

Quote of the Day

Experience teaches only the teachable.

Aldous Huxley (1894 - 1963)

Afghanistan's Security, Iran's Core Policy: Zarif

KABUL - At a meeting with Afghanistan's National Security Advisor Haneef Atmar in Tehran on Saturday, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that progress and security of Afghanistan are among the Islamic Republic's core policies, according to Iranian media. Zarif said that the Iranian and Afghan people enjoy cordial relations. "Afghanistan is a friend neighbor of the Islamic Republic of Iran and progress and security of this country are regarded as Iran's progress and security," he said.



He urged the two countries to further strengthen cooperation in all sectors. Zarif pointed to an order by the Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei about schooling for Afghan children in Iran and said: "This issue indicates that we believe in Afghanistan's progress and development at the highest level." In January, during a meeting with CEO Abdulla Abdullah, Khamenei ordered that all Afghan children in Iran be permitted to attend school regardless of their residency ... (More on P4)...(1)

Hostage Crew: 'Taliban Want Prisoner Swap with Pakistan'



KABUL - Some sources close to Taliban insurgents on Sunday said the rebels had asked Pakistan to release some of their key prisoners in exchange for a helicopter crew they held hostage after their helicopter crashed in central Logar province on Thursday.

The Pakistani MI-17 helicopter belonging to the government of Punjab province crash landed in Azra district of Logar on Thursday afternoon and Taliban militants held hostage six Pakistani military officers and a Russian national onboard after the crash.

Pakistan says the copter was on its way to Uzbekistan for maintenance and the Afghan government has granted permission for that.

The Ministry of Defense (MoD) and the Presidential Palace had also confirmed Pakistan sought permission to transport the copter through Afghanistan and the President Ashraf Ghani during Saturday's National Security Council (NSC) meeting appointed two commissions to investigate the incident. There has been formally no word from Taliban insurgents about the incident, but a source close to the rebels told ... (More on P4)...(3)

ANA Soldiers Plead for Food, Weapons in Helmand



LASHKARGAH - As fierce fighting continues in the volatile southern province of Helmand, reports have emerged that dozens of security force members have been killed while fighting the Taliban. In a video posted to social media, soldiers tell how little food and water they have.

In the video, the soldier who speaks says they are on the frontline of the battle without adequate weapons and that the little food they get daily, shown on the video, is meant to feed four men.

He blasted commanders and high-ranking military leaders for not addressing their concerns.

"We cannot sleep during the day nor during the night; they do not supply us with enough weapons and soldiers survive only on eating bread. We are battling on the frontline, but others (commanders) enjoy life in air conditioned rooms," said the unnamed soldier.

This comes at a critical juncture amid an escalating war in Helmand. Reports indicate that up to 70 ANSF soldiers have ... (More on P4)...(7)

HIA Optimistic about Concluding Peace Deal with Kabul



KABUL - The Gulbadin Hekmatyar-led Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) has claimed the Afghan government had assured them that the peace deal would be finalized this time.

A statement issued by the HIA's political wing said peace talks with the Afghan government had been finalized, the draft agreement was also final and ready for signature but it had to be delayed for some issues. The statement said the government now showed willingness to finalise the deal and had invited the HIA delegation to Kabul. During the delegation's visit, date and venue for concluding the peace deal would be announced, it said.

Earlier, the Afghan government and HIA after two months of negotiations ... (More on P4)...(4)

Herat Court Sentences 14 Men to Death

HERAT CITY - The Herat Primary Court on Sunday sentenced 14 men to death on charges of kidnapping and murder, local officials said.

Another four were sentenced to between 20 and 25 years in prison.

According to the NDS office in Herat, 18 men involved in a 25-member gang were arrested. The gang is allegedly led by a cleric.

Mohammad Shoaib Ibrahim, head of the Herat Primary Court, said the suspects had been responsible for a spate of kidnappings in Herat. They released 10 hostages after being paid ransom but had killed others when no ransom was paid.

"The accusations were proven against the suspects and the men were sentenced to death by the primary court of Herat," ... (More on P4)...(5)

Qahraman Warns Against Underestimating Helmand Conflict

LASHKARGAH - Abdul Jabbar Qahraman, former head of the military operation for Helmand, on Sunday warned the Afghan government and security institutions against underestimating the ongoing insurgency in the volatile province.

Looking skeptical about government's counter-insurgency policy, Qahraman blasted government over what he called a lack of commitment to end the Helmand turmoil and restore peace.

New reports from the warfront in Helmand illustrates that currently up to five districts in the area are under the complete control of the Taliban. This comes as the group's efforts to extend their operations continues to ... (More on P4)...(8)

Afghan Forces Leadership has Improved: NATO

KABUL - NATO's resolute support mission on Sunday said the Afghan national defence and security forces' leadership had improved this year as compared to last year.

Resolute Support (RS) mission spokesman Swedish Army's Colonel Col. Par Zakariasson expressed these views during an interview with Pajhwok Afghan News.

Col. Par Zakariasson said the Afghan national defence forces had seen improvement especially in their leadership compared to past years.

Foreign forces in Afghanistan have been complaining of is-



sues plaguing Afghan forces' leadership over the past two years. But the NATO spokesman said be-

cause of the RS training mission, the Afghan forces' leadership considerably ... (More on P4)...(2)

29,000 Individuals Languishing in Jails: MoI

KABUL - As many as 28,623 people are currently held in 37 prisons on different charges across the country, an official of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said on Sunday.

Lt. Gen. Abdul Alim Kohistani, head of MoI detention centers, told Pajhwok Afghan News the inmates had neither completed their jail terms nor their cases had been tried yet. Of the 28,623 detainees, 20,872 are criminals and 7,751 others suspects.

He added 5,403 of the detainees were involved in drug-related crimes and 446 detained for misusing their authority and dereliction of duty.



Kohistani added there was no political prisoner in the country. He said 5,498 of the detainees posed a threat to security. Those with different vocational skills have been

provided with work opportunities, but 80 percent of their income went to the government. He did not provide information about the ... (More on P4)...(6)

Govt. Blasted for Not Assessing Police Chiefs Cases

KABUL - A number of MPs on Sunday criticized government for not assessing the cases of former Wardak Police Chief Khalilullah Andarabi and former Helmand Police Chief Abdul Rahman Sarjang.

Andarabi is accused of cooperating with Taliban, while Sarjang is accused of corruption and presence of 'ghost soldiers' in Helmand province. Abdullah Akhundzada, a member of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) said a number of circles inside government and members of the Wolesi Jirga are backing the two officials and are stopping their cases from being sent to court. "A number of ministers, some figures in the presidential palace and some officials in the National Security Council are supporting them [the two ... (More on P4)...(9)

5-Year Plan for Financial Management Reform Launched

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani on Sunday has officially launched a five-year 'Public Financial Management Reform Plan' in line with a promise held out to the international community at the London Conference.

As part of the plan, the government will try to ensure transparency in its financial system and proper utilisation of funds through by reforming the financial sector, controlling the budget and overseeing national revenue.

During Saturday's launching ceremony at the Presidential Palace,



Finance Minister Eklil Hakimi said the plan would be first implemented by his ministry before it was

extend to other government institutions. The initiative is part of the national development framework shared with the private sector, civil society and international partners, according to Hakimi, who said it would be presented at the Brussels Conference.

A statement from the Palace said President Ghani promised stepping up efforts to bring necessary reforms to financial management. "We have managed to increase our budget by 22% despite challenging conditions. We can definitely double this amount." (Pajhwok)



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