

### (1) Daesh Activities...

activities. They first change their flag and then their fighting tactics and carry out such activities that they did in Baghlan," said Mohammad Radmanesh, deputy spokesman of MoD. (Tolonews)

### (2) Watchdog ...

stopping the practice. Kabul police however said they have not received any decree in this regard and that they continue to send girls accused of not being virgins for testing.

"There is no decree or law that prohibits virginity testing. If such a law is approved, then we will implement it," said Fraidoon Obaidi, head of the crime investigation department of the Kabul police.

Recently a young girl was accused of not being a virgin and her husband then forced her younger sister into marriage.

The girls' father said however, tests showed his daughter had been a virgin. (Tolonews)

### (3) Significant ...

and defeat Al Qaeda and its extremist allies," he said, adding that the Pentagon had since worked closely with Afghan partners to reduce the terrorist threats and give the people the opportunity to succeed.

"We have made significant gains. We assisted the Afghan government in establishing, enabling, and equipping the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), which today total more than 350,000 personnel," he said.

In April 2014, Afghanistan held a presidential election and produced a government consistent with its laws and constitution. And by the end of 2014, the ANDSF's increasing capability allowed for them to take the lead in providing security, and the US shifted to a train, advise, assist mission, Carter added.

"Today, the United States has fewer than 10,000 military personnel in the country, but we continue to lead the way in international support for Afghanistan, leading a coalition of 41 allies and partners," the secretary continued.

Carter said the Bilateral Security Agreement and Status of Forces Agreement negotiated by the Obama administration provided the foundation for a long-term relationship between the United States and NATO with Afghanistan.

In a separate memo, Secretary of State John Kerry said the US had invested "significant blood and treasure" in Afghanistan's future and it must continue to support the Afghan people as they work to build a secure and peaceful future in the months and years ahead.

"In Afghanistan, we refocused our resources to deal crippling blows to al-Qaeda core's senior leadership, we trained Afghan forces to take responsibility for their own security, and we helped the Afghan people build a more prosperous future," Kerry said.

Today, the American troops in Afghanistan were focused on training and advising Afghan forces and supporting counterterrorism operations, he added.

"We have also surged our diplomatic efforts to support Afghanistan's government, including after the

disputed presidential elections in 2014. At a time of great uncertainty that could easily have erupted into civil war, the United States helped forge agreement on an inclusive Government of National Unity to lead the country forward," he wrote. "Afghanistan is far from perfect, and it will take sustained engagement and effort in the years ahead to protect the progress we've made. But with our support, millions of Afghan boys - and particularly girls - who were not in school eight years ago are getting an education today. Afghans have cast their ballots in democratic elections and seen a peaceful transfer of power." (Pajhwok)

### (4) Afghanistan ...

don't have enough air power in Helmand," Rasul Zazai, a spokesman for the Afghan army's 215 Corps stationed in Helmand, told AFP.

Last year, Afghanistan saw intensified Taliban attacks across the country, leaving Afghan forces stretched on multiple fronts.

Around 30,000 people were displaced in Helmand alone, mostly fleeing to provincial capital Lashkar Gah, with the city still practically besieged. The roads from neighbouring districts are heavily mined by the insurgents.

"More troops mean more fighting," Mohammad Qasim, a local elder in Helmand, said of the US deployment. "It will certainly affect people and their lives. We will witness more fighting and more displacement in the spring."

The Taliban effectively control or contest 10 of the 14 districts in Helmand, the deadliest province for British and US troops over the last decade and blighted by a huge opium harvest that helps fund the insurgency. NATO officially ended its combat mission in December 2014, but US forces were granted greater powers in June to strike at the insurgents as President Barack Obama vowed a more aggressive campaign. The US still has some 8,400 troops in the country.

In early December General John Nicholson, the chief US and NATO commander in Afghanistan, said that Kabul directly controls about 64 percent of the country's population of 30 million, down slightly from 68 percent earlier in 2016. (AFP)

### (5) Baghlan...

crime the enemy has done against our people is an act against humanity and against Islam and they carry out these acts on the orders of their bosses," said Bariz.

"Eight people were killed and three others were wounded and three others escaped and we have transferred two wounded to Mazar-e-Sharif," said Amirgul Hussain Khail, Baghlan police security head. Taliban rejected any involvement in the incident but local officials linked the incident to Daesh. (Tolonews)

### (6) Attack on...

of the coalminers and said if the situation continues, the country will face a crisis.

A number of MPs said terrorists want to create discord among the people using religion and tribal issues and urged government

to investigate the issue.

Mohammad Mohaqiq, second deputy of the CEO also said on Saturday at a press conference that Daesh activities are increasing in the country and said out of 100 global terrorist groups, 20 of them are active in the country.

