

## Quote of the Day

The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home.  
Confucius

# Landmines Continue to Take 112 Lives Each Month

KABUL - In the past two decades, 77 percent of Afghanistan's land was cleared of landmines that continue to take about 112 Afghans' lives each month in around 1,600 villages.

Marking the International Mine Awareness Day, State Minister for Natural Disasters Management, Wais Barmak told a ceremony that more than 19 million landmines had been cleared from 2,710 villages in 117 districts during the past two and a half decades.

He said so far about 1,000 deminers had been killed or injured and 565 others kidnapped but released with mediation of local tribal elders.

However, Barmak said 4,200 different are-



as (an estimated 611 kilometers square area) in 1,570 villages remained contaminated with landmines.

The Afghan government has evolved a five-year plan for demining all the remaining areas, a plan that required \$550 million to be implemented, Barmak said.

He said surveys, clearing landmines, creating awareness about the dangers of landmines, destroying bomb depots and assisting families of the victims were among primary goals of the five-year plan.

The plan was signed between Barmak and representatives of demining firms during the ceremony today.

Acknowledging decrease in support for the demining process, ... (More on P4)...(1)

## Italy Pledges 40m Euros for Herat-Khawaf Railroad

HERAT CITY - The Italian government has pledged contributing another 40 million Euros in aid for completion of the fourth phase of the Herat-Khawaf railroad between western city of Herat and Iran, the Herat governor's house said Sunday.

A statement from the governor's house to Pajhwok Afghan News said Italian Ambassador Luciano Pezzotti pledged his country's assistance during a meeting with Herat Governor Mohammad Asif Rahimi.

With the latest pledge, Italy's aid for the railroad project will be reaching 70 million Euros.

A contract to the effect would be signed soon between the Italian foreign minister and the Afghan finance minister, the statement said.

Italy ... (More on P4)...(2)

## Police Ready for Spring Offensive in the North: Gen. Baba Jan

MAZAR-I-SHARIF - A senior security official on Sunday said they would not let the enemies implement their disruptive plans in the northern zone. The 707th Pamir Zone police commander, Gen. Baba Jan, told a meeting with civil society activists that enhanced coordination among security organs and people's cooperation with them could strength the forces in the northern zone.

He said Taliban militants adopted different strategies to disrupt the security of the zone, but they could not succeed. He said the insurgents wanted to target influential figures and attack checkpoints to capture some districts, but they failed. He said they had prepared plans with new tactics for the spring operations and the plans would be executed in the near future. A civil society activist in Mazar-i-Sharif, Yazdan Parast, supported the Afghan security personnel, saying security in the north could positively impact the security of the whole country. The security forces should prevent a Kunduz-like debacle and should preempt Taliban attacks on them, he suggested. (Pajhwok)

He said the council wanted the unity government leaders to resolve their differences and keep the country on track.

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## New Parliamentary Group Formed in Meshrano Jirga



KABUL - A second parliamentary group was Sunday formally announced on the Meshrano Jirga or Senate premises named as "National Solidarity" bloc.

Senator Nisar Ahmad Haris from Kabul, the spokesman of the group, told the upper house general session that the group included 40 lawmakers.

He said the bloc was created to make efforts at ensuring justice, preserving national unity and promoting peace and intensifying the anti-corruption fight and strengthening relations between the house and the government.

"It is difficult for one or two persons to work for the country's ... (More on P4)...(3)

## Govt. Asked to Replace Acting Officials Forthwith

KABUL - A coalition of jihadi and political parties on Sunday expressed concern over running government entities by acting heads and asked the government to take urgent steps for their replacement.

A member of the High Council of Jihadi and National Parties of Afghanistan, Zabihullah Mujaddedi, told a press conference here that they were concerned about back to back resignations by high ranking officials.

Also chief of his own party "Jabha-i-Mili Nijat of Afghanistan, Mujaddedi said "in a democratic set up, officials resign when they feel they are



not effective and leave their posts to successors who can better perform.

He said the council was concerned that the Afghan of-

ficials had resigned under pressure from the government. He said the council was hopeful the government would appoint experienced

and professional officials. He said the council wanted the unity government leaders to resolve their differences and keep the country on track.

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## Afghan Air Force Increases Air Strikes

KABUL - Officials said Sunday the Afghan Air Force has increased its air attacks in a bid to suppress militants and increase effectiveness of military operations in many parts of the country. TOLONews reporter Abdul Wali Arian, who visited an air force base in Kabul, said there were very few planes at the base as most of them were out conducting air raids against insurgents in various parts of Afghanistan.

