

<b>Jalalabad</b> Clear 12°C 3°C	<b>Ghazni</b> Clear 3°C -7°C	<b>Kandahar</b> Clear 12°C -4°C	<b>Mazar</b> Clear 9°C -1°C	<b>Herat</b> Clear 14°C 1°C	<b>Bamayan</b> Clear -1°C -13°C	<b>Kabul</b> Clear 2°C -12°C
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# Pakistan-Based Terrorists Still a Threat to the U.S: Obama

KABUL - Outgoing U.S President Barack Obama has said that terrorist groups in Pakistan's tribal regions pose an ongoing security threat to the United States, adding that one of the reasons for the U.S's military presence in Afghanistan has been to target these militants. Obama's warning comes as the scale of violence has sharply increased in Afghanistan in recent months. However, the U.S military conducted only three air strikes on terror hideouts in Pakistan in 2016. But U.S attacks on insurgents in Afghanistan increased by 40 percent last year. In addition, Obama has said that his hardest decision during his two terms in office was regarding a massive



troop surge in Afghanistan. "Toughest decision was early in my presidency when I ordered 30,000 more troops into Afghanistan," he said. After a protracted debate in-

side the administration that pitted U.S military commanders against White House advisers, Obama announced the 30,000-troop surge in December 2009. Even after decimat-

ing Al-Qaeda in Pakistan's tribal areas and killing the jihadist group's leader Osama bin Laden, groups in the region still "have both the interest and the capacity if

we don't maintain vigilance to strike against the United States," he said. A fresh report published by the U.S military shows that the U.S forces in 2016 carried out 1,337 military attacks inside Afghanistan, 400 attacks in Libya, 35 air strikes in Yemen, 14 attacks in Somalia and only three attacks on insurgents in Pakistan. "The United States took over a thousand strikes last year 2016 and that is an increase from what took place in 2015 and that is really the result of two authorities that the US forces were provided. Last January the US forces were given the authority to target ISK (Daesh)," said Brig. Gen. Charles Cleveland, spokesperson for US and NATO forces in ...*(More on P4)...(8)*

## NATO Deploys 200 Soldiers in Farah



KABUL - Around 200 NATO soldiers, mainly Italians, have been deployed in Farah province, officials confirmed, after attempts by Taliban fighters in recent months to overrun its capital city. The announcement on Sunday came two days after the Pentagon said it would deploy some 300 US Marines to the southern province of Helmand, where American forces engaged in heated combat until their mission ended in 2014. The troops will mainly train and advise local forces, NATO officials say, but the deployments underscore how foreign forces are increasingly being drawn back into Afghanistan's conflict. "At the request of the Farah provincial governor, Gen. John Nicholson (top US commander in Afghanistan) has authorised approximately 200 coalition members to support Afghan National Defense and Security Forces," NATO said in a statement. "They will conduct their train, advise, assist mission for approximately one week on location." Last year, Taliban fighters attempted to overrun several provincial capitals, from Kunduz ...*(More on P4)...(9)*

## Justice Minister says Elections First, then Loya Jirga



KABUL - Minister of Justice Basir Anwar on Monday said in order for the country to hold a constitutional amendment Loya Jirga, parliamentary and district council elections first need to be held. He said that the National Unity Government (NUG) was however, committed to convening the Loya Jirga, but elections had to come first. "After wrapping up parliamentary and district council elections, on behalf of the national unity government I promise you that InshaAllah (God willing) there is the capacity and commitment within government to convene the Loya Jirga," he said.

Under the NUG political agreement, President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah pledged to convene a Loya Jirga within two years of the signing of the NUG agreement so as to establish the office of prime minister. However, the two year mark passed in September last year and no Loya Jirga has been held. The statement comes a week after Abdullah pledged support to change the current centralized political system to a parliamentary system, however Abdullah clarified that his views shouldn't be interpreted as opposition to the Afghan ...*(More on P4)...(12)*

## Afghanistan, Pakistan Trade Value Takes a Dive



KABUL - Afghanistan and Pakistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industries (APJCCI) on Monday said trade relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have decreased and stressed if the two countries do not revise their trade relations agreement, trade challenges between the two countries will continue. Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) meanwhile urged government to review the Afghanistan-Pakistan Trade and Transit Agreement (APTA). They suggested the current agreement be scrapped and a new one be drawn up between the two countries to include Tajikistan and India.

According to APJCCI statistics, last year's trade value between the two countries dropped by \$1 billion USD to \$1.5 billion USD. In 2015 it was \$2.5 billion USD. "If the APTA is not extended, the rate of trade between the two countries will decrease more and more," said Ahmadullah Afghan, head of APJCCI. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI) also said more customer cooperation, the ease of transit through Karachi and Qasim Khan Ports, allowing Afghan trucks to Waga Port and including Tajikistan and India in the APTA are issues that need to be looked at. According ...*(More on P4)...(13)*

