

Jalalabad Clear 21°C 4°C	Ghazni Partly Cloudy 6°C -6°C	Kandahar Partly Cloudy 12°C -2°C	Mazar Clear 12°C 3°C	Herat Clear 12°C 1°C	Bamayan Clear -2°C -10°C	Kabul Clear 12°C -3°C
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Daily Outlook Weather Forecast

Pakistan

Diplomatic Efforts for Peace Process Revival Set in Motion

ISLAMABAD - Senior Afghan, Pakistani, U.S. and Chinese officials are scheduled to meet in coming days to explore ways for the revival of stalled peace dialogue between the Afghan government and the Taliban, a top Pakistani adviser has said. The genuine efforts to facilitate the Afghan reconciliation were culminated with the "Heart of Asia" Conference in Islamabad on Dec. 9 when a quadrilateral process was agreed to restart the peace process. Diplomatic efforts by the major stakeholders are necessary as concerns are fast growing for further intensified war if the Taliban declares their



so-called "Spring Offensive" in late March or in early April. There would be genuine concerns about the instability in Afghanistan if the peace efforts could not stop the Taliban's major offensive. Senior Afghan leaders told participants of a non-official security dialogue process between Pakistan and Afghanistan in Kabul this week that there is a "window of opportunity" in the coming four months to push for the peace process to stop the Taliban's major attacks before the weather warms up. Pakistan Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz ... (More on P4)...(7)

Taliban Offensive Enabled by Sanctuaries in Pakistan: Ex-US Defense Official

KABUL - A former top American defense official has said the Taliban offensive in Afghanistan is enabled by the group's safe havens situated in the neighboring Pakistan besides an internecine struggle among different Taliban factions playing a role in the growing violence. "At the hands of the Taliban. This offensive is enabled by sanctuaries in Pakistan. And it has also been enabled by an internecine struggle among different Taliban factions and with a new factor in Afghanistan, Da'esh, the Islamic State, which is seeking inroads there as well," David Sedney told PBS during an interview published on Sunday. Sedney has served as deputy assistant secretary of defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan and Central Asia from 2009 to 2013. He said the insurgency activities by the Taliban group should be halted, insisting on peace talks between the Afghan government and Taliban. Sedney also warned that violence will persist and more will die if the Afghans are not assisted in their fight against the Taliban-led insurgency. "The Afghan forces have done very well. But we built a large Afghan army. And the numbers ... (More on P4)...(8)

Taliban Reject Report of Mansoor-Putin Meeting

KABUL - Taliban on Monday rejected the report of a meeting between their Supreme Leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour and Russian President Vladimir Putin. "A British newspaper 'The Sunday Times' published a report claiming that the leader of Islamic Emirate, Amir ul Mumineen Mullah Akhtar Muhammad Mansour, held a meeting in Tajikistan in the month of September with the Russian president Vladimir Putin." Stated a statement released by the group on Monday. "We categorically reject this claim. The leader of Islamic Emir-

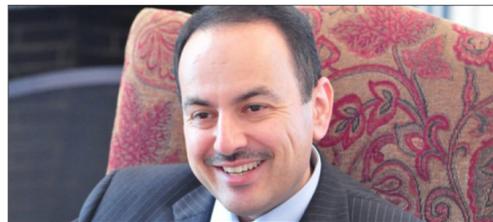


ate has not visited Tajikistan and neither has such a meeting ever transpired with the Russian leaders." The Sunday Times, citing an unnamed Afghan militant commander, reported on December 27 that Vladimir Putin, the Russian

president, held an unpublicized meeting with Mullah Akhtar Mansour, the current Taliban chief, at a military base in Tajikistan in September and that Taliban group has been promised of Russian arms and financial support. (KP)

Govt. to Recruit Young Afghans for CBR: Hakimi

KABUL - Finance Minister Eklil Hakimi, addressing the Wolesi Jirga, said the government would recruit experienced, young Afghans through the Capacity Building for Result Program (CBR). Minister Hakimi said the recruitment would be done on the basis of expertise, merit and ability under the program and added that the CBR was to appoint experienced and professional youth in government departments. The Wolesi Jirga session was attended by the ministers of public health, rural rehabilitation and development, economy, labour and social affairs and telecommunications and



also CBR officials. CBR aims to significantly increase the capacity of government to deliver essential services and implement national priority programs, while helping address the over reliance on external technical assistance. This facility, estimated at \$300-400 million, will work

with ministries fundamental to service delivery and economic growth to provide: (1) financing for hiring top caliber civil servants, including at the sub-National level; (2) technical assistance to support ministry restructuring and reforms, including relevant software and hardware; and (3) ... (More on P4)...(9)

68 Daesh Militants Killed in Fresh Air Strikes

KABUL - 68 militants belonging to the militant group of Islamic State (IS) or Daesh have been killed in fresh air strikes in eastern Nangarhar province, the governor's spokesperson reported on Monday. In an online statement, Ataullah Khogyani said that the air strikes were carried out by Afghan Air Force in Abdulkhil, Bandar, Janjal Shaga, Mazdaki Darah and Kandar areas of Achin District. He said some areas of Chaparhar District were also pounded. According to the statement, several different types of weapons and a vehicle belonging to the group was also destroyed in the air strikes. The statement does not specify when the air strikes were carried out but governor of Achin District said in the morning that the attacks in his districts took place last night. Achin District is stronghold of the fanatics of ISIS in eastern part of the country. The group has been engaged in heavy clashes with security forces and pro-government militia formed by a powerful lawmaker Haji Zahir ... (More on P4)...(11)

