

Jalalabad Partly Cloudy 35°C 18°C	Ghazni Partly Cloudy 24°C 9°C	Kandahar Clear 34°C 17°C	Mazar Chance of Rain 19°C 12°C	Herat Cloudy 25°C 13°C	Bamayan Partly Cloudy 13°C 1°C	Kabul Partly Cloudy 20°C 7°C	Daily Outlook Weather Forecast
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CEO's Office Promises Next Elections will be Free and Fair

KABUL - The Office of the CEO on Wednesday reaffirmed government's commitment to conducting future elections in a free, fair and transparent manner while election observers and monitoring groups warned against past mistakes being repeated.

"One thing I want to assure the people about is that the upcoming elections will be much better than the previous one. We will not repeat the failed experience again," said Jawed Faisal, deputy spokesman for the CEO.

Meanwhile, some election observers and election monitoring groups have warned government against repeating past mistakes.

"In the past there were prob-



lems in terms of delivering sufficient ballot papers and also security in certain areas was fragile; these problems must be the red lines and serious work must be done on these issues," said Sayed Ekram Afzali, chairman of Integrity Watch Afghanistan.

In addition, the Independent Election Commission

(IEC) has said that for the first time it has prepared the legal framework for the assessment of polling centers.

Wasima Badghisi, operational deputy of IEC, said the legal framework will further boost the credibility and legitimacy of the elections and it will help remove ghost polling centers.

She said that the new legal framework, which is the first of its kind in elections in Afghanistan, will determine the exact number of polling stations in each province.

"We have prepared the material for the assessment of polling centers; once the budget issue is finalized, we will start the assessment of the polling centers," said Wasima. *... (More on P4)... (8)*

Strongmen Build Houses on Land Allotted to Teachers

MAHMOOD RAQI - Education officials in central Kapisa province say some powerful individuals have illegally occupied land for a township for teachers in Alasai district.

The education department's property officer confirmed to Pajhwok Afghan News local strongmen had unlawfully constructed houses on 36 acres of land allotted to teachers in the district.

He accused the district administration of taking no measures to resolve the problem. The official has sent district officials several letters to expose the occupants, but the authorities concerned have not cooperated on the issue.

The property officer believed security concerns in Alasai prevented the district administration from stopping the illegal constructions.

Ghulam Naqashband Sapi, the *... (More on P4)... (9)*

'Pakistan Resumes Building Security Post in Angoor Ada'

SHARANA - Pakistani forces on Wednesday once again started construction of a security post in the Angoor Ada border area, officials in southeastern Paktika province said.

Quadratullah, head of Angoor Ada Tribal Council, told Pajhwok Afghan News the Pakistani forces resumed construction works near mountain of Zawabi area of Angoor Ada this morning.

He said Afghan and Pakistani border forces had amassed on their respective side of the border and a skirmish was likely to occur.

"People have left their shops in the area fearing a possible *... (More on P4)... (10)*

US Troops May Not be Needed by 2020: Mohib



KABUL - Afghan Ambassador to the United States Hamdullah Mohib raised the possibility that the US occupation of Afghanistan, which began in 2001, might finally be nearing an end, and that it was at least possible the US occupation could end by 2020.

The hope that the US might be able to leave is very tentative, however, as Mohib made it conditional on the assumption that the Afghan military "will be able to have what they need to carry on the fight on their own for the most part", Anti War reported.

This is not the first time the Afghan military was expected to be ready to handle the Taliban, of course.

Rampant corruption and flagging morale have hindered that time and again, however, with a significant portion of Afghanistan's military dogged by "ghost troops" that exist only on paper, and *... (More on P4)... (12)*

Afghanistan to Launch Cricket League within Next Few Months

KABUL - The chairman of Afghanistan's Cricket Board, Atif Mashal, said in an interview with TOLONews that Afghanistan would launch its own cricket league within the next few months.

He said the league will be called the Afghanistan Premier League, and would be designed along the lines of the Indian Premier League (IPL) and other high-level cricket leagues in the world.

He said the league matches would be held in the United Arab Emirates with the participation of international players.

Mashal also said that the construction of a professional cricket stadium in Kabul is on the cards and is one of their priorities this year.

"The Afghan Premier League is good news for Afghans. The league will be held in the [United Arab] Emirates at the end of this year or at the beginning of the new year," Mashal said.

"Afghanistan Cricket Board annually receives more than \$8.5 million USD from government, the International Cricket Council and Alokozay Group of Companies and other companies for improvement of the sport in the country."

"The league is important for Afghans because it will provide financial facilities for team members and basically the national cricket team members will play with the world's best players," Mashal stated.