Abdul Satar Barez, Baghlan governor however said he will investigate the incident and will seek revenge.

"Such a crime is non-Islamic, against humanity and is shameful. They do what their supporters tell them to do," he said. (Tolonews)

### (7) Municipality...

complained.

But Ahmad Nawab, a local representative from the eighth municipality district, insisted they had been appointed by residents. He said the local representatives appointed by the municipality helped resolve local disputes, approved documents and conveyed residents' issues to authorities.

He said the municipality ignored the issue due to the services rendered by the local representatives. But at the same times, he acknowledged, some representatives misused the opportunity and asked applicants for money.

Abdul Qader Arzo, spokesman for the Kabul Municipality, said responsibilities of the representatives had not been defined. He said the municipality was working on outlining the duties of the local representatives. Arzo said 722 municipal representatives were active in 22 different areas. The spokesman asked residents to call the municipality on 155 in case of any complaint in this regard. (Pajhwok)

### (8) Forces, Taliban ...

took place. Zabihullah Mujahid the Taliban spokesman claimed seven security forces have been killed and some wounded during ongoing offensive. Mujahid did not provide information about the Taliban casualties. (Pajhwok)

### (9) Kunar Residents ...

preserving natural wealth. The cutting of forests contributed to environmental pollution and loss of resources, he observed.

Idress Gharwal, a resident Kunar who also attended the gathering, complained provincial forests had been exploited over the past three decades, but he government did not pay any attention to this issue.

He blamed some parliamentarians and mafia groups for being complicit in the practice. At the end of the protest, participants issued a five-point resolution, seeking prevention of forest cutting, new plantation drives and punishment for those involved in felling trees. (Pajhwok)

### (10) Darz Ab ...

living in Qush Tapa district, 50 kilometres west of Shibberghan, the provincial capital.

Deputy police chief Col. Abdul Hafeez Khashi confirmed the women belonged to the families whose homes were destroyed by Daesh in Darz Ab district ten days back.

He acknowledged innocent civilians from Jar village, who had no connections with government or police, were put to death by the extremist outfit. He said the cruelty of Daesh had made

the women to take arms in self-defence.

Khashi said the women had bought weapons with whatever resources they had and no assistance had provided to them by the government. The number of armed women is more than 100, living in Nawabad Jar village.

"We consider supporting the women who are up in arms and waiting for their turn to take revenge for the killing of their loved ones," he said. A month earlier, 15 women rose against Daesh in Darz Ab district. (Pajhwok)

### (11) 4 People Suffer ...

has been going on from the past several days.

He said that the verbal dispute on Friday led to armed clash that caused casualties to both sides.

"People think the land belongs to them while the nomads have occupied it days before," he said. (Pajhwok)

### (12) Fuel, Sugar...

head, Fazal Rahman, said the price of a 49-kg kilograms of sugar decreased from 2,400afis to 2,300afis. A 49kg sack of Kazakh flour cost 1,150afis, 16 litres of Khurshid ghee 1,100afis and 24.5kg bag of Pakistani rice 1,550afis, the same prices as last week's.

Haji Rahmatullah a tea merchant said a kilogram of Madina green tea cost 240afis and the same amount of African black tea 260afis. But a retailer in the Taimani area of Kabul, Ahmad Sharif, sold a 49kg bag of Kazakh flour for 1,300afis, a 59-kg sack of sugar for 2,470afis and a 24.5-kg bag of rice for 1,700afis.

He sold a 16-litre tin of Khurshid ghee for 1,170afis, a kilo of Madina green tea for 280afis and the same quantity of African black tea for 300afis -- higher than wholesale prices.

Mohammad Fawad, a jeweller in the Timor Shahi area of Kabul, said the price of one gram of Arabian gold increased from 2,200afis to 2,250afis while the same amount of the Russian variety accounted for 1,750 afghanis.

According to Sara-i-Shahzada Moneychangers Union, the buying rate of one US dollar is 66.82afis, with 1,000 Pakistani rupees accounting for 615afis. Last week's exchange value of the dollar stood at 66.85afis and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 614afis. (Pajhwok)

### (13) Trump Reiterates...

the crime and poverty in their own country" over the border.

Building a wall between the United States and Mexico has been a central and controversial part of Trump's campaign pledge, which drew support from low income voters who believe that their jobs have been taken away by Mexicans as well as ire from opponents who accused the wall as a symbol of xenophobia. Trump rhetoric regarding the controversial wall has softened since he won the election, saying in an interview in November that on parts of the border a fence would suffice. (Xinhua)

### (14) Trump Says...

Moscow staged an unprecedented attempt to influence the 2016 White House race by hacking and leaking documents that, they said in a new report, also aimed to boost Trump's campaign. (AFP)

### (15) 43 Killed

The recent attack is believed to have been carried out by the IS, which withdrew from the city in 2014, as since 2015 the city control has become shared between the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front and the Turkey-backed Free Syrian Army.

