

Quote of the Day

Knowledge is
the true organ of sight,
not the eyes.
Panchatantra

Let us Resolve to Put Peace First: UN Chief

KABUL - United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has asked all citizens, governments and leaders strive to overcome their differences and help the millions of people caught up in conflict and suffering massively in wars with no end in sight. "On my first day as the secretary general of the United Nations, one question weighs heavily on my heart. How can we help the millions of people caught up in conflict, suffering massively in wars with no end in sight?" Guterres, who became the world's top diplomat on Sunday (January 1) when Ban Ki-moon's second five-year term ended, in his New Year's message asked all the



people to join him in making one shared New Year's resolution: "Let us resolve to put peace first."

In a statement from UNAMA office in Kabul, the former Portuguese prime minister said peace must be their

goal and guide from solidarity and compassion in daily lives, to dialogue and respect across political divides...

from ceasefires on the battlefield, to compromise at the negotiating table to reach political... (More on P4)...(1)

'1005 Schools Remain Shut Across Afghanistan'

KABUL - The Ministry of Education (MoE) on Sunday confirmed 1005 schools remained closed across the country due to insecurity and other reasons. Acting MoE Minister Dr. Asadullah Mohaqiq told this to the Meshrano Jirga or upper house while briefing the MPs about the education process in the country. Without giving details, he said 1005 schools had been closed due to security threats, but said efforts were underway to reopen them in order students could continue their education. He confirmed the shortage of textbooks and professional teachers and said: "The Ministry of Finance (MoF) has not approved even a single position in the past three years. In the past, the ministry would approve 11,000 positions each year."

Mohaqiq said 42,000 teachers were needed and at least 16,000 teacher posts should be announced and approved for next year. To a question, he said: "Ninety-eight percent of school books in three official languages have been printed and would be taught immediately after teacher positions are approved." The minister said the MoE was not satisfied with salaries paid to teachers, but the current salaries were paid in consideration of available resources. He said 90 percent of teachers had been registered with the Rank System and the rest would be also registered after a test. MoE officials say teachers in the Rank System are given 7,500 afghanis to 35,000 afghanis salary while those not... (More on P4)...(2)

Work Starts on New Cricket Field in Logar



KABUL - Logar provincial officials announced on Sunday that the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) has started work on a new cricket ground in Pul-e-Alam, the provincial capital. The 15-acre cricket venue will cost \$500,000 USD to build and will take two years to complete, officials said adding that this was being paid for by India. Provincial Governor Mohammad Alim Fedayee said: "I am very happy that today construction of a standard cricket ground started in Logar. This will help encourage youths to play cricket." "I hope one day these children and young people who were playing cricket here will become stars like our national cricket players and also become part of the national cricket team in the future," he said. ACB's chairman, ... (More on P4)...(5)

Iran, Turkey Accused of Selling Herat Saffron as their Own



KABUL - A number of Saffron traders in northern Herat province on Sunday said due to the lack of processing facilities, they sell their saffron to Turkey and Iran who in turn sell the processed and packaged product to the United States and Europe as their own. The saffron traders said they also sell the raw product to Iran and Turkey cheaply. "We send the saffron to Turkey for standardized processing and packaging and then it is sent to United States and Europe," said Abdul Shokor, a saffron trader. "Sometimes the country processing and packaging our saffron is selling it as their own to the United States and Europe," said Abdul Khaliq Khudadadi, owner of a saffron company. In addition to the lack of standard processing and packaging facilities, the saffron produced in the province is not harvested according to the standards that have been set. Traders said saffron farmers need to be trained in the correct methods to harvest the raw product. "Farmers do not know enough on how to collect and harvest saffron and this causes a number of challenges," Abdul Shokor, a saffron trader said. Currently Iran is the biggest saffron exporter in the world but in the past few years, Herat's saffron has been cited as the best in the world. (Tolonews)

Afghan Forces Emerge Stronger in 2016: NATO

KABUL - Hailing Afghan forces combat abilities, NATO said Afghan National Defence Security Forces (ANDSF) have thwarted the Taliban attacks in most parts of the war-torn country and did not allow the group to capture provincial capitals. Brig. Gen. Charlie Cleveland, US-NATO spokesman, during an exclusive interview told Pajhwok Afghan News the Taliban should know that they could not win the ongoing conflict militarily and the only path towards peace was dialogue and reconciliation. When asked about the ANDSF operational, battle ground abilities, achievements and threats, he said that Afghan forces denied the Taliban to capture any provincial capital although it was tough fighting year.

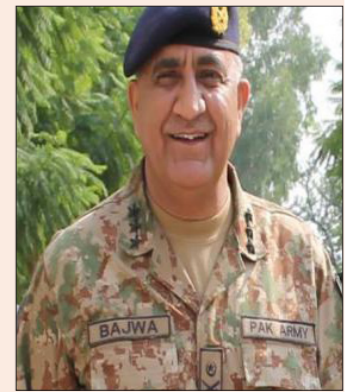
The ANDSF was able to plan and then execute a campaign plan targeting the Taliban and IS-K, he said. Cleveland hailed Afghan forces for effectively using their new capabilities last year that included A29 attack aircraft, MD 530 attack helicopters. He said: "we have seen progress and evolution of the Afghan Security Forces during this past year. They performed better in 2016 than they did in 2015 - their 1st year responsible for security - and we expect them to perform better in 2017 than this year." On overall security situation in the year ahead, he said: "We characterize the security situation right now as equilibrium, or balance, in favor of the government based on amount of population secured." Gen. Cleveland said the Afghan government currently secured about



two-thirds (2/3rds) of the population and the Taliban controlled less than 10%. "There has been about 25% of the country's territory that is contested, but we expect the government to increase the... (More on P4)...(3)

