

Quote of the Day

A life without cause is a life without effect.

Barbarella

Human Rights Watch

Gov't Failed to Improve Human Rights in 2016

KABUL - Human Rights Watch (HRW) said in a recent report that the Afghan government had not made any considerable achievements in improving human rights in 2016 and that internal political rifts and the lack of political will could put the achievements of the past 15 years in jeopardy.

In the report it said 8,000 civilians were killed and wounded in 2016 with a big percentage of these having been carried out by insurgents.

According to the report, in 2016 thousands of families left their homes due to insecurity.



"Government should have protecting civilians and their property as its prior-

ity. But they failed to do so. Thus, they need to look back and concentrate on

protecting civilians," said Musa Mahmoudi, executive director of Afghanistan In-

dependent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC).

The report also stated that in 2016, 12 journalists were killed, the report stated. In addition, it said Taliban and some government departments were guilty of committing violence against journalists.

It stated that government failed to implement its commitments to stop attacks on journalists. As such 2016 had been ...*(More on P4)...*(1)

'Sanctuaries Inside Pakistan Key Operational Issue Faced By Afghan Forces'

WASHINGTON - Gen (rtld) James Mattis, US Defense Secretary nominee, on Thursday told lawmakers that terrorist sanctuaries inside Pakistan was a key operational issue faced by the Afghan security forces.

"Sanctuary and freedom of movement for the Afghan Taliban and associated militant network inside Pakistan territory is a key operational

issue faced by the Afghan security forces," Mattis told members of the Senate Armed Services Committee during his confirmation hearing.

"If confirmed, I will examine efforts to deny sanctuary to extremist forces undermining the stability and security of Afghanistan," Mattis said adding that countries in the region ...*(More on P4)...*(2)

Pakistan Rejects U.S. Allegations on Terrorists' Sanctuaries

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan on Friday rejected U.S. allegations that terrorists still have sanctuaries in Pakistani tribal regions and reiterated that the country does not allow its territory to be used for attacks against any other country. The remarks came after U.S.

State Department spokesman Mark Toner alleged this week that the "safe havens of terrorists still exist" in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas, or FATA. Toner also claimed the "sanctuaries allow terrorists to carry out attacks inside Afghanistan." ...*(More on P4)...*(3)

Afghanistan Disputes US Report on Taliban Gains

KABUL - The Afghan Government on Thursday pushed back against a U.S. Inspector General's report that said Afghan forces are losing significant territory to Taliban insurgents and are not capable of keeping the nation secure.

"These calculations are not constant," Mohammad Radmanesh, a spokesperson for the Afghan defense ministry, told VOA's Afghan service. "Now we have recaptured many areas from the enemy."

On Wednesday, the U.S. Special Inspector General for the Reconstruction of Afghanistan (SIGAR) reported that territory under the Afghan government diminished significantly in 2016 and that the Taliban made large gains.

"The Afghan national defense and security force has not yet been capable of securing all of Afghanistan and has lost territory to the insurgency," SIGAR reported.

"Last August, the U.S. military mission in Afghanistan ... said only 63.4 percent of the country's territory was under government control -- compared to the 72 percent that the military said was controlled by Kabul in November 2015," SIGAR noted.

But the Afghan government said the report does not take into account gains made by Afghan troops in retaking areas after Taliban assaults.

The government said it controls nearly two-thirds of the country's 407 districts. Afghan officials said the Taliban controls 33 districts, less than 10 percent of the national total, and a recent U.S. military assessment lists 116 districts -- more than one-quarter of the country -- as "contested" areas. Overall, defense and interior ministry officials in Kabul said counterinsurgency operations during 2016 by Afghan police and military forces throughout the country killed more than 18,500 enemy fighters and wounded another 12,000. (VoA)

SIGAR ANSF Unable to Provide Security for Whole Country

KABUL - With the imminent arrival of a new administration and Congress in the U.S, which will inherit a 15-year, \$115 billion USD investment in Afghanistan, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan (SIGAR) has rendered a High-Risk List. SIGAR states the list outlines critical areas threatening reconstruction in Afghanistan and is for the new administration and Congress to consider when crafting policies. The report stated the "price has been high". It said since 2001, 2,247 U.S. military personnel have died



and more than 20,000 have been wounded in Afghanistan. Adjusted for inflation, the U.S. has spent more on Afghanistan's reconstruction than it did on the Marshall Plan to rebuild Western Eu-

rope after World War II and that reconstructing Afghanistan has been the largest expenditure to rebuild a single country in our nation's history. The report ...*(More on P4)...*(5)

Atmar Sees Foreign Hand Behind Kandahar Bombing



KANDAHAR CITY - National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar has said a technical team had been tasked by the president with investigating the attack on the governor house in southern Kandahar province. Atmar and other high-level officials of interior and defense ministries arrived in Kandahar City, the provincial capital, on Wednesday. He also spoke to reporters at the

