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|--|---|---|--|--|---|---------------------------------------|
| <b>Jalalabad</b><br>Clear<br>19°C<br>6°C | <b>Ghazni</b><br>Partly Cloudy<br>7°C<br>-3°C | <b>Kandahar</b><br>Partly Cloudy<br>17°C<br>2°C | <b>Mazar</b><br>Partly Cloudy<br>16°C<br>8°C | <b>Herat</b><br>Partly Cloudy<br>19°C<br>7°C | <b>Bamayan</b><br>Clear<br>-1°C<br>-6°C | <b>Kabul</b><br>Clear<br>14°C<br>-1°C |
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**Daily Outlook Weather Forecast**

## Wide Range of Issues Discussed with Iranian Officials: Abdullah

KABUL - Afghanistan's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah said his tour to the Islamic Republic of Iran was constructive and said the two countries have agreed to expand bilateral ties in a number of sectors including trade and commercial relations, counter terror cooperation, drug trafficking and investment. Speaking at a press conference on Thursday after returning from Iran, Abdullah said that the two countries signed at least three accords during his tour to Tehran, adding that Iran has shown its willingness to support Afghanistan over the establishment of the Chabahar-Zaranj



railway line. On a question asked regarding Afghans willing to work in Iran, the CEO said that an agreement had been reached with Iran on exporting Afghan workers through legal ways. "Iran has hosted millions of Afghan

refugees over the past three decades. We discussed education facilities for the children of Afghan refugees in Iran and the protection of Afghan refugees in that country," Abdullah said. He also said that a joint Afghanistan-Iran economic

commission will soon be established. Abdullah stated that Afghanistan and Iran started talks on the Chabahar port twelve years ago, but investments have only come in over the past two years. "Chabahar can leverage economic cooperation and business in the region. Already 60 Afghan businessmen have invested in the port," he said. Abdullah says facilities provided for investment in Chabahar are exceptional. It is a tax and visa free zone for business. Meanwhile, construction is underway on Chabahar and "this ... (More on P4)...(9)

## Some Taliban Factions May Join Peace Process



KABUL - Some Afghan Taliban factions are considering joining the peace process that officials from Afghanistan and Pakistan aim to revive next week, several senior officials said. This appears to be a softening of the militants' recent stance against talks, they said. Next week's meeting in Islamabad, between officials from Afghanistan, Pakistan, the

United States and China, is intended as the first step toward resuming stalled negotiations aimed at ending the 14-year-old war that kills hundreds of people each month and has intensified in the past year. The Taliban has become increasingly dominant on the battlefield since the withdrawal of international combat troops at the end of 2014 but is also ... (More on P4)...(10)

## Power Plants in Afghanistan Go Operational

NEW DELHI - Bharat Heavy Electricals, the Indian government-owned power plant equipment maker better-known as BHEL, has thrown the switch on two substations in energy-starved Afghanistan. The 220/20 kilovolt substations will provide power to Charikar and Doshi regions. Charikar is around 60km from greater Kabul, and Doshi is about 150km from the capital. "The project has been executed by BHEL on [an engineering, procurement and construction] basis," the company said in a stock exchange filing on Thursday, without mentioning its cost. Inaugurated by Afghanistan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and Indian Ambassador Amar Sinha, the substations are part of



a 220-kilovolt transmission line between the northern city of Phul e-Khumri and Kabul. The Indian government has committed \$2 billion for reconstruction of war-torn Afghanistan. On Dec. 25, Prime Minister Narendra Modi officially opened the \$90 million India-funded Afghan Parliament building in Kabul.

Another mega project for which India has extended assistance is Afghanistan's Salma dam, which is to be completed by June at an estimated cost of \$266 million. The 107.5-meter-high earth-and-rock dam in Herat Province will provide energy and irrigation to western Afghanistan. It is to include a 42 megawatt powerhouse. (Agencies)

## Ghani Hails NDS for Repulsing Foreign Intelligence Conspiracies

KABUL - President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani hailed the Afghan Intelligence - National Directorate of Security (NDS) officials and operatives for their sacrifices and bravery in defending Afghanistan and the Afghan people against the foreign conspiracies. During a meeting with the provincial NDS chiefs and officials in ARG Palace on Thursday, President Ghani said the NDS personnel are the defenders of the Afghan soil whose identities usually remain undisclosed due to the sensitivity of their duty. However, President Ghani said the Afghan government and people will always remember and hail the sacrifices, devotion and services of the NDS personnel. President Ghani further added that the NDS person-



nel are not only operating to discover and thwart threats and destructive activities against the Afghan soil and people but present their chest as shield to execute military operations. Ghani also added the government remains committed to support the intelligence officials and personnel in repulsing conspiracies by the foreign intelligence agencies.