Taliban Claims Suicide Car Bomb Blast near Kabul Airport



KABUL - The Taliban claimed responsibility for the Kabul blast on Monday saying that it targeted a convoy of foreign forces. Police though say the attack near a school was aimed at spreading fear among ordinary Afghan citizens. All the victims are said to be civilians. The latest in a recent series of suicide bombings, the explosion shattered windows and sent debris flying onto the street. "I was standing near my shop when suddenly I heard a huge explosion and everything went dark around me," said one of those hurt, mechanic Maiwand Jan,

speaking from hospital. "There were pieces of iron flying over. I was around three metres away from this blast. I saw a teenage boy killed on the ground. It was really terrible." Taliban insurgents have claimed several attacks this month, including an assault on a Spanish embassy guest house in the Afghan capital and a suicide bombing near Bagram air base that killed six American troops. They have also been involved in heavy fighting in their historic heartland in Helmand province in southern Afghanistan, where they have been battling government forces for weeks for control of Sangin district. (Agencies)

NATO Condemns Attack in Kabul

KABUL - The NATO-led Resolute Support (RS) mission in Afghanistan on Monday strongly condemned car bomb attack in capital Kabul which left at least one civilian dead and thirty three others wounded, including children. A statement by the alliance said "Resolute Support strongly condemns the Taliban attack on Afghan civilians in Kabul today. Current reports state the attack has left one dead and thirty-three injured including twenty children. A Taliban group has claimed responsibility for this attack, which targeted Afghan civilians."

"A Taliban group has once again targeted defenseless Afghan civilians, showing their complete disregard for the Afghan people," said Brig. Gen. Wilson Shoffner, Resolute Support Spokesperson. "On behalf of General Campbell, our thoughts are with the victims of this attack and the families and friends of those killed." Taliban groups typically attack places with a high density of innocent civilians, the statement by RS said, adding that "This willful disregard for human life is the leading cause of civilian casualties in Afghanistan. The U.N. attributed 70% of all civilian casualties directly to terrorists in the first half of 2015. Not including today's attack, there have been approximately 6,500 civilian deaths and injuries caused by insurgent attacks in 2015." ... (More on P4)...(12)

Suicide Car Bombing in Kabul Kills 1 Civilian, Wounds 13

KABUL - A suicide car bomb rocked in capital Kabul on Monday killed one civilian and injured 13 others, Kabul police chief Abdul Rahman Rahimi said. "One innocent civilian was martyred and 13 others sustained injuries," Rahimi told reporters at the site of the blast. The bloody bombing occurred at 8:00 a.m. local time (0330 GMT) in Hawa Shinasi locality south of Hamid Karzai International Airport. Several vehicles and build-



ings around the blast site were also damaged. Zabihullah ... (More on P4)...(10)

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20 Development Projects Completed in Uruzgan Province

KABUL - National Solidarity Programme of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD/NSP) on Monday completed 20 development programmes worth Af\$ 26,000,000 in Dehrawod, Chora, Khas Urozgan and Gizab and in a number of areas related to Terinkot the center of Uruzgan province. According to NSP Provincial Manager in Uruzgan province, these projects comprise the construction of a protection wall, culverts, irrigation canals, retaining walls, side ditches,

excavation of wells and graveling rural roads. Approximately, 4,911 families in different communities had an opportunity to gain access to basic human needs upon completion of these projects. Since its inception in Uruzgan province, the NSP has been able to execute 1,259 infrastructure projects disbursing AFN 1,288,054,398 in different sectors including transport, water and sanitation, irrigation, power, livelihoods, education, etc while the work of hundreds of others is currently in progress. (PR)

Career Center Inaugurated at Kabul Education University

KABUL - The University Support & Workforce Development Program, a USAID funded project, inaugurated a career center at the Shaheed Ustad Rabbani Education University on Monday. More than 20 private companies along with leadership of Shaheed Ustad Rabbani Education University and USWDP attended the inaugural ceremony of the career center and the introductory meeting of University Industry Advisory Council for Shaheed Ustad Rabbani Education University. USWDP Career Center/Field Office will serve as center of excellence to improve alignment between the world of schooling and the world of work. Students will be assisted in these centers to enhance their knowledge and skills to compete in the job market. A wide range of market oriented training and capacity development activities will be conducted at these centers to help students qualify for open competition in the local job market. The USWDP Career Center/Field Office host the University Industry Advisory Council (UIAC) that will advise the university on the needs of the market in Afghanistan. The Shaheed Ustad Rabbani Education University UIAC includes entrepreneurs, industry representatives, and interested faculty members, alumni, and students. It will keep abreast of developments in particular industries, advise faculty and administrators on the design of ... (More on P4)...(13)

UN Helps Humanitarian Aid Reach War-Affected Families in Kunduz



KUNDUZ CITY - The United Nations and its partners have helped deliver humanitarian aid packages to over 100 families affected by the recent fighting in the Kunduz province, according to the UN mission in the country. As part of the Afghan Civilian Assistance Programme (ACAP), a countrywide project aiding people affected by conflict, mines and explosive remnants of war, the families received various food and non-food items, including water containers and bedding materials, from the Mine Action Coordination Centre of Afghanistan, which is supported by the UN Mine Action Service (UNMAS). Since the Kunduz fighting this past autumn, over 500 families

have received a variety of food and non-food aid via ACAP, with further distributions planned in the province, according to the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). Between 28 September and 13 October, Kunduz city residents suffered a Taliban attack and temporary occupation, followed by a counter-offensive by pro-Government forces who regained control of the city. There was also fighting elsewhere in Kunduz province. A report released in December by UNAMA and the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) documented civilian deaths and injuries during the period, with a preliminary toll of 289 ... (More on P4)...(14)