

(1) EU Project ...

Ecological Zoning and Land Resources Information Management System will be established in Afghanistan to highly support agriculture policy and investment conditions to achieve sustainable agricultural development for food security, under climate change.

The purpose of AEZ, as carried out for complex rural land-use planning, is to identify areas with similar sets of potentials and constraints for optimum land utilization for agriculture development.

Then specific programs can be formulated in order to provide the most effective intervention to each AEZ and to pave the way for improved agricultural monitoring and crop estimation. The establishment of National Agro-ecological Zoning (NAEZ) includes the analysis of land suitability and production gaps of varied crops under different scenarios (e.g. climate change, agricultural inputs, management intensity, etc).

The EU-funded project will establish Land Resources Information Management System to guide policy-makers in developing appropriate policies and plans for various land uses (especially agriculture) and providing location-specific adaptation options for farmers.

LRIMS provides central spatial database of evaluation of land-use suitability based on modular multiple criteria analysis-based assessment, including a Socio-Agricultural Vulnerability Assessment (SAVA).

The existing FAO LRIMS system will be updated and simplified to enhance the tool's existing modular functionality to run scenarios and generate products.

"This project aims to develop the monitoring and analyzing systems of land resources and also to study the proportionate specifications of land against the environmental risks at the local and national levels," MAIL minister Assadullah Zamir said. He said the project also intended to strengthen Afghanistan's Institution's capacity for assessing agriculture production and development.

Maurizio CIAN, head of cooperation at EU Delegation, said Afghanistan remained one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change.

He said environmental degradation would have a negative effect on overall agriculture sector in Afghanistan, calling for attention to linkages between agriculture development, water management, renewable energy and food security.

"The country has the potential to increase its output of cereals, fruits, nuts and vegetables and to develop supply chains for higher value-added products," said Tomio Shichiri, FAO representative in Afghanistan. He said the development of supply chains would require investments to develop and improve practices and extension services and to build downstream agro-processing capacities.

"In the face of such complexity, the monitoring and analysis of agriculture production systems has become one of the priorities of the Afghan government," he said.

Farmers and government officials are the primary beneficiaries of the project. All stakeholders will benefit the agriculture monitoring system and robust capacity development programmes of the project.

In addition, the Irrigation, Research, Extension, Policy and Planning Directorates of MAIL are the key beneficiaries through improved capacity for agriculture monitoring, National Agro-Ecological Zones (NAEZ), Land Resources Information Management System (LRIMS) assessment and development of scenarios.

The project will be jointly implemented by MAIL and FAO with cooperation and support of all other stakeholders. EU, MAIL and FAO are main stakeholders in the project. (Pajhwok)

(2) Abdullah Wants...

by military officials on the province's situation. They told the CEO that Helmand's security situation had improved compared to the past.

Abdullah also met military commanders and local authorities and stressed increased cooperation and coherence among them.

He assured military officials that the unity government would fulfill their needs, asking them to frustrate insurgents' design to threaten Lashkargah and districts before spring.

Abdullah was accompanied by high-ranking security officials including the minister of defense, deputy interior minister and first deputy head of the National Security Directorate (NDS).

Abdullah arrives in Helmand a day after fierce clashes broke out between militants and security forces in Sangin district. (Pajhwok)

(3) Ghani Tasks...

troubled district, with each side claiming to have inflicted heavy casualties on the other.

Omar Zwak, the governor's spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News the Taliban militants stormed security check-posts in Sangin in the morning and were pushed back and inflicted heavy casualties. But he gave no figure.

Six of the 13 Helmand districts have been under the Taliban control. In some districts the group has strong presence and only the district centres are with the government. (Pajhwok)

(4) Hekmatyar ...

release of Hizb-e-Islami prisoners but also on the issue of securing land for returning Hizb-e-Islami refugees.

Government has created eight committees to implement the peace deal.

Karim said thousands of armed Hizb-e-Islami fighters will join security forces once Hekmatyar settles in Kabul.

Hamid Azizi, a spokesman for Hizb-e-Islami, meanwhile said a number of key people in the group are among the prisoners due for release.

