

Quote of the Day

Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another.

Gilbert K. Chesterton

President Vows to Control Afghanistan's Waters

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani on Saturday said improving the agriculture sector and controlling Afghanistan's waters were among his government's priority programs, announcing to launch the construction of 21 water dams in near future.

While addressing the fourth promotion and development of agriculture conference in Kabul, Ghani said water was a vital element for development of agriculture but it was not paid attention.

"Our main focus is on harnessing and managing our waters to save our farms from devastating floods and the water could be utilised for utmost advantages, our unmanaged rivers damages crops on



hundreds of acres of land every year," he said. The president said Afghan farmers in

the past had been benefiting from an equal water distribution system and they had been using stream waters,

something they were currently deprived of.

He said the Ministry of Agriculture was responsible to pay attention to equal distribution of water among landowners.

"The Afghan government has the plan to launch work on construction of 21 water dams for controlling the country's waters," Ghani said without providing more details. Afghanistan allowed its water to be used by others without any payments, the president said.

Based on some reports, billions cubic meters of Afghanistan water flows into Iran and Pakistan.

Ghani said the prevention of land-grabbing was his government's second high priority. ...*(More on P4)...(1)*

New Defense Building Facing 'Construction Issues'



KABUL - The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has issued a report stating that the new building of the Ministry of National Defense - or "Little Pentagon" as it is known - still has several construction issues.

The report states that engineering criteria has not been considered and the building does not have the necessary resistance to withstand earthquakes.

The report indicates that in

the construction of the new building, a huge amount of money was invested by the America defense ministry but due to technical issues there is the possibility it could collapse due to earthquakes or long-lasting rain.

The SIGAR findings show that the new building was built at a cost of about \$155 million USD in aid from the U.S Department of Defense but that some construction standards have not been taken into ...*(More on P4)...(2)*

Afghanistan Must Probe Reports Claiming its Forces Raided Medical Clinic: HRW



WASHINGTON - Afghanistan must investigate reports that its special forces raided a local medical clinic in the Wardak province and executed two patients and an 11-year-old caregiver, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a statement.

Human Rights Watch noted the Swedish Committee of Afghanistan (SCA) had informed them that uninformed Afghan troops forced themselves into the hospital earlier in February, dragged out two patients and an 11-year-old child and shot them.

"President Ashraf Ghani needs to send a clear message to the Afghan army that killing hospital patients deserves severe ...*(More on P4)...(3)*

UN Agencies Meet on 2016 Uplift Plans for Afghanistan

KABUL - United Nations agency heads met last week in Kabul on their programmes for the current year, stressing closer alignment with development plans of the unity government.

Mark Bowden, the secretary-general's deputy special representative for Afghanistan, said: "At a time of many challenges, we are focusing on how we can best support the government and people of Afghanistan."

He added the UN team's discussions focused on how to enhance their partnership in Afghanistan, working



together as One UN, drawing together the strengths of different parts of the UN system.

Calling disaster risk reduction an area important to Afghanistan, he said the UN agencies had been

working together in support to the government and its youth strategy - a critical issue, given the proportion of young people.

"These issues directly touch upon the lives of people in Afghanistan, but in addition to this, the UN system has also been working in support of the work of the Government, such as its statistical services.

"I think we, the UN Agencies, Funds, and Programmes, have made real progress in working together as part of one effort in support of the people of Afghanistan." (Pajhwok)

Officials Hope to Reconnect Kabul Power within Days



KABUL - Afghan officials said Saturday they hope to fully restore electricity to the capital now that security forces have cleared insurgents from an area in the northern Baghlan province where cables from Uzbekistan were damaged during heavy fighting.

Engineers had reconnected some cables and the work should be completed within five days, said Wahidullah Tawhidi, spokesman for the Afghanistan electricity directorate.

The severing of the cables late last month has left most of Kabul's 5 million residents with just two hours of electricity a day. Many have had to rely on diesel generators and wood-burning stoves through the end of a mild winter.

The incident exposed the vulnerability of the capital's energy supply as well as the country's reliance on power from outside its own borders. Afghanistan also buys electricity from Tajikistan.

The governor of Baghlan, Abul Satar Barez, said the military had cleared insurgents from the Dand-e-Shahabuddin district, where the cables were cut. "We hope that power will soon be reconnected to Kabul," he said.

It was unclear whether the cables were deliberately sabotaged or accidentally damaged during the fighting.

The Taliban have been battling the government for 15 years. Following the draw-down of the international combat mission in 2014, the insurgents spread across the northern provinces bordering Central Asia.

Meanwhile, the Interior Ministry said six members of the same family were killed when their vehicle hit a roadside bomb in eastern Paktika province. Four children were among the dead, it said.