He said he believes that the national team's recent achievements *... (More on P4)... (13)*

Taliban Capture Strategic Area of Balcharagh District

MAIMANA - Local officials in northwestern Faryab province acknowledged on Wednesday the Taliban had captured a strategic area in Balcharagh district, forcing the security personnel to beat a retreat.

Police spokesman Abdul Karim Yourish told Pajhwok Afghan News the security forces retreated after launching a clearing operation in Aqbalagh locality, where Daesh commander Qari Hikmatullah and his loyalists attacked them.

The security forces had moved back to avoid casualties, the police spokesman said, claiming the militants suffered heavy losses in the overnight clash. "Gunship helicopters hit militant positions in the area at around 11:00am and ground forces are advancing to establish fresh posts."

Yourish claimed one Daesh commander was injured while two of his associates were killed during the firefight. A local security official was also killed and a second injured.

Nokor, a local uprising commander, accused some police personnel of



having links with the Taliban. "For a week now, fighting has been ongoing on the outskirts of Aqbalagh. 10 police tanks arrived in the area and returned after 24 hours. The policemen sold seven boxes of bullets to militants before returning."

The police spokesman, however, rejected the claim as baseless and blasted *... (More on P4)... (11)*

NDS Arrest 6 Suspects of Major Terrorist Attacks



KABUL - A group of six militants involved in major terrorist attacks in Afghanistan were arrested by the provincial intelligence directorate operatives in Kandahar, local reports said.

The National Directorate of Security (NDS) in Kandahar said the militants were arrested during a special military operation after their

At Least Five Killed in Kabul Explosion

KABUL - At least five people were killed on Wednesday afternoon in a suicide bombing in Kabul city.

A security source said the attack took place in front of the presidential palace's administrative affairs office, which is close to the PD2 headquarters and the defense ministry.

Eyewitnesses said two presidential palace guards are among those killed.

Photographers at the scene also reported that presidential palace guards (PPS) had deleted their photographs.

The Ministry of Interior said earlier a suicide bomber on foot had detonated explosives.

The presidential palace issued a statement Wednesday afternoon condemning the suicide bombing in Kabul.

The statement said: "Terrorist groups cannot attain their nefarious ends by creating fear among the people."

President Ashraf Ghani said in the statement the enemies of Afghanistan are targeting people along highways, in cities, in mosques and schools because they are against development and stability.

He extended his condolences to the *... (More on P4)... (15)*

No Evidence of Russian Visit to Taliban in Uruzgan: MoI

KABUL - The Ministry of Interior (MoI) on Wednesday said it had no evidence that Russian military officers met with Taliban representatives in Uruzgan province recently.

The statement comes a day after Uruzgan police chief Ghulam Farooq Sangari claimed that eleven Russian military officers, including two generals and two female doctors, met Taliban officials in Uruzgan.

In response to the claims, the ministry of interior has said it has no knowledge of such a meeting in the province.

"We once again call on the Uruzgan police chief to provide us with further explanations and give us more information, but the ministry



of interior has no information about the presence of Russian military in Afghanistan," said MoI spokesman Najib Danish.

But Uruzgan police chief said in a telephonic interview with TOLONews earlier this week there were intelligence reports which indicated that the Russian military delegation had met with the Taliban near Trinkot city, the center of Uruzgan province.

"They (Russian officers) met the Taliban to train them in tactical maneuvers, and planting of mines, this is the information which has been traced by our intelligence organs in Uruzgan, *... (More on P4)... (16)*

'Russians Spotted in Taliban Ranks in Uruzgan

TIRINKOT - Russian mentors have been seen with Taliban militants operating just 10 kilometres from Tirinkot, the capital of central Uruzgan province, an official claimed on Tuesday.

Police chief Brig. Gen. Ghulam Farooq Sangari told Pajhwok Afghan News Russian trainers had been spotted in Taliban ranks recently, a claimed the provincial governor rejected.

He said the Russians disguised as health workers were training and providing military assistance to the Taliban.

Sangari claimed two women were 11 Russians helping the Taliban



near Tirinkot.

Provincial Council head Amir Mohammad Barakzai confirmed Sangari's claim and said the Russian

trainers had been previously seen in Darfeshan area a few months earlier.

He said the Russians had filmed military installations which the Taliban captured from Afghan security forces.

Governor Nazir Kharotai said they had investigated the rumors that some people in Taliban ranks spoke foreign language.

He said their investigation showed there were no Russians among the Taliban.

The Taliban and Russia have acknowledged their contact but Moscow has strongly rejected it supplied *... (More on P4)... (17)*