Azizi said Hizb-e-Islami has been waiting for the United Nations (UN) to remove Hekmatyar's name from its blacklist, but that after Russia and France raised objections, the UN does not appear to be moving forward on the issue.

Khpalwak however said they are trying to convince the two countries to agree to the move.

Meanwhile, a Hizb-e-Islami member has said 500 men will be appointed to maintain Hekmatyar's security in Kabul. (Tolonews)

(5) UK Lawmakers ...

the United Kingdom's intention to withdraw from the EU."

Kicking off the debate, Brexit Secretary David Davis said legislators had to answer a simple question: "Do we trust the people or not?"

"It's not a bill about whether the U.K. should leave the union or indeed about how it should do so," he said. "It is simply about Parliament empowering the government to implement a decision already made - a point of no return already passed."

Assuming lawmakers agree on Wednesday, the bill will move on to committee scrutiny and then Parliament's upper chamber, the House of Lords.

Ministers hope the European Union (Notice of Withdrawal) Bill can be pushed through both houses of Parliament by early March so the government can meet its March 31 deadline. (AP)

(6) At least 47 ...

few weeks," said Hashir, adding that two other children were killed by an avalanche while traveling from one village to another.

Mohammad Reza, a spokesman for the provincial governor, said: "We are trying to provide those harmed by the cold weather with immediate necessary assistance."

According to Reza, Darzab has one hospital and seven mobile health clinics operational, but

access to the facilities are hindered due to mountainous areas blocked by snow and the presence of insurgents. (Monitoring Desk)

(7) Noor Pushes ...

"The big question people are asking is, 'is this the start of the 2019 presidential campaign for Afghanistan?'," said Scott Worden, director of Afghanistan and Central Asia Programs at the United States Institute of Peace in Washington. (Reuters)

(8) 4 Human...

launched a decisive crackdown on human traffickers. Some suspects have been detained and handed over to judicial organs. (Pajhwok)

(9) 20 ISIS ...

armed militant groups including the loyalists of ISIS terrorist group have not commented regarding the incident so far.

Zabul is among the relatively volatile provinces in southern Afghanistan where the Taliban insurgents are actively operating in some of its districts.

Recently, the local tribal elders expressed concerns regarding the growing insurgency activities of the foreign insurgents in some districts of Zabul.

Militants believed to be affiliated with the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group have reportedly shifted to this province in a bid to expand their insurgency in some restive districts. (KP)

(10) Commander...

been transferred.

Steps were being taken to eradicate corruption from the ranks of boarder police, added the commander, who promised doing all under his control to make the force invincible.

With regard to a recent Taliban attack on two police posts near the Durand Line, he alleged lack of cooperation from Pakistani forces had created multiple security problems for them.

Hussainkhel acknowledged a number of border police personnel had been unable to prevent drug smuggling of drugs or protect mines. Some officials were involved in bribery but he has redoubled efforts to address the issue and some corrupt personnel had been arrested.

"I don't gainsay the fact that some policemen receive bribes to allow smuggling; but I have ordered detective organs to keep under surveillance such personnel. So far, three have been detained and referred to the attorney office."

Asked about Torkham Commissary, Hussainkhel said: "It may be involved in corruption." To resolve the problem, he plans to devise an effective strategy. However, he would not go into details at this stage.

Hussainkhel, pointing to a recent Torkham clash, said the ADB personnel were fully equipped with ammunition and weapons to give a befitting response if anyone attacked them.

About honouring the dead border guards and boosting the morale of others, he said: "Photographs of martyred soldiers have been displayed and work is ongoing on a monument to them. I have visited the martyrs' families."

To a question about meddling in his affairs, he said: "I am a soldier and won't let anyone intervene in my work." While seeking public support, he called upon all ABP personnel to defend their country.

The commander remarked: "I'm personally ready to lay down my life for the country and people recognise my courage and bravery." Those dying for the country's defence were martyrs, remembered forever, he said.

Hussainkhel earlier served as commander of the ABP at Torkham. A month back, when Gen. Wali Khan Shinwari was transferred, he was appointed as general commander of ABP. (Pajhwok)

(11) Return Refugees ...

