukraine or Syria, the purpose of the sanctions was just about formulating a "containment policy against Russia."

(Xinhua)

(18) N. Korea Warns...

officials do not believe Pyongyang possesses weapons able to reach the continental United States.

Lee also warned that North Korea may carry out "a sixth, a seventh or an eighth" nuclear test. (NBC News)

(19) World Leaders...

oceans and marine life should be next."

Director of Antarctic and Southern Ocean conservation at The Pew Charitable Trusts, Andrea Kavanagh, said that Russia, which has dubbed 2017 the Year of Ecology, has led ocean conservation efforts worldwide. (Xinhua)

(20) America Cannot...

recently, their disputes with the United States, are now working more closely together than they have in years. As Turkey increases cooperation with one of America's biggest geopolitical threats, it is more important than ever for the United States to pay new attention to Turkey. (Monitoring Desk)

(21) Turkish President ...

offensive to liberate Mosul "under any circumstances."

Tensions have been growing over the presence of Turkish troops at the Bashiqa camp near Mosul, the second largest city of Iraq that fell to IS control in June 2014.

Early Monday, Al-Abadi declared the start of the long-awaited campaign, backed by by a U.S.-led coalition.

The campaign is the biggest in Iraq since the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2011. (Xinhua)

(22) Iraqi Forces...

"Very soon, we will be with you to raise the flag of Iraq in the middle of Mosul, and in towns and villages as well," Abadi said, calling on the people of Mosul to cooperate with security forces to defeat the IS group.

Abadi also vowed that 2016 will be the year of defeating terrorism of the IS group.

The operation of security forces and allied U.S.-led coalition troops to retake Mosul will be the biggest in the country since U.S. troops withdrew from Iraq in 2011. (Xinhua)

13 Killed in Airstrikes on Rebel-Held Area in Syria's Aleppo

DAMASCUS - At least 13 people were killed on Monday in airstrikes on a rebel-held area in Syria's northern city of Aleppo, a monitor group reported.

Children were among those killed in the raids that targeted the Marjeh neighborhood in eastern Aleppo, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

It added that the death toll could rise as tens of people are either wounded or gone missing.

Attempts to dig out the bodies under the rubble are still ongoing, the Observatory said.

This comes amid clashes between Syrian forces and the rebels in several areas in Aleppo on Monday. Aleppo, located near the borders with Turkey, is Syria's largest city and once an economic hub. It has been a focal point of clashes between the Syrian army and the rebels. (Xinhua)

British PM Supports Chancellor of the Exchequer Amid Brexit Row

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May has voiced her "full confidence" in British Chancellor of the Exchequer Philip Hammond after he was accused of slowing progress toward Brexit. May's support came one day after British media said that colleagues believe Hammond was trying to undermine the Brexit process by delaying decisions on migrant curbs.

The prime minister's spokesperson told media on Monday that the British leader believes that Hammond's focus was on how best to approach Brexit negotiations.

Some British media have earlier

slammed Hammond, accusing him of "arguing like an accountant seeing the risk of everything" rather than pushing ahead with plans. (Xinhua)

Philippine President Says "Only China Can Help Us"

MANILA - Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte has said that his country expects to boost traditional friendship with China and further bilateral trade and economic cooperation.

Duterte starts a four-day state visit to China on Tuesday at the invitation of his Chinese counterpart, Xi Jinping.

The visit will help him better understand China, Duterte told Xinhua in an exclusive interview on Thursday.

He spoke highly of the Chinese government and people, saying that China boasts hard-working people and "good, sound policies, internal and external."

"I would say that China deserves the kind of respect that China now enjoys," he added.

Duterte also lauded China's commitment to and generosity of helping others as a major player of the international community, adding that besides its own development, China has never forgotten those underdeveloped nations, as illustrated by its devotion to helping African and Southeast Asian countries to promote development.

Speaking of the two countries' economic and trade cooperation, Duterte said that since his country is abundant in tourism, mineral and agricultural resources, and China boasts a huge lucrative market, the two neighbors enjoy high complementarity and considerable potential for further cooperation.

The Philippine leader said his country needs to retain its friendly relationship with China and learn from the latter's success in economics and trade, especially in times of global financial crisis. In terms of the South China Sea issue, Duterte said he prefers negotiation to confrontation. (Xinhua)

Portuguese Gov't Calls for Urgent Action to Fight Poverty

LISBON - Portugal's Minister for Employment, Solidarity and Social Security Jose Vieira da Silva on Monday called for the government to fight poverty.

"Eradicating poverty must be our society's biggest ambition, and the greatest ambition of our generation," Vieira da Silva said in an official message to mark the International Day for Eradication of Poverty.

"Poverty many times means war, or refugees, or abandoned elderly people, or children without support, and almost always it means unemployment and inequality," he added.

Portugal is a "country with too much poverty," and it is necessary to fight for a more just society and prioritize children, he urged.

He said the solution was for the government to reinforce its support to families with younger children younger than three years old from 2017.

Viera da Silva also mentioned the importance of guaranteeing education and medical support for children.

According to a report in September, the number of poor people in Portugal between 2009 and 2014 rose by 116,000 to 2.2 million, with around 10.7 percent of workers and a quarter of children living below the poverty line.

Around one in five Portuguese citizens earn less than 422 euros (463.96 U.S. dollars) per month, with salaries dropping by around 12 percent during the 2009 and 2014 period.

Portugal signed a 78 billion euros bailout program in 2011 with international lenders when it was on the verge of bankruptcy, and made steep spending cuts and tax hikes to meet budget targets.

The prime minister and leader of the Socialist Party, Antonio Costa, who was appointed in November, promised to reverse public wage cuts and is compensating by increasing other taxes. (Xinhua)