

(1) Taliban Aiding ...

farmers, he suggested. A public representative from Helmand in the Meshrano Jirga said that maintaining security and preventing poppy cultivation was the duty of security personnel but did not do their jobs honestly.

Senator Mohammad Hashim Alokozai indicated the improper behaviour of security forces had prompted people to join hands with rebels.

A tribal elder from Nad Ali district, Haji Abdul Khaliq, refuted the allegation that they were egging on farmers to grow poppies. However, he did not comment on Taliban's role in this regard. He said tribal elders always lent their weight to the government.

Previously, 215th Maimand Military Corps commander Brig. Gen. Dadan Lawang had said some mafia groups were also aiding poppy growers in the province. Helmand is the biggest producer of narcotics in the region. (Pajhwok)

(2) Mol Honors...

made by the forces.

"We are proud of our soldiers who serve for the nation and sacrifice their lives," Safai praised.

The appreciation of police forces comes as the Afghan National Police Forces (ANPF) are expected to hold the security responsibility for the entire country from January 1, 2015.

The main duty of police forces is to maintain the law and order situation in the cities, however, the Afghan National Police (ANP) forces, besides their main duty, have also fought terrorism and have lost their lives in this way. (Tolonews)

(3) Insecurity

religious scholars did not extend their support, the problems would remain and tens of thousands of students would be deprived of education.

Ludin said besides closure of schools, the lack of buildings, a shortage of professional teachers and no cooperation from the people were other problems affecting the education process. Tribal elder Majid Khan told Pajhwok Afghan News reopening of closed schools was the responsibility of tribal elders and religious scholars.

He said religious leaders were afraid of Taliban and were not discharging their responsibility to help reopen schools.

Khan said depriving children from education meant pushing another generation to the conflict because uneducated persons had to choose but to pick up guns. Religious scholar Maulvi Abdul Wali acknowledged it was their responsibility to reopen closed schools.

He said all sections of the society had realised they needed schools and tribal elders and clerics were bound to keep schools open.

He asked the education department to convene gatherings and invite real tribal elders to push for the schools reopening.

He said those living in city could not face Taliban or help reopen closed schools. Besides the closed schools, the education sector has been facing other challenges as well.

Munir Ahmad, an 11th grade student of a high school in Qalat, the provincial capital, said their school lacked laboratory and practical study was zero.

He said the main high school in Zabul had been without essential education equipment over the past 13 years. "It speaks of the central government's

negligence."

A seventh grade student of a school in Shah Joy district, Abdul Khaliq, said the teaching capacity in their school had been low. He said they received textbooks in-time in initial days of each academic year, but later the lessons were postponed for various reasons. He said this year their lessons were delayed due to the electoral impasse. He said they were taught by teachers not fully professional.

An influential figure in the Atghar district, Haji Hassan Khan, said thousands of children in the town remained deprived of education.

He said there were no schools in the district and only a handful of children from the district were studying in Qalat.

He said the government had not given any positive response to their demands over the past 13 years.

"In such a situation, how can peace come and why the people should support the government," he asked.

He said education was every Afghan's right and they wanted to send their children to schools for the sake of their bright future.

Officials in Shinkai district said security was not a problem there, but the district lacked school.

Haji Qasim Khan, the district chief, told Pajhwok Afghan News there was the only high school "Shah Alam Khan" in the district centre and there were no schools in villages.

He said residents were cooperative with the government and there was no security problem in most of the villages, where schools needed to be established.

The official said they requested the provincial education department for supply of education equipment to make operational three or four schools, but they were told the department lacked equipment.

He said sites for more schools had been identified and the government should approve budget for constructing buildings next academic year.

But the education director said they could not resolve the problems and needed support from government officials, tribal elders, religious scholars, Taliban and common people to reopen the schools and provide them with necessary equipment.

Rahimullah Ludin said the people and government should mount pressure on the Taliban to allow children to go to school because the education department could not use force. (Pajhwok)

(4) Iran Bans...