The city is highly valued as a logistical supply route close to the Turkish-Syrian border. (Xinhua)

### Netherlands Takes over NATO's Baltic Air Policing Mission

BRUSSELS - The Netherlands took over NATO's Baltic air policing mission from France, NATO said Friday.

The 43th rotation of NATO's Baltic air policing mission kicked off at a ceremony at Lithuania's Siauliai air base on Thursday.

The Royal Netherlands Air Force will patrol the skies over Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania until the end of April 2017 for a regular term of four months.

The Netherlands led the mission once before in 2005. "A task we gladly perform for the next four months to demonstrate NATO unity," said Major Gert, commander of the Royal Netherlands Air Force detachment.

NATO Baltic air policing missions have been carried out since 2004 with NATO allies taking turns deploying their interceptors and staff in the Baltic states in a four-month rotation. (Xinhua)

### UAE Nuclear Power Plant 75 Percent Complete

DUBAI - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) first nuclear energy complex is 75 percent complete, said Emirates Nuclear Energy Corporation (ENEC) on Saturday.

The government controlled ENEC in Abu Dhabi said that units three and four of the nuclear energy complex are half completed, marking the 75 percent completion of the total complex.

All four units will deliver safe, clean, reliable and efficient nuclear energy to the UAE grid, pending regulatory reviews and licensing, said ENEC in an e-mailed statement.

The Barakah nuclear energy plant, in the UAE's southwestern region Al-Gharbia, is scheduled for completion in 2020, which started construction in 2012. With four reactors online, the facility will deliver up to a quarter of the electricity needs of the UAE.

The Gulf Arab state, a major oil supplier, aims to save up to 12 million tons in carbon emissions every year through the nuclear plant which will be the first in the Arab world.

ENEC CEO Mohamed Al Hammadi hailed hard work of the construction team, referring to the latest successful achievement of these milestones for units three and four. (Xinhua)

### Iraqi Forces Close in on Tigris in IS Stronghold Mosul

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Special Forces closed in on the Tigris river that runs through central Mosul on Saturday, advancing in parallel with

other troops and forcing Islamic State to retreat in its last major stronghold in the country.

Turkey and Iraq meanwhile came to an agreement over a demand for the withdrawal of Turkish forces from an area close to Mosul, Baghdad said, as the two regional powers sought to improve ties after a spat last year over Ankara's military deployment.

Turkey's prime minister did not say a deal had been reached, but that the issue was discussed and would be resolved.

Advances by Iraqi forces in recent days, including Saturday's push to within several hundred meters (yards) of the Tigris, involved an unprecedented nighttime assault by elite forces and have driven the ultra-hardline militant group out of several areas east of the river. (Reuters)

### UK Envoy Who Quit Top EU Post Resigns from Civil Service

LONDON - A senior British diplomat who warned that negotiating a European Union exit could take 10 years has quit the civil service, days after stepping down as the U.K.'s envoy to the bloc, the government said Saturday.

Ivan Rogers unexpectedly resigned as Britain's permanent representative in Brussels on Tuesday, months before divorce talks are due to start, fueling opposition claims that the government's plans for Britain's EU exit are in disarray.

Rogers came under pressure following last month's leak of his suggestion that it could take up to a decade to strike a new trade deal. Politicians who support Brexit called him overly negative. Tim Barrow, a former U.K. ambassador to Russia, has been appointed to replace him.

In a farewell email that was leaked to the media, Rogers told his staff to beware of politicians' "ill-founded arguments and muddled thinking."

Britain's Foreign Office said Rogers had not sought a new post, "and has therefore resigned from the civil service with immediate effect." (AP)

### Turkmenistan Plans to Transit Carbamide Via Azerbaijan in 2017

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan will transit 300,000 tons of carbamide through Azerbaijan in 2017, Azerbaijan Railways CJSC said in a message.

Azerbaijan Railways actively participates in implementation of the projects of international transportation corridors, important for Azerbaijan, the main task of which is to attract transit cargo from Central and East Asia to Europe and back, according to the message.

"An important part of bringing the cargo traffic to Azerbaijan is the cooperation with the Baku International Sea Trade Port, which led to test transportation of carbamide from Turkmenistan to the Black Sea via Azerbaijan in December 2016," reads the message.

"The cargo was delivered by ships to the Baku terminal and then it was sent to Georgia by rail. The test transportation of cargo was successfully carried out and it is planned to ship 300,000 tons of carbamide via the same route in 2017." (Trend)