## Families of fallen Afghan Soldiers Receive Apartments

KABUL - The families of certain fallen Afghan soldiers received apartments as President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani announced a major scheme to hand over more apartments to families of fallen security forces members in the next three years. President Ghani handed over the keys of apartments to the families of 14 soldiers who lost their lives. The apartment keys were handed over during a ceremony organized to pay tribute to the fallen soldiers. In his speech during the ceremony, President Ghani promised to prioritize the fallen security forces' families in the housing scheme in coming three years. He said more reforms have been implemented in the security institutions in the past two years, calling corruption one of the key factors in increase ...*(More on P4)...(11)*

## Drive Launched to Wrest Back State Lands in Nangarhar

JALALABAD - Officials in eastern Nangarhar province say a drive has been launched to retake all grabbed lands and no one will be allowed to create hurdle to the campaign. Attaullah Khogyani, the gubernatorial spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan news that the drive was launched on Sunday in compliance with the directive of Governor Gulab Managal. All grabbed lands in Qasimabad were wrested back from illegal occupants in the first stage of the campaign, he said. Some government officials, however, tended to brand the campaign as an eyewash. He said that Ahmad Shah Sadaat, head of the Qasimabad township commission, Jalalabad Mayor Hameedullah Afghan, Urban Department Director Siddique Dawlatzai, security officials and locals were part of the campaign. Illegal constructions were destroyed and a large swath of government land retaken from ...*(More on P4)...(14)*

## Good Russia-US Ties in Afghanistan Interest



KABUL - Former president Hamid Karzai Monday said he supported US president-elect Donald Trump's stance on relations with Russia. Donald Trump, who defeated Hillary Clinton in last year's elections to become 45th president of the United States, is all set to be sworn-in on January 20. Trump has promised having good relations with Russia and praised President Vladimir Putin as a wise man after he did not expel American diplomats from Russia in a tit-for-tat response. Karzai supported Trump's political line towards Russia in terms of having good bilateral relations. On his Twitter account

Karzai said: "Good relations between the US and Russia are essential for peace and stability in Afghanistan and the world." Incumbent US president Barack Obama has accused Russia of meddling in the US elections in

support of Trump and expelled more than 30 Russian diplomats. However, Vladimir Putin has rejected Obama's allegation said they wouldn't expel US diplomats in reaction. Trump welcomed Putin's decision. (Pajhwok)

## Cops Linked to Drug Traders Detained in Helmand

LASHGARGAH - Some security officials have been arrested over their alleged involvement in drug trade and other illegally activities in southern Helmand province, the police chief said Monday. Brig. Gen. Aqa Noor Kintoz told a press conference here that 'crucial' reforms had been brought to the police force during the past one year, thus resulting in reduced security gap. Giving no specific figure, Kintoz said: "We have captured some security officials who had a hand in narcotics trade and other illegally activities and some other officials are under investigation". He said some of the detained officials kept under ages boys with them in checkpoints and others had links with ...*(More on P4)...(10)*

## Afghan Leaders Condole Rafsanjani's Death



KABUL - Afghan government leaders Monday condole the death of former Iranian president Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. A statement from the Presidential Palace said President Ashraf Ghani was saddened at hearing the news of Rafsanjani's demise. Ghani said Rafsanjani during his leadership was an influential man in regional issues and he ruled the hearts of his supporters. The president on behalf of the Afghan government and the people condole with the government and people of Iran over Rafsanjani's death that Iranian media reported resulted from a heart attack. Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Dr. Abdullah Abdullah also said the death of Rafsanjani an 'irrecoverable loss for the Iranian government and people. In a statement

from his office, the CEO said besides playing a vital role in the Islamic Revolution in Iran, Rafsanjani was an academic and influential character. "Rafsanjani during his eight years of leadership had always supported Afghanistan Mujahideen's legitimate efforts and he helped Afghan refugees," Abdullah was quoted as saying. He extended his heart-felt condolences to the Iranian people, particularly to Rafsanjani family and demanded a chosen place for his soul in the Heaven. Meanwhile, former president Hamid Karzai also condole the death of Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani. A statement from his office quoted Karzai as saying, "I want to extend my condolences and sympathies to the government and people of Iran and the bereaved family." (Pajhwok)

## US Ramps up Airstrikes in Afghanistan



WASHINGTON - The U.S. Air Force dramatically increased the number of airstrikes it carried out in Afghanistan in 2016, data released by the military shows, a further sign of growing US involvement in the war following the withdrawal of most coalition troops two years ago. The increased engagement follows the U.S's decision last year to widen the military's authority to conduct offensive operations in Afghanistan amid gains made by the Taliban, its largest insurgency, and Daesh. "The increase in the number of U.S strikes is a direct result of having those additional authorities," U.S Army Brig. Gen. Charles Cleveland said Sunday. "As we move into 2017, U.S forces retain those authorities and will use them aggressively to target [Daesh] and to help the Afghans achieve strategic effects." The number of weapons dropped in Afghanistan in 2016 rose by around 40 percent to 1,337. The U.S Air Force also conducted more than 600 aerial sorties that resulted in at least one strike, almost 50 percent more than the previous year, although the number of overall sorties was slightly lower. The departure of international coalition troops in 2014 left a vacuum that has allowed the Taliban to escalate attacks on the Afghan government and gain territory. Worsening security conditions and a growing Daesh presence in the country last year led President Barack Obama to broaden the U.S military's ...*(More on P4)...(15)*