Repatriation reveals that more than 60,000 Afghans returned to the country from Pakistan in the past year, of which most are living in Nangarhar. (Tolonews)

(12) Bamyan ...

a center of skiing. Geeti Ebadi thanked the governor, the sports director and elders of Bamyan for paying her respect.

"I feel proud to be able to achieve champion's name for my country. I dedicate it to my beloved country, my parents and all those who put their honest efforts into developing sports and encouraging the youth in Afghanistan", she added.

National Skiing Federation chief Mohammad Afzal Noori said that six teams, including a foreign team, were currently active in Bamyan participating in every national and international competition.

It is said several girls have been trained as professional skiers in the province and they would soon be participating in international competitions.

Skiing has improved in recent years in Bamyan as many skiers are seen skidding down the snow-blanketed slopes individually and in groups especially on Fridays. (Pajhwok)

(13) 20 Townships...

Hamdard Township in Mazar-i-Sharif was called as illegal by municipality officials. However, the Hamdard township in charge, Noorullah Hamdard, said they had legal documents of the township.

He said they had not launched the construction works arbitrarily, but they carried an order from the Ministry of Urban Development.

Townships called as illegal by the municipality have houses where people live. Their residents are worried about the townships' illegality.

A resident of Amani Karte Township in Mazar-i-Sharif, Humayun, said he had been living in the town over the past five years. He said many other people lived in the township.

He said he was told the township had been legally constructed and the municipality's claim had created doubts in people's minds. The municipality should legalize the townships in cooperation with their owners who should face accountability. (Pajhwok)

(14) Man Chops ...

chief Brig. Gen. Abdul Raziq Qaderi said.

The incident occurred in Elamkhel area late on Monday and the accused had been detained and was under investigation now.

Women's rights defender at Balkh attorney's office, Fawzia Hamidi, had last month said incidents of violence against women decreased by 30 percent in Balkh compared to last year. She had said they faced problems in investigating incidents of violence against women due to the presence of powerful armed individuals. (Pajhwok)

(15) Angry Macrorryan...

system that doesn't work smoothly."

They were subjected to six hours of loadshedding daily, he said. During the period the CHS did not work, leaving residents helpless in the freezing Kabul winter, he said, asking the authorities to fix the issue.

Mohammad Mirwais Arghandwal, head of the Macrorryan management and maintenance enterprise at the Kabul Municipality, said there was no technical issue with the system itself.

"Our system is run on two kinds of energy: One the water is heated by fuel before it is circulated through power-run pumps. But when there is a blackout, then CHS also stops working. But our power cuts are rare."

He said power lines to apartments and the CHS furnace room were separate. Power supply to the furnace room continues round the clock, barring situations resulting from technical faults.

According to him, over the past 24 hours, the furnace room's electricity had been cut off for only two minutes once and seven minutes for a second time.

Arghandwal said the enterprise planned to acquire a huge power generator that would be used

for pumping water into pipes in case of blackouts.

Kabul power utility head, Mohib Rahman Momand, said the furnace room was supplied electricity from the Naghlo hydropower dam. The electricity supply was disrupted only by technical issues.

Arghandwal, in response to public complaints, said: "A number of Macrorryan residents have made changes arbitrarily in their apartments by extending the heating pipes from rooms to balconies. As a result, the system couldn't heat up rooms in a proper manner."

He claimed some people had installed valves on pipes to use the hot water for other purposes. "Such things cause a drop in the heat and pressure levels. Consequently, the CHS can't warm rooms properly."

The official said the water used for heating contained salt and its use for other purposes might cause serious health problems.

About the bills the enterprise received from Macrorryan for the heating system, he said municipality, in coordination with residents' representatives, worked out the annual expenditure and added 10 percent of revenue for the enterprise. Then the total amount is divided among different Macrorryan sectors.

In the solar year 1393, 300 afghanis were collected from each apartment per one square metre. About 258.5 afghanis were charged last year. The current year's expenses would be determined at the end of the winter. Thirty percent of the bill is collected in advance from every home. (Pajhwok)

(16) 3 Killed As ...

attacks, the ordinary civilians are targeted as the anti-government armed militants are accused of incurring the most casualties to the civilians.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said late in October last year that the mission has documented 8,397 conflict-related civilian casualties (2,562 deaths and 5,835 injured) between 1 January and 30 September, representing a one per cent decrease compared to the same period in 2015.