Legal Afghan Refugees have been issued Refugee Cards allowing them to stay in Pakistan until the end of 2015. (KP)

(5) Carters Urge ...

had been out of government control and militants had been active there. (Pajhwok)

(6) Armed Grou....

successful. Militants who join the peace process do not hand over new weapons but old ones," he said. Eng. Alham Omar Hotaki, deputy and acting CEO of Dehsabz-Barikab city development authority, said the design of the city had been completed and the practical construction was supposed to take place last year, but it was delayed due to some ownership problems.

The problems had been shared with the president and Chief Executive Officer who started to find out a negotiated solution to the problem, he added. This

joined the peace process to obtain privileges.

"If the DIAG was a success story why would the so many illegal armed men exist today? These men loot defenseless people and torture them," he added.

He said the government had failed to collect illegal weapons. "If someone travels on a bike from his village to the city, gunmen stop him and take away all his money and the bike," Hakim said, adding 20 motorcycles had been stolen and their owners deprived of money in his area this year.

A dweller of Joi Ganj village of Bala Murghab district, Abdul Majid, said the district had become comparatively stable after the establishment of some security posts last year. But he added illegal armed men still existed and the DIAG was doing nothing.

However, Haji Mohammad Nasar Nazari, the provincial council member, said a number of people in some areas had risen in arm against militants. He said he did not defend illegal armed men but sometimes it was necessary for local people to be equipped with weapons.

But DIAG Director Hasamuddin said the process was going better in Badghis than some other provinces in the west. He confirmed some irresponsible armed men existed and said they had shared the issue with the officials concerned.

"You know the DIAG has only one police officer and his driver who cannot arrest illegal armed men alone because they have no extra personnel," he said.

Hasamuddin said they used to share plans with security organs but no one paid attention. He said 250 different weapons had so far collected over the past two years in Badghis. Provincial police chief Col. Mohammad Qayum Angar said there were no any illegal armed men in Qalati-Naw and district centres. Such groups operated in remote areas, he said.

He said people in remote areas kept weapons for their own protection and that security forces were trying to disarm illegal armed men and maintain security in Badghis. (Pajhwok)

(7) Release of...

Barack Obama, as commander-in-chief, to stay focused on the most important priority -- the security of the nation.

"The president's intent to solidify his legacy on closing Guantanamo Bay is putting politics ahead of the security of our service members, the American people and our nation," Inhofe said. (Pajhwok)

(8) Agreement on...

agreement the New Kabul City would provide the ministry with all the maps and other relevant information, and then the Ministry will develop the cable networking plan for the city.

The New Kabul City would provide the required land for the networking and communication facilities free of cost to the ministry. Eng. Alham Omar Hotaki, deputy and acting CEO of Dehsabz-Barikab city development authority, said the design of the city had been completed and the practical construction was supposed to take place last year, but it was delayed due to some ownership problems.

The problems had been shared with the president and Chief Executive Officer who started to find out a negotiated solution to the problem, he added. This

is an \$80 billion project with 5% government share would be paid through private sector, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(9) Kabul, ISAF ...

commanders assured the Pakistan army chief that terrorists would not be allowed to use Afghanistan's soil. They also expressed their shock at the loss of lives in a recent attack in Peshawar.

Nearly 150 people, including 132 students, were killed on Dec. 16 when the Taliban stormed an army-run school in Peshawar. More than 250 people, mostly students, were wounded in the assault. (Pajhwok)

(10) Taliban Block ...

convinced, then 3,500 children would be left without vaccination.

Muhammad Naeem, acting governor, acknowledged the drive had hit snag but he could not say why the militants took the extreme step. Rebels should help resolve the problem because the campaign was a non-political issue, he argued.

Rangin, a resident of Kajaki district, said he did not know the benefit of polio vaccination but asked militants to allow the campaign.

Qari Mashal, a resident of Lashkargah, the provincial capital, said the vaccination drive was launched for the benefit of locals and it should not be hindered. (Pajhwok)

(11) US Knows...

a war in Afghanistan is Omar's name and he has been under the protection of Pakistan army," wondered Karzai.

Faizi said Kerry had no answer to satisfy Karzai, but he told the former president that Gen. Pervaiz Kayani, former Pakistan Army chief, had confirmed Omar was under their observation.

