

Obama Proposes \$1b Additional Support for Afghanistan

WASHINGTON - US President Barack Obama on Monday proposed \$1 billion in economic support fund for a reform-driven government in Kabul. This is in addition to more than \$3 billion for the Afghan national security forces.

"With a new reform-minded government in Kabul and Afghan security forces leading operations across the country, this will be perhaps the most critical phase of solidifying the progress made over the last decade," the State Department said.

FY 2016 resources remain essential to maintaining Afghan stability following the 2014 security transition and fostering economic development that would gradually lessen the country's reliance on international assistance.

The 2016 ...*(More on P4)...*(1)



UK Launches Action Plan for Afghan Women, Security



KABUL - The United Kingdom has launched implementation of a National Action Plan for women, peace and security in Afghanistan, the British ambassador to Afghanistan said on Tuesday.

Sir Richard Stagg hosted a reception at the embassy to launch the UK's National Action Plan. The event was attended by Afghan women from the worlds of politics, human rights, education and business, a statement from the embassy said.

It said that the event celebrated the work that Afghan women are already doing to promote peace and security in their country, and launched the UK's Implementation Plan to help support them to take this forward.

Speaking on the occasion Stagg said: "As last night's reception demonstrated, women and girls already play a huge role in Afghan society. Women are putting their talents to use in Parliament, in the news-room, in business and on the sports field.

"They are playing a key part in creating the more stable, peaceful and prosperous future which Afghanistan both wants and deserves. This is vital: Afghanistan will never succeed if it relies on only half of its population."

The National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security, released in June 2014, sets out the UK's priorities around five key pillars such as women's participation in decision making and the peace process, prevention of violence against women and girls, protecting the human rights of women and girls, addressing women's and girls' needs in peace and recovery and building national capacity.

It merits mention that as a follow-up to the National Action Plan, the UK released its Implementation Plan in December 2014, which sets out the activities the UK will undertake for 2014-2017 and details how progress will be measured. *(Pajhwok)*

US Defence Nominee to Rethink Afghan Pullout Plan

KABUL - The US defence secretary-designate on Tuesday hinted at changes in America's plans to pull all its troops out of Afghanistan by the end of 2016 in case the security environment deteriorated.

In a written response to a query from the Senate Armed Services Committee, Ashton Carter indicated he might suggest changes to the pullout strategy and size of the drawdown plan to address security concerns.

The Associated Press quoted



President Barack Obama's nominee for the defence secretary as saying was aware of reports that Islamic State fighters could try to enhance their ...*(More on P4)...*(2)

Private Sector's Support Sought for Curbing Corruption

KABUL - Revenue and Custom Affairs Director, Gul Maqsood Azizi, on Tuesday urged private-sector businesses to help the Ministry of Finance (MoF) in eliminating corruption.

Speaking at a one-day seminar on the tax calculation system, he claimed the government had fought against corruption in the past 13 and achieved many targets. But he acknowledged custom departments were yet to be purged of corruption -- a big challenge. He told businessmen to contact MoF officials in case they were asked for illegal gratification ...*(More on P4)...*(3)

EU Invites President Ghani to New Partnership

Under the motto "A new Government - a new kind of Partnership", EU Ambassador met with President Ghani to kick off the future cooperation

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani welcomed the European Union Special Representative in Afghanistan and Head of the European Union Delegation, Ambassador Franz-Michael Mellbin, to discuss the European Union's future engagement in Afghanistan.

"The EU is a long lasting friend of the Afghan people and our support to Afghanistan will continue to be at an exceptional level. With the new ...*(More on P4)...*(6)



Minister of Mines to form Advisory Council, Promises Improvements

KABUL - Newly appointed Minister of Mines and Petroleum, Dawoud Shah Saba, announced the formation of an advisory council intended to enhance transparency, accountability and coordination in Afghanistan's valuable mineral resource industry.

During his confirmation, Dawoud Shah Saba talked about undertaking a more inclusive approach to mine extraction, adding that all new strategies would be taken in consideration of national interests and in order to attract investments.

"The interests of the people of Afghanistan would be prioritized in the policies and programs to make sure all the people benefit from the natural resources," Minister Saba said.

The Presidential Palace voiced support for the new cabinet member's plans, emphasizing the importance of proper management of Afghanistan's valuable mineral deposits for the country future economic growth. "The ...*(More on P4)...*(8)

Qatar Denies Taliban Leader Trying to Rejoin Rebels



KABUL - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Qatar has rejected reports that one of the Taliban leaders released last year as part of a prisoner swap was trying to reestablish contact with rebels.

Five Taliban prisoners were freed from the Guantanamo Bay detention centre in return for Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl in 2014. They were released to Qatar, which said it would monitor the former detainees' activities.

However, multiple media reports quoting anonymous sources said one of them had tried to contact the Taliban. Khalid bin Mohammad Al-Attayah, the foreign minister of ...*(More on P4)...*(4)

Afghanistan Needs to Root out ISIS and Taliban: Iran



KABUL - Mohammad Afkhami Rashedi, councillor of Iran in Afghanistan's western Herat province says that Afghanistan needs to root out Islamic States of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) which also goes by ISIS and its Arabic name DAESH.

He has told Voice of America (VOA) that "I am optimistic by the formation of new National Unity Government in Afghanistan, administration and assignment of new officials, the government will eliminate ISIS and Taliban who ...*(More on P4)...*(5)

Stalemate over Provincial Councils' Role Resolved

KABUL - The provincial councils' members reached an agreement with the government with regard of their right to supervision and evaluation of local departments, spokesman of the Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) said on Tuesday.

Tawab Ghurzang told Pajhwok Afghan News the provincial councils' members



held detailed deliberations with President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and the stakeholders settled the issue. Ghurzang said that Ma-

teen Baig, acting head of the IDLG, would share more details in this connection later in the day in a press conference. ...*(More on P4)...*(7)

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