

Quote of the Day

The great aim of education is not knowledge but action.

Herbert Spencer

Ayatollah Khamenei Underlines Importance of Afghanistan's Security to Iran

TEHRAN - Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei, on Tuesday in a meeting with Afghan CEO Abdullah Abdullah stressed that Iran attaches great importance to the security and progress of its Eastern neighbor. "Iran and Afghanistan enjoy abundant capacities for cooperation and the Islamic Republic of Iran assumes Afghanistan's security, tranquility and progress as its own security and progress," Ayatollah Khamenei said in the meeting in Tehran.

He lauded the idea of forming the NUG, and said, "God willing, the national unity government will find its true and real shape since establishment of real unity among tribes and officials in the only real solution to the problems of Afghanistan." Ayatollah Khamenei underscored the necessity for any coun-



try, including Afghanistan, to strengthen its defensive capabilities, and said, "We have seen the killing of large numbers of

people by the Americans in Afghanistan and the abundant damage inflicted by them and they are still continuing their

deeds." Abdullah, for his part, appreciated Iran's assistance to Afghanistan in hard days, and said there are many good

fields for cooperation between Tehran and Kabul which should be discussed and studied by the two sides' officials. Iran is one of the most important donors to Afghanistan, which has kept its promises to help to the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country.

Iran has built several roads, power transmission lines, border stations and many other infrastructure projects to better link the two nations.

Iran has also contributed more than \$50mln annually to Afghan anti-narcotics efforts during the last five years.

Tehran has repeatedly called for a withdrawal of the US-led foreign troops from Afghanistan, stressing that establishment of peace and security in the war-ravaged country is possible only through cooperation among the regional states. (FNA)

US Lawmaker Pathankot, Mazar-I-Sharif Attacks Reminder of Terror Threat



WASHINGTON - The terrorist attacks on the Indian Air Force base in Pathankot and the Indian Consulate in Afghanistan's Mazar-e-Sharif city are stark reminders of the challenges posed by terrorism in the region, a top US lawmaker has said.

"I strongly condemn the terrorist attacks on India's Pathankot military base as well as on the Indian Consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif, Afghanistan," Congressman Brad Sherman, 61, a senior member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said. "There is speculation that these attacks might be in reaction to positive outcomes from Prime Minister (Narendra) Modi's recent visits (to) Afghanistan and Pakistan," he said.

Mr Sherman strongly encouraged the governments in the region to make every effort to find the terrorists who carried out these attacks and bring them to justice. "These attacks ... (More on P4)...(2)

US Casualties in Fighting in Southern Afghanistan

WASHINGTON - Defense officials say a number of U.S. special operations troops have been killed or wounded in fighting in southern Afghanistan.

The fighting Tuesday against the Taliban was near the city of Marja in Helmand province, where the Taliban has made recent gains. Details on the battle and the number wounded or killed is sketchy and the situation is fluid.

One U.S. official says a U.S. helicopter was sent to the scene to evacuate casualties but did not immediately take off because a mortar landed nearby. It was not clear whether the mortar has damaged the helicopter.

The officials was not authorized to speak publicly about the fighting and spoke on condition of anonymity. (AP)

Yemen War Intensifies Amid Mounting Regional Tension

DUBAI - Saudi-led air strikes targeting Iranian-allied Houthi forces intensified in Yemen on Tuesday, residents said, an escalation of a nine-month-old war that follows a rise in tensions between the kingdom and arch foe Tehran.

After weeks of a relative lull, large air strikes targeted military positions linked to Yemen's ascendant Houthis in the capital Sanaa, the port city of Hodeida and the disputed southwestern city of Taiz.

Heavy shelling resumed on battle fronts which had been largely static during a truce which began on Dec. 15 in tandem with United Nations-backed peace talks. Houthi fighters launched Katyusha rockets at the city of Marib, residents said, their first attack ... (More on P4)...(5)

Consulate Attack will not Affect Relations: Indian Envoy

KABUL - India's Ambassador to Kabul, Amar Sinha, who visited Mazar-e-Sharif on Tuesday, after a 25-hour siege on the Indian consulate, said that such attacks will not affect relations between the two countries but will instead strengthen ties between Afghanistan and India.

During his visit, the ambassador praised security forces for their efforts to eliminate the attackers and said that those responsible for the attack are opposed to the friendship between Afghanistan and India.

"I am sure the NDS and security forces will investigate and let us know but we more or less



understand who the common enemy is. And we know that these are people who don't like India and Afghanistan's relations very much but they are making a mistake as these attacks only make us stronger," said Amar Sinha, the Indian ambassador. After 25 hours of fighting three attackers were gunned down by

security forces.

