

## Quote of the Day

Without a struggle, there can be no progress.

Frederick Douglass

# Riyadh Hosts Conference on Islam as Religion of Peace

RIYADH - Saudi Arabi hosted a two-day international conference on Islam as a religion of peace and harmony in Riyadh. The Saudi foreign ministry said the conference, organised by the Malak Saud University, was attended by scholars from 40 countries.

Renowned Saudi cleric Sheikh Abdul Aziz, in his remarks, said Islam is a religion of blessing and rejected violence and evils. He added there was no concept of suicide bombings and terrorism in Islam, an ideology based on peace and brotherhood.

Head of Jamat Dawa Sheikh Sami and journalist Hikmat Sapi represented Afghanistan at the



two-day event, which kicked off on Sunday. Sheikh Sami said such con-

ferences could help check extremism. Some elements were using the

name of Islam to promote their interest. (Pajhwok)

## Iran, EU Must Boost Cooperation to Fight Terrorism: Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has slammed the Western countries that have failed to undertake a genuine campaign against terrorism, stressing that Iran and the European Union must enhance cooperation in countering the scourge.

"The fight against terrorism needs firm determination in the international scene but despite ample grounds, certain Western countries still refuse to show necessary seriousness to fight terrorism and some other countries are using terrorists to promote their short-term interests," Rouhani said in a meeting with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras in Tehran on Monday. He expressed Iran's readiness



to hold more consultation with European Union member countries and Greece in particular to fight terrorism. "We should convince countries which are supporting terrorism that using terrorists as a means is an futile and wrong move and that terrorism will finally damage their own interests as well," the Iranian president stated. (PressTV)

## Lawmakers Concerned over Illegal Extraction of Mines

KABUL - Lawmakers from Badakhshan province on Monday said that the commander of an illegal armed group removed security troops responsible for the safety of a lapis lazuli mine out of Kiran-wa-Manjan district of the province in early 2014 and captured the mine.

The lawmakers said that the commander and his armed men are illegally extracting the lapis lazuli and then transfer the stones through Anjuman-Parian pass and Panjsher province to Kabul.

They said that the commander has brought two Taliban commanders to the district and currently half of the profits the mine makes go towards supporting the Taliban. "The commander had only 10 to 20 people and captured the mine. He is unprofessional and is senselessly extracting the mine and now he has 200 people," said Abdul Raouf Enami, secretary of Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament). The lawmaker lashed out... (More on P4)...(1)

## Campbell Backs Long-Term US Presence in Afghanistan

KABUL - Announcing a long-term commitment to Afghanistan will be a better option for the United States in the given circumstances, America's outgoing military says.

Gen John Campbell, commander of the Resolute Support mission, believes such a step would keep the Taliban, who are hedging their bets on the US troop withdrawal, under pressure.

"It sends a message to Pakistan, it sends a message to Taliban, and it sends a message to NATO," the top general told the House Armed Services Committee, according to a transcript of his testimony,



released by the Department of Defense.

On the verge of completing his 18-month deployment, he argued a long-term commitment would boost the confidence to the Afghan government, people and security

forces. He warned a US pullout would let the enemy simply wait them out. A long-term commitment... is the way we need to move forward to enable the Afghans to have a predictability and stability."

If the US cut its military presence from 9,800 to 5,500 troops, its capacity to support Afghan forces would be drastically reduced, the commander reasoned.

About militant safe havens, he said such hideouts existed on both sides of the Durand Line. Pakistan and Afghanistan, therefore, had to together to address the issue, he added.

"They've got to talk military-to-military on how they can get after a common enemy that knows no border, knows no boundaries," Campbell said, stressing improved coordination. "Afghanistan is at an inflection... (More on P4)...(2)

## New ANSA Head Vows to Fight Corruption



KABUL - The newly appointed head of the Afghanistan National Standard Authority (ANSA), Naqibullah Faiq, who assumed office on Monday, vowed to prevent the import of substandard fuel to Afghanistan and to fight corruption.

He termed scarcity of professional people and lack of political support to the organization as the main reasons behind the importation of low quality fuel. He stressed that the low quality oil, like terrorism, is a killer of Afghans.

"The ANSA has failed to perform all its duties in the past. It doesn't have political support," Faiq said. He pledged to fight against corruption in the organization.

Meanwhile, the former head of the ANSA, Popalzai Popal, said they were faced with numerous challenges in implementing standards.

"We managed to set standards and lay foundations for norms and now the ground for monitoring on import of fuel oil, construction materials and food is paved and I hope that the new leadership of the ANSA will make advancement in the implementation of these standards," he added.

Due to widespread corruption and lack of standards, most of the foods and fuel that are being imported from neighboring countries are of low quality. (Tolonews)

## SCO to Actively Cooperate with Iran in Anti-Terror Fight in Afghanistan

TASHKENT - The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) will intensify its cooperation with Tehran's special services to counter terrorist activities in Afghanistan, the SCO Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure's (RATS) press service said Monday.

The SCO is a political, economic and military alliance that includes Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The sides will boost the frequency of their interactions and information exchange on anti-terror activities, according to the organization's press service.