"We join night operations, besides day operations and we will eliminate terrorists," said one air force pilot, Mohammad Ayan.

It is believed that air raids have played a vital role in tackling Taliban and Daesh rebels in Helmand and Nangarhar provinces.

Another military pilot, Habibullah Mahmoudi, said: "We are ready for any kind of operation. We conduct flights during the day and we ... (More on P4)...(7)

## Zamir Farmers, Agro-Product Processors to Get \$6m Credit

KABUL - Up to \$6 million would be provided in credit to farmers and processors of agricultural products during the current year, the minister of agriculture announced on Sunday.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) to the effect was signed among Minister of Agriculture Asadullah Zamir, Afghan Rural Finance Company (ARFC) CEO Hashmat Sayar Amarkhel and First Microfinance Bank (FMFB) Chief Financial Officer Faburama Ceasay.

Zamir said during the signing ceremony the money would be given in credit to growers, small entrepreneurs, producers and processors of agricultural products through the two organisations by the end of current solar year (till March 20). ... (More on P4)...(10)

## I Can't be Removed by Force: Balk Governor

KABUL - The governor of northern Balkh province, asserting his massive public following, has said he cannot be removed from his position by force.

In an interview published in The New York Times on Sunday, Atta Muhammad Noor said would be ready to quit as soon as Ashraf Ghani reappointed him to the slot.

He was effectively fired 18 months ago when the president announced the sacking all governors. However, the powerful political actor has refused to resign the job he has held since



2004. "I should be given my approval letter from the president...then we decide about it," said the former jihadi leader, whose loyalists recently clashed

with supporters of Vice-President Abdul Rashid Dostum. A week back, backers of both strongmen rallied in Mazar-i-Sharif ... (More on P4)...(5)

## Peace Can't be Brought through War: Muslimyar

KABUL - Meshrano Jirga or Senate chairman Fazal Hadi Muslimyar on Sunday welcomed peace talks with the Gulbuddin Hekmatyar-led Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA). A HIA team has currently been in capital Kabul for peace talks. The delegation a day earlier said the HIA supports women's rights given to them by Islam.

The HIA delegation headed by Eng. Amin Karim and Attiqullah Sapi had met High Peace Council (HPC) Chairman Pir Syed Ahmad Gilani on ways of ending the ongoing war. "We have to wait for the outcome



of the dialogue between the HIA and the HPC. We support peace in Afghanistan. HIA members are Afghans, they should also come and accept the laws and regulations of the country," ... (More on P4)...(8)

## HIA Supports Women's Role in Political Arena

KABUL - A team of the Gulbuddin Hekmatyar-led-Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), currently in capital Kabul for peace talks, has said the party supports women's rights as envisioned by Islam.

The second largest rebel group after the Taliban, HIA promised supporting and striving for the protection of women's rights in political, social and economic spheres in line with Islamic teachings.

Earlier, the group headed by Eng. Amin Karim and Attiqullah Sapi met High Peace Council (HPC)

Chairman Pir Syed Ahmad Gilani on the launch of formal peace negotiations on ways of ending the ongoing war.

The delegates said the HIA had joined peace parleys in response to an invitation from the Afghan government. The talks were aimed to ensure revival of the national will, an Islamic system and socio-economic justice.

At a meeting with members of HPC, civil society, parliament and women rights activists, Karim said: ... (More on P4)...(11)

## Terror Threat on the Rise in the Region, Warns Karzai



KABUL - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) on Sunday expressed concern over rising threats from terrorist and armed groups to the region including Afghanistan, saying joint cooperation was needed

in dealing with the challenge. Speaking at a meeting on counterterrorism measures, organised by the Heart of Asia, Istanbul Process, Deputy Foreign Minister, Hekmat Khalil ... (More on P4)...(9)

## Minister of Counter Narcotics Explains 2nd 100 Day Plan

KABUL - Afghan Minister of Counter Narcotics Salamat Azimi on Saturday outlined her 2nd 100 Day program and said that the ministry is determined to come up with more inclusive programs during 1395 to combat the cultivation, production and smuggling of drugs..

She said that the current resources available to her ministry weren't sufficient to fight drugs effectively, calling on the other relevant ministries to come forward and help the ministry of counter narcotics to achieve its objectives in fighting drug trafficking and production. Salamat is the first cabinet minister



to outline her program for the new year. She also outlined the efforts to address the challenges facing addicts in addition to boosting the capacity of the ... (More on P4)...(12)