No group claimed responsibility. The Taliban are active in the province which borders Pakistan, where they plant roadside bombs that often kill civilians. (AP)

3,000 Militants Active in Kunduz: Officials



KUNDUZ CITY - Officials said Sunday that a large-scale military operation has been launched in Kunduz and that up to 3,000 militants, including about 200 foreigners, are currently active in the province.

They said that militants have expanded their activities to the outskirts of Kunduz city, the center of the province.

"As per my information, 200 foreign insurgents are active in Kunduz city and its outskirts and there are 154 militant groups and around 2,500 to 3,000 militants in the entire province," said Mohaiuddin Ghorri, commander for 20th Pamir Battalion.

But the Afghan National Army's Chief of Staff Gen. Qadam Shah Shahim downplayed the reports.

"Wherever we know there is a threat, our special units are there and they are being advised by foreign troops," said Shahim.

But residents are wary and these days shops in Kunduz are being closed early and the city is empty.

Residents say they are worried the Taliban will return, especially as the Taliban frequently establish checkpoints ...*(More on P4)...(5)*

Britain to Hold EU Referendum on June 23: PM

LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron announced Saturday that his country would hold a referendum on June 23 to decide where to stay or leave the European Union (EU).

Speaking outside his No. 10 Downing Street residence after a cabinet meeting, Cameron said that the government's position is to recommend that Britain remain in the EU once the referendum goes underway.

The decision to hold a referendum still has to be formalized by the British parliament, but it is widely

expected to be adopted since Cameron's Conservative party holds the majority.

"I will go to parliament (on Monday) and propose that the British people decide our future in Europe through an in-out referendum on Thursday the 23rd of June," Cameron said.

"My recommendation is clear. I believe that Britain will be safer, stronger and better off in a reformed European Union," he said.

Cameron's Saturday announcement on the referendum date came after he

clinched a deal with other EU country leaders Friday, which gives a "special status" for Britain in the EU in areas ranging from benefit cuts for migrants to opt-out for closer union.

Despite vows by Cameron to campaign in full-out efforts for Britain to remain in EU, the outcome of the referendum is far from certain as opinion polls indicated that British voters are evenly divided, and even many senior members of the Tory party declared support for the "Leave EU" campaign. (Xinhua)

White House Hopefuls Face Latest Election Battle

CHARLESTON - The race to the White House entered its third round Saturday as Republicans began voting in a South Carolina primary and Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders faced off for the Democrats in Nevada caucuses.

Polls opened at 7:00 am (1200 GMT) in South Carolina, where pre-vote surveys showed flamboyant businessman Donald Trump with a commanding lead over five Republican rivals.

Trump is banking on a big symbolic win ahead of "Super Tuesday" -- March 1, when about a dozen states will go to the polls to choose candidates for the November 8 presidential election, with a quarter of the nominating delegates up for grabs.

"It's crunch time, folks," Trump, 69, told voters at a North Charleston rally, his final pitch Friday before the



primary. The real estate billionaire finished second to Texas Senator Ted Cruz in Iowa on February 1, but secured a commanding win in New Hampshire one week later.

"I don't want your money," said Trump, who is self-funding his campaign. "We want your vote."

The onetime reality TV star who has upended the political landscape with

his brash style and controversial comments has his eye on a particular date: March 15.

After that day, many of the Republican primaries will be winner-takes-all in terms of delegates. If his five rivals are still in the race at that point, they will be splitting the anti-Trump vote -- and increasing his chances of winning the nomination. (AFP)

Afghan Troops Pull out of Strategic Helmand District



LASHKAR GAH - Afghan forces have pulled out of bases in Musa Qala, a strategic district of the southern province of Helmand, after months of heavy fighting with Taliban insurgents, officials said on Saturday.

Helmand, a traditional heartland of the Taliban and one of the world's biggest centres of opium production, has been threatened for months and the United States recently sent hundreds of soldiers to the

province to bolster its defence.

The commander of the Afghan army's 215th corps, Mohammad Moeen Faqir, said troops had been ordered to pull back from Roshan Tower, their main base in Musa Qala, as well as other checkpoints to reinforce Gereshek, straddling the main Highway One which links Kabul with the south and west.

"Their ...*(More on P4)...(4)*

Experts Blast Govt. for Negligence over Failure to Bring Electoral Reforms

KABUL - A number of legal and political experts have lashed out at government for its failure to bring about reforms in the electoral system.

They believe that some elements inside the government do not want parliamentary and district council elections to be held nor do they want a Loya Jirga to be convened.

They said that the National Unity Government (NUG) has done nothing to bring about reforms in the electoral commissions nor convene a Loya Jirga in order to form a legal framework for itself.

"Reforms should have been brought, electronic National Identity Cards (e-NIC) should have been distributed, a commission for drafting an amended Constitution should have