During Karzai's last visit to the US, the American security advisor, intelligence chief and other senior officials had told him the US would not consider the Taliban their enemy in 2015 and would no longer target them, Faizi recalled.

He said Karzai told the Americans it was surprising they considered the Taliban as enemy before 2014 and not after that year. Karzai also asked the American officials who they would call terrorists post 2014.

The American advisor replied those attacking their embassy, troops and assets in Afghanistan and those threatening American interests. To this Karzai said: "If our 70 or 80 people die in a terrorist attack, will you consider it terrorism? The American advisor said: no!"

Karzai was astonished and asked if a few thousands armed men in disguise of Taliban crossed into Afghanistan from Pakistan and captured some areas and erected their flags, then?

The advisor said it would be a problem between Afghanistan and Pakistan and the US would have nothing to do with that. These remarks by the Americans further eroded Karzai's trust in the US and the war on terrorism.

As a result, Karzai opposed the opening of Taliban's political office in Qatar and refused to sign the bilateral security agreement with the US, Faizi continued.

Faizi's revelations come after a Department of Defence official indicated on Sunday US forces in Afghanistan would not target Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Omar unless they

posed a direct threat to America.

Pentagon spokesman Rear Admiral John Kirby told reporters in Washington: "Being a member of the Taliban doesn't mean that the US is going to prosecute operations against you for that reason alone."

But he made clear those fighting against Afghan and American forces would not be spared. "We've also concurred that a member of the Taliban who undertakes missions against us renders himself vulnerable to US action." (Pajhwok)

(12) Wardak Teachers

would directly receive salaries, but later when we were directed to receive salaries through banks, the Kabul Bank branch has since been unable even to open accounts for teachers," the official said.

Tariq said hundreds of teachers had arrived in Maidan Shahr from districts to receive their salaries, but they only wasted their time and money. He said if the situation remained the same, it would lead to widespread absenteeism from schools.

He said the Kabul Bank branch in Maidan Wardak lacked enough staff. The branch had requested the main branch in Kabul to increase its staff, but there had been no response.

The education director said the Kabul Bank should establish small branches in districts to resolve the issue.

Mohammad Zahir, a teacher at Khalid Bin Walid High School in Syedabad district, said he had not received his salary for the last three months.

He said the education department sent them to the Kabul Bank branch and the branch referred them to Kabul, but the problem remained.

"I spent money equal to one month salary travelling between my home, the Kabul Bank branch and Kabul. Now I have borrowed some money from a friend to afford transport fare. It is my fourth day coming here, but to no avail," the teacher said.

He said if the government did not pay attention to their problems, a large number of teachers would abandon their job soon.

Calls seeking comments from the Kabul Bank branch officials were not returned.

But Attaullah Khogyani, the provincial government spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan the Kabul Bank branch in-charge was called to the Governor's House over the issue.

He said the bank official complained about a shortage of staff at the branch. He quoted the bank official as saying the Kabul Bank these days assessed accounts and could not increase the number of staff. (Pajhwok)

(13) Kabul Residen...

Another Kabul citizen blamed the increasing air pollution on the Kabul Municipality and National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA).

Admitting the frightening air pollution, the Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) spokesman, Kanishka Turkistani, said daily tens of patients affected by air pollution visit different Kabul hospitals.

"The increased air pollution is causing various diseases. Even many people from one family visit the hospitals," Kanishka said. However, NEPA officials blame the problem on the ministry of finance, saying lack of budget for the agency has caused the air pollu-

tion to persist.

"We prepared plans several times to reduce air pollution but the ministry of finance has been rejecting us because of budget shortages," said Mohammad Kazim Hamayoun, planning director for NEPA. But according to the reports, NEPA is among those government departments that have failed to utilize their annual budget. Burning fossil fuels like coal and also wood-burning in winter are considered the main sources of air pollution. (Tolonews)

(14) Women...

women would be trained in cultivation, processing and then selling of their products in the market.

According to Faryab agriculture officials, the national gardening program has started last year in the province and till now has accomplished many tasks such as creation of pistachio jungles, water reserves and plan to create the raisin processing job also for women in the near future.

