

<b>Jalalabad</b> Clear 17°C -1°C	<b>Ghazni</b> Clear 10°C -4°C	<b>Kandahar</b> Clear 23°C 8°C	<b>Mazar</b> Clear 17°C 4°C	<b>Herat</b> Clear 18°C 1°C	<b>Bamayan</b> Clear 0°C -9°C	<b>Kabul</b> Clear 14°C -1°C
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# HPC Funds Halted Over Leadership Issue: Qasimyar

KABUL - Financial assistance provided by some countries to the High Peace Council (HPC) has been suspended due to the absence of council's leadership and non-active role, a senior HPC member said on Friday.

Mohammad Ismael Qasimyar, HPC's international affairs advisor, told Pajhwok Afghan News since five months the peace council's funds had been stopped.

He said the countries that provided funds earlier had now demanded the nomination of HPC chief and its active role as prime condition to



release the promise funds.

According to Qasimyar the leadership issue at the peace council would be resolved soon, adding that US, United Kingdom (UK), Japan and Germany were the main financiers of the HPC in the country.

According to reports amount \$800 million has been so far spent on peace council and its committees since few years. Some believed the HPC had no gains despite extravagant use of resources and money.

But Abdul Hakim Mujahid, acting chief of the HPC, said the council spent 2.8 ... (More on P4)...(8)

## Ghor Protestors Want Corrupt Officials Sacked

FEROZKOH - Residents and civil society activists on Thursday staged a protest rally in western Ghor province, asking the government to sack officials involved in corruption.

Some 200 people took part in the demonstration and gathered in front of the urban court in Ferozkoh, the provincial capital, chanting slogans against corruption.

Cases of several senior officials, including the deputy governor, have been referred to the court by the attorney's office after the former governor accused them of corruption.

The protestors said graft-tainted officials should be relieved of duties because they used their positions to avoid justice.

Abdul Qadir Ghafoori, one of the civil society activists, said: "Our main demand is that the duties of officials involved in embezzlement, including the deputy governor Mohammad Amin Tokhi should be suspended so they could not use their authority in their interest."

He said they would close the gate of the court and continue their ... (More on P4)...(9)

## Merkel to Travel to Turkey Next Week over Migrants



BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel will travel to Ankara on Monday to meet with Turkey's prime minister as she tries to reduce the migrant influx to Europe, the German government said Friday.

Merkel and Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu decided on the trip when they met at this week's aid conference for Syria in London, government spokesman Steffen Seibert said.

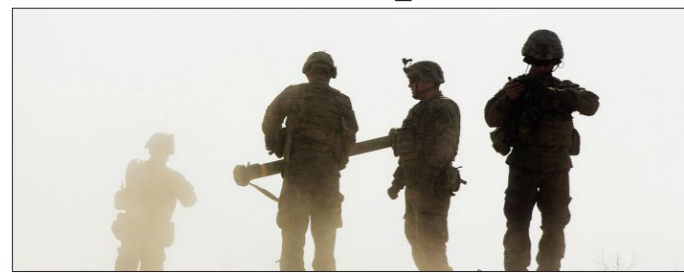
Turkey, a key country on the migrant route to Europe, is

central to Merkel's diplomatic efforts to reduce the number of migrants coming to Germany. She has resisted pressure for unilateral measures such as a national cap on refugee numbers.

Turkey agreed in November to fight smuggling networks and help curb irregular migration. The European Union pledged 3 billion euros (\$3.3 billion) to help improve the condition of refugees in Syria in return.

So far, officials say a recent dip in the number of migrants arriving ... (More on P4)...(11)

## NATO Chief Meets EU Defense Ministers to Discuss Cooperation



AMSTERDAM - NATO's chief met Friday with European Union defense ministers to discuss boosting cooperation between the military alliance and the 28-nation bloc to tackle looming threats to the region.

"I'm looking forward to discuss with them how we are responding to a more

demanding and challenging security environment," Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said of the meeting in Amsterdam.

The EU and NATO are working to beef up their responses to threats such as Russia's increased military activity to the east and the Islamic State group's threat amid violent conflicts ... (More on P4)...(14)

## Besieged ANA Troops Call for Reinforcements in Key Helmand Town

KABUL - Embattled Afghan troops have appealed for reinforcements in Sangin district amid reports that government forces have lost control of the key strategic town.

Soldiers who are apparently under Taliban siege have said that they are running out of food and ammunition and are unable to break the siege and clear the area of militants.

Dozens of troops are reportedly still under siege and no

one is addressing the problem, a number of troops fighting Taliban in Sangin district said on Thursday.

Meanwhile, members of Helmand provincial council have confirmed the reports - which have however been dismissed by senior Afghan security officials including the Ministry of Defense and provincial police chief.

Sangin, once a Taliban stronghold - has witnessed fierce fighting over the past two ... (More on P4)...(15)

## Zakhilwal Invites Imran Khan to Visit Kabul

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani's special envoy and Afghanistan's Ambassador to Pakistan Dr. Omar Zakhilwal on Thursday praised Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) chairman Imran Khan for his latest position on Afghan refugees living in Pakistan.