205th Atal Military Corps headquarters. Atmar said he had arrived in Kandahar following directives from the president to step up the investigations, condole the death of senior officials and inquire after the health of the wounded. He added preliminary information showed the attack was perpetrated by the foreign enemies of Afghanistan against ...*(More on P4)...*(6)

Delay in Offensive Irks Imam Sahib Residents, Officials

KUNDUZ CITY - The residents and local officials of Imam Sahib District in northern Kunduz province have been worried over the growing insecurity and said clearing operation in the district had been postponed without reason. Imamuddin Qurishi, the town's administrative Chief, told Pajhwok Afghan News,

situation would get worsen in the spring if clearing operation was not launched in the district now.

"We want the government to order security forces stationed in the district to conduct clearing operation because situation was getting bad with each passing day." He added clearing operation in ...*(More on P4)...*(7)

Herat Officials Assailed for Spurning Access to Info Law

HERAT CITY - A number of media organisations and journalists in western Herat province complain of the government's double standards on access to information. They claim having concrete evidence of provincial officials sharing first-hand information with certain reporters of their choice and denying the same favour to others. Some journalists and media outlets warn of boycotting the news coverage of the relevant departments and officials if the discriminatory practice persisted.

Based on the access to information law, no government department or official is allowed to hide information from journalists or share it only with certain media sources.

The journalists want media protection organisations to seriously investigate the discriminatory attitude of the officials concerned. Shekib Shams, a journalist in Herat, told Pajhwok Afghan News Herat officials had long been discriminating among media representative in terms of access to information. Arifa Saboori, another journalist, says: "Access to information ...*(More on P4)...*(8)

UN Rise in Afghans Returning Home Threatens Overstretched Resources

LONDON - More than 9,400 undocumented Afghans have returned home from Iran and Pakistan in the first week of 2017, raising concerns over how the war-torn Asian nation will cope with the rising influx, the United Nations said on Wednesday. The vast majority were young men crossing the border from Iran.

Although repatriation is not compulsory, the Pakistani government has stepped up pressure to send people back amid growing local animosity towards Afghan refugees. The United Nations migration agency - the International Organization for Migration (IOM) - said most returnees from Iran were young men deported while looking for work, or on the migration



route to Europe. Future patterns were hard to predict. "It can be very unpredictable as there are a lot of factors at play that could push returns up at any day," said Matthew Graydon, a U.N. spokesman in Afghanistan. Graydon said unregistered Afghans face greater challenges than returnees who are officially logged as refugees

because they are not entitled to cash grants from aid agencies, nor other benefits such as education or government-allocated land.

In the first week of 2017, 1,643 unregistered Afghans chose to return or were deported from Pakistan, and 7,776 returned from Iran, according to the IOM, with more expected as ...*(More on P4)...*(4)

Afghans Have Long Been Victims of Terror: King Salman



KABUL - The Saudi king, conveying his condolences to President Ghani and the Afghan nation, has denounced recent Kandahar and Kabul bombings as a violation of Islamic teachings.

A statement from the Presidential Palace said King Salman bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud, during a telephonic communication on Wednesday evening, shared his grief with Ashraf Ghani. It said the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques denounced the attacks in Kabul, Kandahar and Helmand and conveyed his condolences to Ghani and the Afghan people. The Afghan people had been victims of terrorism, he noted, pledging joint efforts for eradicating the threat. Saudi Arabia stood with Afghanistan in the fight against terror, he added.

Ghani thanked the king for extending condolences to the Afghans, while stressing a joint struggle against the menace. "As a follower of Islam, I will not permit a small insurgent group to victimise innocent people in violation of Islamic teachings and Afghan values in justifying their subversive activities." ...*(More on P4)...*(9)

Serious Threats Exist in Kabul, US Embassy Warn Citizens



KABUL - The US Embassy in Kabul has issued a security alert to citizens in capital Kabul following a series of deadly attacks in the main cities of the country, including capital Kabul that left scores of people dead or wounded.

"The U.S. Embassy in Kabul reminds U.S. citizens that serious threats to safety and security exist in the city of Kabul and throughout Afghanistan," the US Embassy said in a statement.

The statement further added "The threat of kidnapping is high. Militant groups often plan attacks against locations and individuals with Afghan and possible American connections, including: Afghan and U.S. government facilities, foreign embassies, military installations, commercial entities, non-governmental organization offices, restaurants, hotels, guest houses, airports, and educational centers."

According to the US Embassy, the potential also exists for protests to occur in Afghan cities on short notice. This comes as the militant groups carried out a coordinated attack in West of Kabul city earlier this ...*(More on P4)...*(10)



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