

<b>Jalalabad</b> Clear 18°C 5°C	<b>Ghazni</b> Partly Cloudy 8°C -1°C	<b>Kandahar</b> Clear 16°C 4°C	<b>Mazar</b> Clear 14°C 4°C	<b>Herat</b> Clear 15°C 2°C	<b>Bamayan</b> Partly Cloudy -3°C -11°C	<b>Kabul</b> Clear 18°C 3°C
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# Standoff Ends Near Indian Consulate in Mazar

MAZAR-E-SHARIF - The Afghan national security forces have eliminated all four terrorists and ended siege of a building near the Indian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif after almost 24 hours of resistance. The provincial government media office said the operation was jointly conducted by the special forces of the Afghan National Police and Afghan National Army under the supervision of acting governor Gen. Ata Mohammad Noor. Noor earlier said clearing operations near the Indian consulate is carefully being conducted in a bid to prevent losses to the lives and properties of the civilians.



Noor further added that the Afghan security forces have forced the remaining terrorists into a confined part of the building by tightening grip on the situation since Sunday night. A group of heavily armed insurgents launched a coordinated attack in a bid to storm into the consulate building on Sunday night but were forced to hide into a residential building after the security forces thwarted the attack plot. According to reports, a member of the Afghan Special Operations forces lost his life and 9 others including 5 security personnel were injured during the standoff. (KP)

## New Council to 'Play A Role' in Peace Talks



KABUL - The Council for the Protection and Stability of Afghanistan said on Monday that it will play a role in the peace process with the Taliban. The council, formed recently by former Jihadi leaders and senior government officials, made the announcement on the heels of Afghanistan and

Pakistan's decision to resume talks with the group. According to the council's spokesman, Sayed Hamid Gillani, a meeting will be convened in Kabul to plan a national consensus on the prospect of peace. On Monday, the council formally inaugurated its office in Kabul - ...*(More on P4)...*(7)

### Russian FM

## Russia Ready to Assist Turkmenistan to Strengthen Border with Afghanistan

BISHKEK - Russia is ready to assist Turkmenistan in strengthening the border with Afghanistan to prevent the possible penetration of the militants of the Islamic State terrorist organization, said Director of the Third Department of the CIS countries of the Russian Foreign Ministry Alexander Sternik in an interview with Interfax. The Turkmen border with Afghanistan goes mainly on the plains, which may require more resources, noted Sternik. He said that the Russian side



is informing the Turkmen partners about the works of the border agencies carried out in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. Sternik said that the majority of the neighbors of Afghanistan, including the Central Asian countries, prefer joint efforts, attract-

ing reliable partners, who wants to ensure stability in the region. "Russia is one of such countries. We are particularly interested in this, because Central Asia is the southern gateway to our common security zone," stressed Alexander Sternik. (AKIpress)

## Cutting Off Iran Ties not Constructive Step: Russia'

TEHRAN - Russian Foreign Ministry says cutting off diplomatic relations is not a "very constructive step" after Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Sudan severed their ties with the Islamic Republic. "Severing diplomatic relations is not a very constructive step... It is not contributing to mutual understanding," a Russian Foreign Ministry source told Interfax on Monday. "Rather, it is necessary to maintain contacts, enter dialogue and discuss disagreements in order to find a solution," he added. He said Russia believes that Riyadh and Manama deci-



sion to cut off relations with Tehran will not help improve mutual understanding. The Bahraini government said on Monday that it is cutting diplomatic ties with Iran following a similar move by its ally Saudi

Arabia. "Bahrain decided to break off diplomatic relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran and calls upon all members of the mission to leave the kingdom within 48 hours," Bahrain News Agency said. (PressTV)

## Mullah Tarakhil's Guards Beaten up Security Man at Parliament Door

KABUL - Bodyguards of Mullah Tarakhil, a member of Wolesi Jirga or Lower House of Parliament, have beaten up a security man at the door of parliament. The act was condemned during Monday's session of Wolesi Jirga. Abdul Rawouf Ibrahim, speaker of the house said Mullah Tarakhil himself is in India taking care of his ailing mother but his men conducted irresponsible acts yesterday. He said those involved in the incident were arrested but a number of elders interrupted and released them. Abdul Sattar Durzabi, another MP, expressing his anger over the incident said, "Soldiers are losing their lives to protect us but we respond to them with weapon and run them over with vehicles." This should not be the attitude of a representative," he added. The incident was also condemned by Meshrano Jirga. Senate chairman Fazal Hadi Muslimyar ordered the related commission of the house to carry out investigation. The quarrel reportedly broke out after a vehicle of Mullah Tarakhil was stopped for security check. (KP)