He also urged to further intensify their activities to defend the Afghan soil and people against the conspiracies and destructive activities. President Ghani promised to present the recommendations of the provincial NDS chiefs and officials to Chief Executive Office in a bid to improve the security of different provinces and zones under their control. (KP)

## Turkey Summons Iran's Ambassador over Criticism Against Erdogan

ANKARA - Turkey has summoned Iran's ambassador to Ankara over the controversy created by some Iranian media outlets on Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's recent visit to Saudi Arabia, said the Turkish Foreign Ministry in a statement later Thursday. The statement condemned the stories run by the Iranian media and the accusations against Erdogan, and demanded an end to such publications and broadcast that aim to create a negative image of the Turkish president in the minds of Iranians. The safety of foreign diplomatic missions was a responsibility of host countries; therefore, the attacks against Saudi Arabia's embassy in Tehran and Consulate in Mashhad could not be explained and accepted, added the statement. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan visited Saudi Arabia between Dec. 29 and Dec. 31. On Saturday, Saudi Arabia executed prominent Shia ... (More on P4)...(11)

## Attack on Indian Consulate in Mazar-E-Sharif was Planned Abroad



KABUL - Attack on the Indian consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif was planned by a foreign terrorist group which left a policeman killed. It also left five policemen and four civilians wounded. Deputy Police Chief of Balkh province told Azadi Radio that cell phones and other evidences obtained following the attack show who planned the attack but it is not the time to share further details with media. Abdul Raza Qaderi said further information would be released to media upon conclusion of the investigation. After the attack when security forces were conducting combing operation when they came across Urdu-language messages on walls of the building used by militants during the attack. The messages believed to be written with blood stated that 'Ek Shaheed 1,000 fedaye, Afzal Guru Kaentiqam' which means 'one martyr is replaced with 1,000 suicide attackers and that attack was revenge of Afzal Guru'. Afzal Guru was hanged in 2013 in one of the Indian jails for his alleged role in attack on the Indian Parliament. (KP)

## Indian Consulate in Herat Rejects Car Bomb Seized Outside Consulate Compound



KABUL - The Indian Consulate in western Herat province rejected reports regarding the seizure of a Vehicle-borne Improvised Explosive Device (VBIED) outside the consulate compound. Earlier reports suggested that the Afghan national security forces thwarted a terrorist attack plot in Herat by seizing a vehicle packed with explosives. Local officials said vehicle was seized by the security forces while it was parked close to the Indian consulate. Provincial police spokesman Abdul Rauf Ahmadi confirmed that the vehicle was identified by the security forces and was defused on time. He said police discovered explosives, fuses and remote controls from the vehicle which are normally used in suicide attacks. The anti-government armed militant groups have not commented regarding the report so far. The insurgency activities by the anti-government armed militant groups have been rampant during the recent weeks in various provinces of the country including capital Kabul. This comes as a group of heavily armed insurgents attempted to storm into the Indian consulate in northern Mazar-e-Sharif city of Afghanistan on Sunday. The militants were forced to enter into a house near the consulate building and continued to resist the Afghan security forces for at least 25 hours. (KP)

## Afghan-Pak to Synchronise Polio Campaigns

KABUL - Polio has remained endemic in Afghanistan and Pakistan and to mitigate a further outbreak, the two nations will cooperate to promote their polio campaigns. A three-member delegation from the Afghan national polio team will visit Pakistan to monitor the campaign beginning in Pakistan on January 11. The head of Pakistan's Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), said that one type of virus, R4B5C Dr Rana Safdar, had been travelling from Nangarhar to Khyber and onwards to other parts of both countries, reported



the Dawn. The EOC head added that Polio campaigns will be started on the same day on both sides of the border to ensure that every child is vaccinated even if he or she is travelling. The teams agreed to monitor nomadic movement across the border and strengthen

transit vaccination as well as holding synchronised polio campaigns over the next five months. Additionally, national representatives from both countries will meet on a quarterly basis through video conferences and through biannual meetings. (ANI)

## Clashes Between Gov't Forces, Taliban Militants Continue in Lashkargah

LASHKAR GAH - Fierce fighting between government forces and Taliban militants for control of Helmand province has entered third month and the latter has offered stiff resistance. Since last November, according to health workers in Helmand's provincial capital Lashkar Gah, 518 dead and injured including military personnel and civilians have been taken to hospitals. Asmatullah Dawlatzai, commander of the 5th Police Zone in Helmand, Thursday con-

firmed that bloody fighting between Taliban and security forces in the province has been continuing, saying 2015 was the bloodiest year there. Hundreds of people with majority of them Taliban militants have lost their lives in the war for control of Helmand since last November, the official asserted. Meanwhile, Taliban militants who have been fighting in Helmand province, in online statements, have claimed advances and expanding territories in the troubled prov-

ince. Taliban's major focus is put on the strategically important Sangin and Marja districts over the past couple of months, and if captured by the militants, according to military analysts, the districts would enable the armed outfit to cut supply lines to government forces in Lashkar Gah. The Taliban outfit has claimed destroying eight armoured vehicles and killing and injuring more than 20 soldiers in Marja ... (More on P4)...(12)

## Some 60 Taliban Fighters Killed in Afghanistan in one Day

KABUL - At least 60 Taliban militants have been killed in the past 24 hours during a special operation conducted in different parts of Afghanistan, Defense Ministry spokesman Brig. Gen. Dawlat Waziri said Friday. According to the Pajhwok news agency, citing Waziri, raids were carried out in 13 Afghan provinces. Four militants were reportedly arrested and 14 were injured. The security staff seized weapons and ammunition from the militants. The security situation in Afghanistan has significantly worsened in the last months, with the violent Islamist group Taliban carrying out offensives on the country's big cities. In late September, the militants briefly captured the provincial capital, Kunduz - home to some 300,000 people - and attempted to seize the city of Ghazni, south of Kabul, in October. (Sputnik)