Zakhilwal, who called on Imran Khan at his Islamabad residence, thanked the former cricket star for his stance that the Afghan refugees should be treated in Pakistan with dignity and respect.

He also welcomed Khan's call on Taliban to renounce violence and reach peace with the Afghan government and commended him for his call on the Pakistani government to take more vigorous steps to improve relations with Afghanistan.

Zakhilwal told the PTI leader that Afghanistan wanted nothing less than special relations with Pakistan but in order to get there, steps needed to be taken to reduce and hopefully eventually clear the environment of mistrust between the two neighboring countries. He said his appointment as the President's Special Envoy and Ambassador to Pakistan with special authoritative mandate to lead overall discussions with Pakistan showed Afghanistan's seriousness with respect to changing our relationship for the better. ... (More on P4)...(12)

## Ishaq Gilani Talks with Taliban 'Doomed to Flop'

KABUL - The upcoming peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban are very unlikely to bring about any breakthroughs, according to prominent Afghan political analyst Seyed Ishaq Gilani.

In an interview with Sputnik, eminent Afghan political analyst Seyed Ishaq Gilani remained downbeat about the forthcoming peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, which he said are doomed to failure.

He lamented the fact that Kabul does not have any clear-cut program on ways to achieve peace in Afghanistan, and that the ISAF mission had also failed to help imple-



ment this goal.

"The presence of foreign military forces did not meet our expectations. The international community pledged a lot but failed to deliver. And neither the authorities nor those backing the Taliban managed to hammer out a full-fledged peace program,"

Gilani said.

He predicted that the war in Afghanistan will never show signs of abating and that the Taliban will dominate by spring, refusing to sit down for talks with weak authorities.

"I think Afghan authorities will ... (More on P4)...(10)

## Elders Taliban Control 95pc of Uruzgan's Dehrawud

TIRINKOT - The Taliban are in control of 95 percent areas of Dehrawud district in central Uruzgan province, tribal elders and residents said on Thursday.

They said government officials and forces have been confined to the district administration and police headquarters.

A former administrative chief of Dehrawud, Khalifa Sadat, told a gathering that there had



been no coordination among security forces.

"If police or army personnel are attacked, they don't go for the support of each others," he said. ... (More on P4)...(13)

## Bamyan Title as World's Creative City Celebrated

BAMYAN CITY - Residents on Thursday celebrated the title "world creative city" the central Bamyan province has been given by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Bamyan joined the list of UNESCO's creative cities in 40 countries of the world in December, 2015.

UNESCO says Bamyan is the only province in central Asia and the Middle East winning the title of "world creative city."

Historical and ancient monuments, tourism sites, handicrafts, and civil society engagement and people's peaceful way of living are said to be the reasons Bamyan was nominated as a World Creative City. World Creative Cities is an initiative of UNESCO, instituted in 2004. The World Creative Cities Network recognises cities world-wide with reputations as centers of excellence in craft and folk art,



design, gastronomy, literature, media arts, and music.

On Thursday, local officials attended a function to celebrate the title. An exhibition of handicrafts and a party presenting different programs were also organized on the occasion.

The governor's spokesman, Abdul Rahman Ahmadi, told Pajhwok Afghan News the celebration showed Bamyan people were happy over the selection of the province among world's creative cities. "Bamyan is the capital of civilization and has a valued history, thus deserves to be titled as world's creative city, we thank all those who made efforts in this regard," he said.

The exhibition showcased different kinds of women's handicrafts including embroidery, socks, cotton gloves, cloth piles, colorful rugs and others.

Zahra, one of the arrangers of the exhibition, said she had been working over the past 13 years to introduce Bamyan as a major handicrafts producer.

She said she had participated in more than 20 exhibitions, displaying handicrafts of Bamyan women to people. (Pajhwok)

## 2016 - The Bloodiest Year in History of Afghan Media: NAI

KABUL - NAI (Organization Supporting Open Media in Afghanistan) declared January 2016 as one of the bloodiest months for Afghan journalists and media organizations over the past sixteen years, citing that at least eight journalists and media workers were killed and more than 20 others were wounded during this month.

In a fresh act of violence, two local workers of a local radio sta-

tion were admitted to hospital after being shot by unknown gunmen in Baghlan province.

Among those wounded by the armed men is Ibrahim who sustained a gunshot wound to his head and is now unable to talk.

His family called on government to serve justice on the perpetrators who committed the act.

"We were on our way home, when ... (More on P4)...(16)

## About 5,000 Militants Still Concentrated on Tajik-Afghan Border

BISHKEK - Up to 5,000 militants are still concentrated on the Tajik-Afghan border, which arouses concern in Dushanbe, reports TASS referring to the source in the State Committee of National Security of Tajikistan.

"Our security services are not

only monitoring the situation in these areas and other districts of Kunduz province, but also they adopted additional security measures reinforcing the Panj border guard detachment," noted the source. He declared ... (More on P4)...(17)