

Quote of the Day

Reading, after a certain age, diverts the mind too much from its creative pursuits. Any man who reads too much and uses his own brain too little falls into lazy habits of thinking.

Albert Einstein (1879 - 1955)

Constitution

The Loya Jirga in its first session elects from among its members a chairperson, a deputy-chair, and a secretary and an assistant secretary.

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Durable Peace in Afghanistan My Top Priority: Ghani

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani has vowed to establish durable peace in the country even if it costs him his life. In a meeting with members of Grand Ulama Council on Friday, the president said sincere efforts were underway to remove obstacles in the way of peace.

A statement from the Presidential Palace said that Ulama lauded Ghani's decision to stand by Saudi Arabia on the Yemen crisis.

Ulama stressed the need for peace and stability in Afghanistan, saying, the teaching of Prophet Mohammed (PBUH) directed the humanity to resolve issues through peaceful ways. They also condemned the brutal killing of Farkhunda in Kabul and laud-



ed the position of Presidential Palace to investigate her murder and punish the perpetrators involved in this inhuman act.

The president praised the role of Ulama in the nation and country's building.

The defence of the two holy places is the duty of every Muslim, he said, adding: "I made it clear during my speech to the US Congress that a handful of terrorists did not represent Islam."

The president assured his government was committed to ensure peace in the country at all cost. A commission led by Maulvi Muhayyuddin Baloch had been formed ... (More on P4)...(1)

Tajik-Afghan-Pak Delegation Meet up to Conclude Trade Agreement



KABUL - Delegations from Afghanistan and Pakistan met in Dushanbe, Tajikistan capital city, on Thursday to reach conclusive decisions on the trilateral transit agreement.

The Afghan-Pak Trade Transit Agreement (APTA) was signed between Pakistan and Afghanistan in 2010, based on which Afghan traders can ex-

port their goods to other countries through Pakistan.

In July 2012, Pakistan had proposed to include Tajikistan in the transit trade agreement with Afghanistan to convert it into a trilateral accord and extend the trade to the entire region.

United States Agency for International Development ... (More on P4)...(2)

Afghanistan Intends to Buy Mi-35 Attack Helicopters from Russia



KABUL - The Afghan government intends to buy Mi-35 attack helicopters from Russia in a bid to boost the capabilities of the Afghan Air Force. Shakir Kargar, special envoy to President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) countries, said negotiations regarding the purchase of Mi-35 helicopters will begin in the near future.

"We intend to buy Mi-35 helicopters from Russia. This issue is on the agenda. I think we will begin negotiations on that in the nearest future," Kargar quoted by Interfax said.

Kargar further added that the Afghan government will also buy guns, cartridges and other munitions from Russia. He said Afghan armed forces are equipped with ... (More on P4)...(4)

Govt. Waits for Azerbaijani Investments

BAKU - The government of Afghanistan is waiting for Azerbaijani investments, Minister of Mines and Petroleum Daud Shah Saba told Trend on Thursday, commenting on the talks in Baku.

"Azerbaijan and Afghanistan have agreed to use the full potential to intensify cooperation," he said. "I hope that this visit will contribute to increasing the level of cooperation, in particular create opportunities for Azerbaijani investments in Afghanistan."

Daud Shah Saba and Special Representative of President of Afghanistan ... (More on P4)...(5)

Abdullah Visits Protest Camp Seeking Release of 31 Hostages

KABUL - The Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah visited the protest camp of civil society members and families of 31 abducted passengers on Friday in Zarnigar Park of Kabul.

He once again promised the sit-in protesters to put all efforts for the release of hostages being held for about two months by the unknown gunmen.

"What is more important to us is the safe release of hostages," Abdullah said following criticisms accusing the government of inaction to rescue the abductees.

In order to make the protesters sure about government's efforts for the release of abduct-



ees, Abdullah asked the civil society activists and the families of hostages to send their representative to the National Security Council (NSC) meeting where top government officials including security authorities discuss

the matter.

Regarding the alleged demand of kidnapers for prisoners' swap, Abdullah - who has repeatedly opposed release of prisoners accused of insurgency - warned that "the

release of prisoners in exchange for hostages must not become a tradition."

