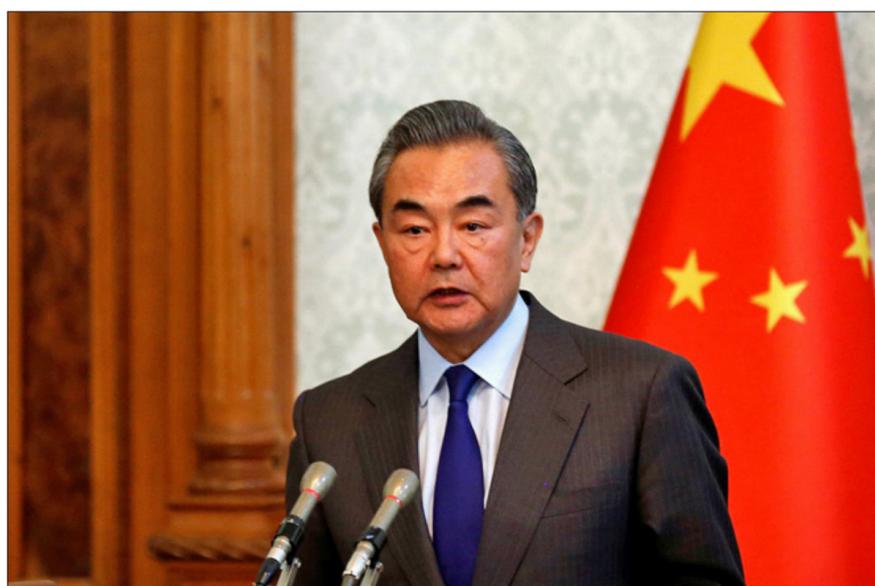


<b>Jalalabad</b>	Clear	<b>Ghazni</b>	Clear	<b>Kandahar</b>	Clear	<b>Mazar</b>	Partly Cloudy	<b>Herat</b>	Clear	<b>Bamiyan</b>	Clear	<b>Kabul</b>	Partly Cloudy
18°C 6°C	18°C 6°C	-1°C -11°C	-1°C -11°C	13°C 5°C	13°C 5°C	12°C 3°C	12°C 3°C	13°C 4°C	13°C 4°C	-5°C -12°C	-5°C -12°C	5°C -4°C	5°C -4°C



# China to Form SCO Contact Group for Afghan Peace

China's foreign minister says the decision is aimed at speeding up political settlement in Afghanistan.



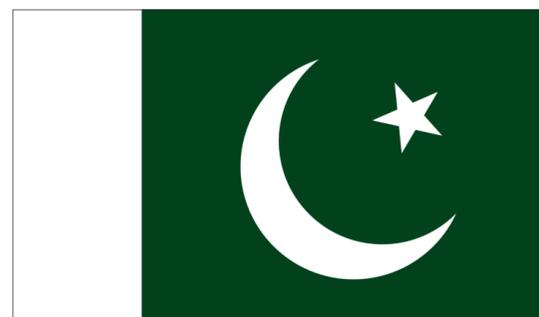
KABUL - China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi says that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) will form a contact group to help in a political settlement in Afghanistan to put an end to the long-lasting war. He made the remarks in a meeting with his Kyrgyz counterpart Chingiz Aidarbekov in Beijing on Thursday.

"We will make the SCO Afghanistan contact group to play a better role so we can speed up the political settlement of Afghanistan internal issues," said Wang. His remarks come as efforts on Afghan peace have been accelerated which include creation of a "national negotiating team" by Afghan government. Reports indicate that Taliban has also

formed their negotiating team. A number of researchers at the Middle East Institute in Washington said reaching peace in Afghanistan without direct engagement of Afghans is difficult. Former Afghan envoy to Canada Omar Samad talking at the institute said nothing will go ahead successfully ... (More on P4)...(8)

# Pakistan Moves to Cut India's Exports to Afghanistan

ISALAMABAD - In a tit-for-tat response, Pakistan has decided to curtail India's exports to landlocked Afghanistan under transit trade agreement. Pakistan Commerce Ministry took the step days after India withdrew the most favored nation (MFN) status to Pakistan and halted bilateral trade in the wake of the Pulwama attack. As many as 90 Indian items have been put on the negative list, cutting India's exports to Afghanistan by \$500-600 million. The News International reported on Thursday. Indian items worth \$600



million being exported to Afghanistan under transit trade agreement could be banned in the garb of inspection of goods.

As the Pulwama incident stoked new tensions between Islamabad and Delhi, India imposed 200 percent duty on Pakistani products. (Pajhwok)

# IEC Secretariat Officials Also Complicit in Fraud: Candidates



KABUL - Unsuccessful Wolesi Jirga candidates from Kabul on Thursday renewed their call for invalidating all votes cast in the central province and asked the government to dismiss the election commission's secretariat of-

officials as well. Numbering around 30, the disgruntled candidates told a press conference in Kabul that they would wage a protest movement "the nation's fury" if their demands were not accepted. ... (More on P4)...(10)

# Hekmatyar Says Election Commissioners Dismissed 'Illegally'

KABUL - Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar on Thursday said the conflict in Afghanistan continued because of the foreign forces' presence and the lack of an impartial government. The HIA chief also called as illegal the dismissal of election commis-



sions' members without any investigations. Talking to a press conference here, the presidential hopeful said foreign forces should leave Afghanistan under a rational timetable and a government which was acceptable to all Afghans should be established. Hekmatyar said the government dismissed election commissioners before identifying those involved in fraud and failures, calling it unfair. He added the government should have appointed an independent team for investigation into allegations against the commissions and then should have made a decision. "If the commissioners have committed crimes, then those who are complicit in their crimes should also be tried," said Hekmatyar, adding those who had appointed the election commissioners were also complicit in the first place. ... (More on P4)...(11)

# 50pc Water Declined in Harirud River Basin: New Study



KABUL - An investigation by the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) shows water in the Harirud River has decreased by 50 percent and improper use of the natural source by Iran has significantly affected the river basin's ground water. The study comes as a book 'Harirod: A look at a flowing basin' authored by Sayed Ali Hussaini, a member of AISS,

hit the stalls. Harirod River, which originates in the Baba mountain range, follows a relatively straight course to the west and is shared by three countries Afghanistan, Iran and Turkmenistan. The river passes near Firozkoh and Herat cities and then enters Turkmenistan and finally drains in the Karakum Desert. ... (More on P4)...(12)

# Khalilzad Discusses Afghan Peace with Turkish Officials



ANKARA - Khalilzad says Turkey is considering what it can do to facilitate the Afghan peace process. US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad held talks with Turkish officials, including Turkey's Deputy Foreign Minister Sedat Onal and Ibrahim Kalin, a senior advisor to Turkish president, during his visit to Turkey on Thursday as part of a multi-nation trip on Afghan peace. According to Turkey's aa.com, Khalilzad and Kalin discussed the ongoing negotiation process and latest developments in Afghanistan, solidarity and political stability. The two highlighted the importance of deep-rooted his-

torical and cultural ties, friendship and brotherhood between Turkey and Afghanistan in providing lasting peace and sustainable stability and security environment in Afghanistan.

Turkey's role and efforts in Afghanistan's national peace process and reestablishing stability were also discussed. Hours after his meeting, Khalilzad said in a tweet ... (More on P4)...(9)

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