Gen. Bajwa Tells Ghani He'll Work for Peace

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's new military chief spoke to Afghan leaders and promised to work for regional peace as mutual mistrust and suspicion continued to plague bilateral ties in the outgoing year. General Qamar Javed Bajwa telephoned Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and Bajwa's Afghan counterpart, General Qadam Shah Shaheem, according to the Pakistan army's media wing. It said that Bajwa "conveyed best wishes for 2017 and pledged to work for peace in the region," adding that peace in both countries was in the "greater interest of the region." The Afghan leadership invited the Pakistan army chief for a visit to Afghanistan, the



statement said, but did not mention any dates or other details for the proposed visit. The Kabul government alleges that covert support the Taliban receives from Pakistan's military and its spy agency has enabled the insurgent group to prolong and expand its activities in Afghanistan. Islamabad denies the charges, calling them an attempt to... (More on P4)...(4)

Border Policeman Dies of Cold in Badakhshan

FAIZABAD - A border police officer has died of severe cold temperature in northeastern Badakhshan province, where two persons were separately found dead, an official said on Sunday. Crime branch police chief Col. Sakhi Dad Haidari told Pajhwok Afghan News three border police had been stuck in snow in Shuda locality of Kotal Aghardah district and one of them died Saturday night.

He did not provide more details about the incident. Haidari said a woman had been killed mysteriously in Kiran wa Menjan district and so far reason of the killing remained unknown. Police were investigating the murder. Separately, three suspects were arrested in connection with the killing of a 25-year-old man in Parikham village of Sharibuzarg district. (Pajhwok)

AIHRC Urge Govt. to Address Dostum-Eshchi Issue

KABUL - Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) on Sunday urged the National Unity Government (NUG) to transparently investigate claims against First Vice President General Abdul Rashid Dostum that he ordered his men to beat and sexually assault Ahmad Eshchi, the former governor of Jawzjan province. "Anyone regardless of their position should be responsible for what they do and government should investigate the issue and we will monitor it. Some issues are more complicated and are time consuming. We hope that government investigates the allegations transparently and free of interference," AIHRC executive director Musa Mahmoodi said. This comes after the Attorney General's Office (AGO) issued a summons for Dostum, or his attorney, to appear before them regarding the claims. However, Dostum has allegedly failed to comply. Some MPs have meanwhile urged Dostum to respond to the allegations and clear up the matter. "Senior officials should be more careful. If Dostum has committed such actions in the past as a commander, today he is the First Vice President. He... (More on P4)...(6)



NPC Approves 20 Contracts worth 12.5 Million Afs



KABUL - The National Procurement Commission (NPC) has approved 20 contracts worth 12.5 million afghanis, the Presidential Palace said on Sunday. A statement from the Presidential Palace to Pajhwok Afghan News said the contracts were signed in an NPC meeting chaired by President Ashraf Ghani on Saturday evening. The major contracts included designing, mapping, installation and transfer of a power substation equipment to Sarobi Dam, transfer of 500KV electricity from Aqina port to Andkhoy and Shiberghan cities and activation of electricity distribution network in Logar and Paktia provinces. The contracts for construction of a second phase of Kamal Khan Dam, third phase of road construction from Takhar's Bangi district to Ashkmath district and road construction between Mehtarlam, the capital of Laghman, to Badpakh district of the province were also signed. Asphaltting a 14 kilometers road in Kando area of Khoshi district

in Logar province, reconstruction of a nine-kilometer road in Zaranj district of Nimroz province and amending a contract for consultancy services to Trans Hindukosh Linking Road project were also among the projects signed. Building an information center in Kabul Education University, providing IT equipment to the Office of Administrative Affairs and providing supplies to the Ministry of Defense (MoD) were other contracts signed. The NPC returned technical investigation contracts for reservoir dams in Panjsher, Takhar and Badghis provinces. The statement said the meeting was attended by President Ghani, Second Vice-President Sarwar Danish and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah. The ministers of economy, justice and finance, special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) representative and some parliament members were also present at the meeting. (Pajhwok)

Rehab Pays off for Addicts who Now Seek Work

KABUL - Fifty drug addicts who have successfully completed a rehabilitation program at Omid Vocational and Training Center on Sunday called on government organizations to help them find jobs. The director of the center, Ali Eftekhari, also called on government along with non-profit organizations to help the recovered addicts in their quest for work. He said addicts were among the most vulnerable members of society. He also warned that unless help is provided to rehabilitated addicts, they could return to their old ways. "They have learned different types of professions, they are now a complete citizen with a profession, the government must facilitate them and give them jobs in their relevant institutions so that we can get rid of one of the major vulnerabilities that threaten our society," said Eftekhari. Amir Hussain is one recovered addict who said he had suffered chronic pain, which led him to start using drugs. "I was working with a private company before becoming an addict, I was implementing projects on the sites under the supervision of the engineers, I had a very good income, but I lost all my energy and job after becoming an addict," said Amir Hussain. The center which was established a year ago has treated hundreds of drug addicts in Kabul. Staff at the center said that of those treated, at least 80 percent started using drugs while living in Iran or Pakistan. Addicts not only receive medical treatment... (More on P4)...(7)