"In 2016, the participation of Iran's relevant authorities in events held by the RATS will increase due to the intensification of the terrorist threat in Afghanistan," the RATS press service told RIA Novosti.



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Afghanistan is in a state of political and social turmoil, with the long-standing Taliban insurgency continuing in the country, while other terrorist groups, such as Daesh have expanded their activities there also. (Sputnik)

## Barak Obama

## N. Korea Rocket Launch Concerning but not a Surprise



WASHINGTON - U.S. President Barack Obama said he was concerned but not surprised about North Korea's rocket launch over the weekend, saying his administration is pressing China and working with South Korea to pressure North Korea's regime and block its efforts.

In an interview aired on Monday, Obama told CBS he was not surprised at the launch, adding: "We have been concerned about North Korea's behavior for a while.

"This is an authoritarian regime. It's provocative. It has repeatedly violated U.N. resolutions, tested and produced nuclear weapons and now they are trying to perfect their missile launch system," he said. The interview was conducted on Sunday, when North Korea launched a long-range rocket that it said carried a satellite but stoked fears about its nuclear weapons capabilities. Obama pointed to his conversation last week with China's President Xi Jinping, telling CBS he told the Chinese leader "about the need to really tighten the noose on" North Korea. The two leaders spoke on Friday. He also said the

United States "is consulting with the South Koreans for the first time about more missile defense capabilities to prevent any possibility that North Korea could reach U.S. facilities or U.S. populations."

U.S. officials and missile defense experts have said North Korea's latest rocket launch could trigger a buildup of U.S. missile defense systems in Asia. (Reuters)

## Taliban Seek End to Operation before Power Pylon's Repair



PUL-I-KHUMRI - Taliban say they would allow repairs of a power transmission line if an ongoing operation in Dand-i-Ghori district is sopped, mediators said on Monday. The militants blew up a power pylon in Dand-i-Shahabuddin area on the outskirts of Pul-i-Khumri nearly two weeks ago before they destroyed three more towers.

Some tribal elders, who held talks with Taliban, were told the repair issue would be negotiated a few days later, peace committee head Abdul Samad Stanikzai said.

He told Pajhwok Afghan News the elders would meet the Taliban again on Wednesday. But it was not clear yet what the insurgent group's demands would be, he said.

"We asked the Taliban to let the government to repair the transmission line, but the sought the withdrawal of forces... (More on P4)...(4)

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"We asked the Taliban to let the government to repair the transmission line, but the sought the withdrawal of forces... (More on P4)...(4)

## No End in Sight for Kabul Power Outage



KABUL - Kabul city has been without power for 13 days - almost two weeks that Afghan security forces have been trying to push back Taliban militants from the area where they blew up a power pylon. Officials from Da Breshna Sherkat (DABS) said that they do not know when they will be able to rebuild the pylon.

"I don't know when the power will be restored. Security forces should specify the time when they will allow us to

rebuild the pylon," said Wahidullah Tawhidi, spokesman for DABS.

He added that security forces have made no progress in the past 12 days in securing the area.

The Deputy Chief of Army Staff, General Murad Ali Murad, a few days ago assured people that power will be restored within two days. This electricity outage has also inflicted losses for manufacturing... (More on P4)...(5)

## 400 Traders Leave Kunduz

KUNDUZ CITY - Nearly 400 entrepreneurs and traders have left northern Kunduz province for security reasons, badly affecting the economic condition of the province, officials said on Monday.

They include big traders who had been operating at the Sher Khan dry port, but shifted their capital to other provinces and foreign countries due to recent security issues in the province, export manager at Kunduz chapter of Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI), Masoud Wahdat, told Pajhwok Afghan News.

The recent security disruption in Kunduz City also resulted in a 50 percent decrease in exports through the dry port, which was a big economic loss for the country especially for Kunduz, he said.

Wahdat said more than 2,100 traders were registered with his department.

Taliban... (More on P4)...(3)

## Gov't

## 37 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Military Operations

KABUL - About 34 Taliban insurgents and three Afghan army personnel have been killed during military operations on Sunday, the country's Defense Ministry said on Monday. The security forces also seized weapons and defused several roadside bombs and landmines during the joint raids launched by Afghan army, Afghan National Police and personnel of National Directorate of Security, the country's intelligence agency, the ministry said in a statement.

"The cleanup and military operations were carried out in Dangam district of Kunar province, Maiwand of Kandahar, Dehrawood of Uruzgan, Dand-e-Ghori of Baghlan, Marja and Musa Qala districts of Helmand province respectively," said the statement that provides daily operational updates. Earlier on Monday, three Taliban militants were killed and six others wounded after militants attacked a police patrol along a main highway in Andar district, eastern Ghazni province, highway police official, Mohammad Mubariz Salangi, told Xinhua, adding that no member of the police unit was hurt during the clash. Afghan security forces have pressed on clearing the militants in restive provinces as Taliban militants have been attempting to take territory and consolidate their positions during the winter in the Central Asian country. (Xinhua)