Earlier reports indicated there had been four attackers but officials said Tuesday there had been three.

The situation has since returned to normal in the area after families were evacuated from their home during the attack.

"People were really worried but now they are relieved as people are returning home," said Osman one of the residents.

"People are happy the insurgents were gunned down and that security forces killed the attackers," said Hassibullah another resident. Mohammad Ali, ... (More on P4)...(1)

Ghani Receives New Findings on 'Ghost Schools'



KABUL - A newly assigned technical team to investigate the findings of a fact-finding team on ghost schools presented its report to President Ashraf Ghani on Monday.

The previous team was assigned in August last year by the president to probe ghost teachers, ghost students, ghost schools, embezzlement in contracts of the Ministry of Education (MoE), scholarships, appointment of unprofessional individuals for organizing gatherings, ghost training sessions in provinces and the renting of buildings for schools. Of-

officials said the newly assigned team assessed the construction projects, quality of education, number of teachers and students and appointment processes of teachers.

"The [newly assigned] technical team that presented its report to the president yesterday [Monday] had carried out its investigation in the light of the primary investigation and there were some contradictions between the two reports. The preliminary report was unveiled by SAYED ZAFAR ... (More on P4)...(3)

Militants Still Active in Outskirts of Kunduz City



KUNDUZ CITY - One hundred days after the fall of Kunduz, militants continue to create problems on the outskirts of the city.

Kunduz Police Chief Qasim Jangalbagh said on Tuesday that plans are however in place to bring an end to this problem.

Jangalbagh said: "Taliban militants are operating on the outskirts of the city but we have plans to stop them and eliminate them."

Meanwhile, tribal elders and residents of the province warned that if government fails to ensure security in the city, the city might fall again

to the Taliban. The militants also have a widespread presence in different districts of Kunduz province, said locals and Dasht-e-Archi and Imam Saheb districts have reportedly turned into a hub for insurgents. It is here that the Taliban not only keeps armored vehicles and other military equipment they seized during the fall of the city but the group has also allegedly established training centres in these districts. Hajji Ghulam Sakhi, a tribal elder, said: "Security forces are operating inside the city but on the outside, there are Taliban militants." A number ... (More on P4)...(4)

Iran Renews Support for Restoration of Peace, Stability in Afghanistan

TEHRAN - Iranian First Vice President, Eshaq Jahangiri renewed Tehran's support for the restoration of peace in Afghanistan.

"The security and stability of Afghanistan is highly important for Iran," Jahangiri said after a meeting with Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah in Tehran on Monday night.

He pointed to Tehran-Kabul relations, and said, "Iran believes that a threat to Afghanistan will in fact be a threat to Iran."

Iran is one of the most important donors to Afghanistan, which has kept its promises to help to the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country.

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Iran has also contributed more than \$50mln annually to Afghan anti-narcotics efforts during the last five years.

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Kabul Police on Alert Following Suicide Attacks



KABUL - Security has been beefed up in capital Kabul after suicide bomb blasts killed and wounded dozens of civilians. Noor-ul-Haq Olomi, Minister of Interior has put police on alert to prevent any further anticipated terrorist attacks.

In a press conference on Tuesday, the ministry's spokesperson Sediq Sediqi said police have been ordered to use every mean in foiling enemy plans.

This comes as the security situation has been deteriorating in the capital.

In the past five days, at least three suicide bomb blasts has taken place in Kabul leaving dozens of civilians killed and wounded.

On Jan 1, a suicide bomber struck his explosives laden vehicle to a famous restaurant-Le Jardin- located in 4th police district of the city leaving at least two civilians killed and eighteen others wounded.

Yesterday, two suicide bombings took place close to Hamid Karzai International Airport which also goes by its old name Kabul International Airport leaving two killed and at least 30 others wounded. (KP)

Senate Rejects Presidential Decree on Authorities of Electoral Bodies

KABUL - The Meshrano Jirga — the upper house of the parliament — on Tuesday rejected a presidential decree on formation and authorities of the election commission and electoral complaint commission. However, the administrative board of Senate did not specify the reason for rejection of the decree but a number of senators have said that there is no need of decree.

The rejection of Presidential decree has raised concerns of electoral observing institutions.

Members of electoral observing institutions said that the rejection of presidential decree will cause many challenges.

"There were political and personal hands in the rejection of presidential decree. Delay in election will effect political, security and economic problems of the country,"



Payenda Muhammad Hekmat, member of FEFA said.

The Free and Fair Election Foundation of Afghanistan (FEFA) considered the rejection of presidential decree by Senate far away from the expectation of Afghan people and the parliamentary election will face many challenges.

Previously, President Ghani has called on National Council to work on adjustments instead of rejecting the decree. (ATN)