Ground engagements remained the leading cause of civilian casualties, followed by suicide and complex attacks, and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), UNAMA said, adding that the anti-Government Elements caused 61 per cent of civilian casualties - 1,569 civilian deaths and 3,574 injured (5,143 total civilian casualties). (KP)

(17) Badakhshan...

damaging a number of residences and inflicting heavy financial losses on villagers. The incident did not cause casualties, however.

Over the past few days, continued snowfall in Badakhshan has blocked many roads in the province, whose residents are faced with numerous problems as a result. (Pajhwok)

(18) Three Insurgents...

a military operation by Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) in Khan Abad district of northern Kunduz province. Abdullah was the group's recruiter and was arrested along with an accomplice.

One AK-47 rifle was also recovered from the arrested individuals. (Tolonews)

(19) 4 Killed, 12 ...

critical condition," a traffic police officer told Xinhua.

Police have detained the driver of the truck and the traffic police have launched an investigation into the incident, the source noted.

Reckless driving is mainly blamed for traffic incidents on congested roads and highways. Fourteen passengers were killed and over 40 injured in a similar accident in neighboring Farah province in December. (Xinhua)

(20) Austrian Court...

Austria has not seen sexual assaults on the same scale as those in the German city of Cologne on New Year's Eve more than a year ago, but attacks involving

immigrants, like a series of sexual assaults in the city of Innsbruck a month ago, continue to attract close media scrutiny. (Reuters)

(21) Trump Sacks ...

"At present, I am not convinced that the defense of the Executive Order is consistent with these responsibilities, nor am I convinced that the Executive Order is lawful," she added. (Xinhua)

(22) Syrian Groups...

Turkey as a terrorist group.

It forms the military backbone of autonomous regions that have been set up by Kurdish groups and their allies in northern Syria since the onset of the war in 2011, alarming Turkey where a Kurdish minority lives just over the border. The main Syrian Kurdish groups say their aim is autonomy, not independence. (Reuters)

(23) UNHCR ...

vast majority of the world's refugees are hosted in developing countries, and less than 1 percent will ever be resettled globally.

"The High Commissioner underlines once again UNHCR's position that refugees should receive equal treatment for protection and assistance, and opportunities for resettlement, regardless of their religion, nationality or race," the statement concluded. (Xinhua)

(24) EU Kicks ...

package is a follow-up to the training of basic seamanship delivered in the first package, in accordance with a Memorandum of Understanding agreed by the two sides in August 2016. The first 78 Libyan Navy Coast Guard and Libyan Navy trainees embarked on board the EU training vessels in October 2016. (Xinhua)

(25) Finland Does...

minister Timo Soini had also said that they did not accept the restrictions.

Under the executive order U.S. President Donald Trump signed on Friday, refugees from all over the world will be suspended from entering the United States for 120 days while all immigration from so-called "countries with terrorism concerns" will be suspended for 90 days.

Countries included in the ban are Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen. The total population from these countries exceeds 130 million.

The ban sparked chaos across U.S. international airports and continuous protests nationwide in the past days. (Xinhua)

(26) EU Foreign...

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(27) CASA 1000 ...

arrangements and the transmission infrastructure required for this trade. Sustained efforts to promote institutional development and socio-economic prosperity in the CASA-1000 countries are a high priority for the World Bank Group.

The CASA-1000 countries vary significantly in terms of population numbers, economic size and development trajectories but they have complementary development needs and goals, especially in the energy sector. (AKI)

(28) Uzbekistan to ...

start up a system of small loans and increased social allowances for local residents.

Once the world's fourth-largest landlocked natural water reservoir, the Aral Sea has lost 90 percent of its size since 1960 -- in part because two major rivers feeding the sea, the Amu Darya and Syr Darya, were diverted for Soviet irrigation projects.

The situation has led to significant environmental challenges in the region shared by Uzbekistan's Karakalpakstan autonomous region and Kazakhstan. (Monitoring Desk)