Last week, refined seeds and special tents were distributed among women in Jawzjan province. Agriculture officials said the number of women cultivating vegetables in the province had reached to 1,700 farmers. (Pajhwok)

(15) Despite ...

year, as a result of the ban, the customs department registered a loss of 15 to 18 million afghanis on a daily basis.

The Iranian government decided in October 2012 to put restrictions on vehicles with substandard fuel tanks. As a result, more than 1,000 trucks were kept stranded on the other side of the border.

According to Sultani, the department's revenue in the current year had been 6.5 billion afghanis, seeing a 15 percent increase over the previous year. (Pajhwok)

(16) 9 Rebels ...

Sarbaland, Abu Kala and Bolan Kala areas. Sultani said security forces and civilians escaped unhurt during the operation.

A resident of the Sultan Bagh area, Nazir Ahmad, told Pajhwok Afghan News Afghan forces had conducted operations in their area and residents were happy with that.

"Areas here were insecure. Security forces conduct operations and then leave, they should establish permanent posts," the resident said.

Andar district chief Mohammad Qasim Desiwal said the operation would yield positive results and would pave the ground for development activities. He said many areas had been purged of insurgents.

Sultani said security forces on Tuesday launched "Operation Khyber" in the Ab Band district. He said the operation involving army troops and intelligence officials was being conducted in areas considered strongholds of insurgents.

A resident of Sarfaraz village in the district, Rahimullah, told Pajhwok Afghan News their village was insecure, but it should not be turned into a battlefield.

"During such operations, Taliban often open fire at police who open fire at the village and it leads to civilian casualties. Afghan forces should conduct operations in a proper way."

The Taliban have so far said nothing about the operations. (Pajhwok)

(17) Land Dispute....

had been killed and four others wounded in gunfire from Kuchis, who also lost

one man. He claimed they had ownership documents of the land occupied by the nomads.

On the other hand, Kuchi elder Sethi told Pajhwok they had been allotted the land in compliance of a presidential decree. He said the government also had the relevant record.

Provincial council chief Haseebullah Stanikzai and gubernatorial spokesman Din Mohammad Darwesh also confirmed the clash. Stanikzai also said the land belonged to the villagers. (Pajhwok)

EU's Tusk Urges Erdogan to Respect Judicial Process

BRUSSELS - Donald Tusk, president of the European Council of EU leaders, urged Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday to ensure fair treatment of recent detainees, a week after sharp exchanges between the bloc and its prospective Muslim member.

In a statement couched in diplomatic language, the former Polish prime minister said he and Erdogan discussed in a telephone call how to improve relations. He said the European Union welcomed Turkey's efforts to care for Syrian refugees.

But referring to the arrests of journalists and others close to an opponent of Erdogan, Tusk added: "We also discussed developments in Turkey, including recent detentions and the importance of an impartial and transparent process in this regard. We agreed to remain in close contact and both looked forward to a meeting at the earliest possible opportunity."

A week ago, Erdogan effectively told the EU to mind its own business after its foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and its commissioner in charge of membership negotiations described the arrests as incompatible with the bloc's democratic values.

"We have no concern about what the EU might say, whether the EU accepts us as members or not, we have no such concern," the Turkish leader had said. "Please keep your wisdom to yourself."

Mogherini had said she was especially surprised by the moves against allies of cleric Fethullah Gulen because they came just days after she led one of the highest-level EU visits to Turkey in years, aiming to revive a relationship that has been strained by European criticism of authoritarian tendencies in Ankara. The German government said Turkey should remove doubts over its "commitment to basic democratic principles" following the raids on Dec. 14, in which 24 people including executives and former police chiefs were held. On Dec. 19, an Istanbul court ordered the arrest of Gulen, who lives in the United States. Erdogan has accused Gulen, a former ally, of plotting to seize power. He has purged Gulen supporters from key positions. The statement by Tusk, who took office this month and hosted his first summit of EU leaders on Thursday, added to impressions that he plans to play a more visible role in diplomacy than his low-key Belgian predecessor Herman Van Rompuy. Turkey began negotiations to join the EU in 2005, 18 years after applying. But political obstacles, especially over the divided island of Cyprus, and resistance from powerful countries like Germany and France have slowed its progress towards membership. (Reuters)