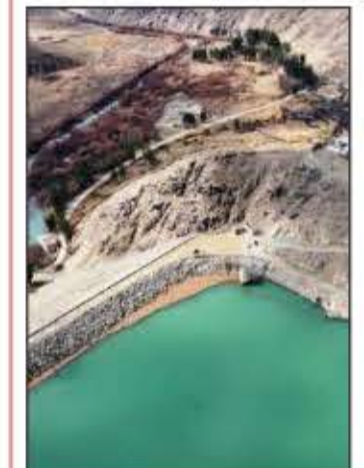
Yesterday, the head of provincial council of Zabul, Attaullah, told TOLONews that the kidnapers had demanded the release of 12 prisoners currently detained by the Afghan government in exchange for the 31 hostages.

However, the National Security Council has reportedly rejected the demand.

At least 31 passengers were kidnapped on February 24 along the Kabul-Kandahar highway, but their fate is still uncertain. Since the abduction, ... (More on P4)...(3)

Dahla Dam's Height Increase Project Hits Snag

KANDAHAR CITY - The project to raise Dahla Dam, the largest in southern Kandahar province, has been stalled for some reasons, but the project's first phase is 80 percent complete and the remaining is to be finished over the next two months, an official said on Thursday.



Kandahar Irrigation Director, Eng. Sher Mohammad Attaee, told Pajhwok Afghan News during an exclusive interview that the dam's reconstruction project has two phases.

"The phase one includes construction of the dam's small and big gates, valve house and extension of the outlet tunnel and phase-2 is raising the dam by eight metres," he said.

Attaee said the project phase-1 had been completed by 80 percent and the remaining would be completed over the next two months. The total cost on the phase-1 is estimated at \$71 million being provided by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID).

The contractor for the phase-1 is a Turkish company, which has been effectively carrying out its activities, according to Attaee.

He said completion of the phase-1 would prevent the dam's water from being wasted and would pave the ground for launching the phase-2, which has been halted for the time being.

Once the dam is raised by eight metres, six more supporting dams would be constructed along it besides construction of the dam's gates. It would help increase the dam's power-producing capacity, he said.

These activities would cost \$308 million, to which the Ministry of Finance would contribute \$37 million and the rest by USAID.

He said it had been decided ... (More on P4)...(7)

Ajmal Obaid Abidi Ghani to Take Action against MoD Fuel Contract Scandal

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman said that the government is committed to bring officials involved in Ministry of Defense (MoD) fuel contract scandal to justice after the oversight committee revealed corruption that totals about \$100 million.

Ajmal Obaid Abidi told TOLONews that Ghani was seriously following the case which discovered many former and current senior government of-



officials involved in the scandal. "The committee assigned by President Ghani to investigate the agreements has presented its report to the president, and

the president will make a decision based on the suggestions by the committee and this is our commitment," Abidi said. The ... (More on P4)...(6)

Thousand Families Displaced in Qaisar Fighting

MAIMANA - Three localities in Qaisar district of northern Faryab province have fallen to insurgents amid intense fighting for the last two days, officials said Thursday.

Col. Nizamuddin, police chief for Qaisar district, told Pajhwok Afghan News a group of insurgents attacked the district and managed to take hold of Bazar-



i-Charshanbe, Chechketo, and Kata-o-Lang locality.

Intense fighting was still ongoing between security forces and insurgents, he informed. He said a back-up force was needed in the area otherwise there was a possibility of the entire district falling to rebels.

Nizamuddin said in the last two days at least 70 Taliban insurgents, including their commanders, have died in the battle. He acknowledged four local police were also killed and eight others wounded in the gun battle. Abdul Jamil Sediqi, the town's administrative chief, however, said only Kata-o-Lang locality had fallen to insurgents. He said more than 1,000 families have also been displaced due to clashes. Mohammad Sediqi, resident of Gawdar locality, said: "I have left my house with my family members and we are going to the centre for refuge." Taliban spokesperson Qari Yusuf Ahmadi said his fighters seized four security check posts in Kata-o-Lang and the fighting was ongoing. (Pajhwok)

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