## Syrian Opposition Leader to Visit China

BEIJING - President of the Syrian National Coalition Khaled Khoja will visit China from Tuesday to Friday, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told a regular press conference on Monday. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will meet Khoja during his stay in Beijing to promote a political settlement in Syria, Hua said. Khoja was invited by the Chinese People's Institute of Foreign Affairs, the spokeswoman added. Wang Yi held talks with Syrian deputy prime minister and minister of foreign affairs Walid al-Moallem in Beijing on Dec. 24, 2015. (Xinhua)

## Stoned Ghor Girl's Parents Criticize Govt.



KABUL - The parents of the girl stoned to death in Ghor province two months ago have blasted government for having yet brought the perpetrators to justice. The father of the victim, Abdul Karim said that nothing has been done to bring the killers of his daughter, Rukhshana, to justice and that no assistance has been given to them. He said they were forced to leave their village and are now living in Feroz Koh city in Ghor. He said they have no home and no food. However government officials have said that they are investigating the incident and that a delegation has been sent to Ghor to assess the family's situation. Abdul Karim said that President Ashraf Ghani made a number of promises to him in a telephone conversation but so far none of the promises have been kept. He said his family is now living in a mud house. "No one cares about us, if the president takes back his words then ok otherwise at least care about us," said Abdul Karim. Rukhshana's brother has also criticized the security institutions in Ghor and said that the forces detained his uncle who was not involved in the stoning and then called it an achievement. Rukhshana's mother and sister are meanwhile living in a safe house in Ghor province and claim that every day they are threatened by unknown men for having spoken out to the media about the stoning. Rukhshana, who was 19 years old, was stoned to death ...*(More on P4)...*(9)

## Hizb-E-Islami Favours Peace Talks

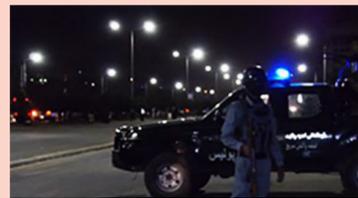
KABUL - Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA), which is one of the largest groups fighting against Afghan government, on Monday announced support to the peace process but says talks should take place inside Afghanistan. "Hizb-e-Islami favours Afghan-led and Afghan-owned talks as we have always argued that war is no solution to the problem," said Chairat Baheer who heads the political commission of Hizb-e-Islami under the leadership of Gulbuddin Hekmatyar. In an interview with Pakistani media, Baheer has warned that no group should be left out of the peace process.



"We have already floated comprehensive proposals for ending the conflict. We want all-inclusive talks to be held in Afghanistan to make them Afghan-owned in real sense of the word," said Baheer whose party was left out of the first round of talks.

Baheer added that HIA chief Engineer Gulbudin Hikmatyar has always backed 'meaningful negotiations' and expressed willingness to join an intra-Afghan dialogue. "We want the agenda for the dialogue process should be ...*(More on P4)...*(8)

## Powerful Bomb Rocks Kabul



KABUL - A powerful bomb rocked Kabul Monday night - the second for the day. Early reports indicate it was a truck bomb that was detonated close to the scene of the first explosion that happened Monday morning close to the Hamid Karzai International Airport. TOLONews reporter Mirabed Joyenda who is at the scene reports many people have been injured and massive damage has been caused to nearby buildings. He said security forces have cordoned off the area. This comes after a suicide car bomber detonated his explosive vest near the airport in Kabul earlier in the day. Officials said the car the bomber had been driving was also packed with explosives. However, when stopped at police checkpoint, the suicide bomber detonated his explosive vest. The explosives in the car failed to detonate. The incident took place shortly before 11am local time. (Tolonews)

## Standoff Ends Near Indian Consulate in Mazar

KABUL - Afghan deputy foreign minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai will represent Afghanistan in the key meeting with U.S, China and Pakistan to map out the way forward for peace talks with the Taliban. A framework going forward with regards to the peace talks is expected to be drawn up at this meeting, due to be held in Islamabad next week. Scheduled to start Monday, the meeting between the four nations will also determine the role of the four countries in peace dialogues. "It is expected the first key meeting will be held for the peace dialogue framework and the aim of this meeting is to determine working procedures for the start of peace dialogues," said Sayed Zafar



Hashemi, the president's deputy spokesman. Hashemi also said two areas were agreed upon at discussions on the sidelines of the Heart Of Asia summit in Islamabad late last year. He said: "The first option is peace and the second option

is terror and horror. Those who choose the first option we are ready to talk with them but those who select the second option then we have already responded to them and we will respond to them in the future as well," Hashemi added. Meanwhile

Afghanistan High Peace Council (HPC) is also optimistic about the start of peace talks and said that the splintered group of the Taliban under the leadership of Mullah Rasoul had shown interest in the peace talks. "The Taliban's splintered group under the leadership of Mullah Rasoul has announced that they are ready for peace talks. However our position is that if the opposition speaks from one address it is good and if any group is ready for peace the government is ready to talk with that group," said Shahzada Shahid HPC spokesman. "If talks are not held with the Taliban and peace is not secured Daesh will start its attack with much intensity and ...*(More on P4)...*(10)