

**Nationwide Ulema Council Expresses Solidarity with ANSF**



KABUL - As the trend of supporting Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) continues countrywide, the National Ulema Council, Afghanistan's largest religious body, has announced broad support for the security forces, a council whose decisions are honored nationwide. In a gathering of more than 5,000 religious scholars from across the country on Wednesday in Kabul, the participants raised their voices with slogans of "Long Live Afghan Forces."

From young to old, men to women, so far thousands of citizens in different shapes have come up to show their solidarity with the security forces that are now assuming the overall security responsibility of the country after the NATO-led international troops formally ended their 13-year combat mission in war-torn Afghanistan.

"Afghanistan's religious leaders will support the security forces to protect Afghanistan's independence and the territorial integrity," the council member Rajab Ali Rashid said.

They called on the security forces to not miss any chance in suppressing the country's enemies.

"It is the responsibility of all religious leaders to support the security forces because if our safety is not ensured, we can't practice our rituals as well," another member named Mawlawi Ataullah Faizani said.

In addition, the participants demanded the government to further mobilize and support the security forces as the burden of citizens' safety is now totally upon their shoulders.

Meanwhile, Afghanistan's Youth Union also came forward to announce solidarity with the security forces ...*(More on P4)...(2)*

**Afghanistan to Become Major Copper Producer: Ghani**

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani hopes Afghanistan will become a giant copper and iron producer in the next two decades, his office said on Wednesday.

At a meeting with Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry officials during his recent visit to the UAE, Ghani highlighted the enormous investment opportunities offered his administration.

A statement from the Presidential Palace quoted Ghani as touting lucrative investment chances in mining, telecommunications, agriculture and civilian aviation sectors.

While appreciating the UAE



investment in different sectors of Afghanistan's economy, he wooed the Arab entrepreneurs to explore more opportunities in the conflict-devastated country.

"In the next 20 years, our country will become one of the world's leading copper and iron-producing nations," the president told his interlocutors. UAE trade leaders expressed their willingness to invest in aviation, telecom, mining, fuel exploration and agriculture sectors, according to the statement, which said both sides agreed to enhance bilateral cooperation. A day earlier, Abu Dhabi Crown ...*(More on P4)...(1)*

**Amended Draft Budget to Land in Parliament Next Week**

KABUL - After being rejected by the Wolesi Jirga, an amended draft budget for the current fiscal year would be presented to the lower house of parliament next week, a lawmaker said on Wednesday.

Wolesi Jirga's Finance Commission head Amir Khan Yar said the amendments made to the draft by the Ministry of Finance included a 4.2 percent increase in the general budget and funding for 443 incomplete projects.

The general spending for 2015 was worth 275 billion afs and for development spending 183 billion afs - projections that were flatly rejected on the floor of the house



**Ministry of Finance**  
Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

on Dec 24.

The lawmakers called the draft unfair and unbalanced. "The fate of incomplete projects has been addressed and another 443 schemes that had been excluded have been brought back to the revised version," Yar explained. The new draft will be tabled for voting on Monday.

MP Ramazan Bashardost said

the draft had not been approved by parliament yet, but some 45 million afs had already been taken for salaries of the chief executive office personnel.

Sadeqi Zada Nili, another lawmaker, said the government needed to clarify the administrative structures of the newly-established offices of the chief executive and special representative on good governance and reforms. *(Pajhwok)*

**Karimov against Withdrawal of Int'l Forces from Afghanistan**

BISHKEK - President of Uzbekistan, Islam Karimov, said that the withdrawal of peacekeeping forces from Afghanistan is a serious challenge for all Central Asian countries.

It is impossible not to recognize the significant expansion of the range of threats to international security and stability, the prevalence of force use in conflicts resolving, increasing geopolitical competition for control over natural resources and communications, the spread of nuclear technology and weapons of mass destruction, activation of the forces of international terrorism and extremism, the aggravation of inter-ethnic and inter-religious confrontation, said the President. ...*(More on P4)...(3)*



**No Safe Havens for Terrorists in Afghanistan: Campbell**

KABUL - NATO's top commander in Afghanistan US General John Campbell on Wednesday insisted on jointly countering terrorism and hoped the international community would continue cooperating with Kabul.

Campbell expressed these views during a meeting with Chief Executive Officer (CEO)



Abdullah Abdullah, a statement from the latter's office said.

The NATO commander said they would not allow Afghanistan to

become a terrorist safe haven again, urging the unity government to intensify its efforts for countering terrorism.

But in an interview to The Hill, Campbell said he was "worried" about terrorists making a comeback unless the US and Afghan forces kept pressure on them. Campbell avoided giving ...*(More on P4)...(4)*

**Iran's FM to Visit Afghanistan**

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will visit Afghanistan in the near future, spokesperson for the Iranian Foreign Ministry Marziya Afkham was quoted Jan. 14 by the Iranian news agency ISNA as saying.

She said that a program of the visit is being prepared and the visit will be made in the near future.

"Iran and the new Afghan government are negotiating," she said. "Afghanistan and Iran are two neighboring countries and the relations between them are being developed. A document, aimed at comprehensive development of cooperation and ...*(More on P4)...(5)*

**Kabul Police Foils Massive Terrorist Attack Plan**



KABUL - The police in the heavily fortified capital Kabul have neutralized a huge plan of terrorists to carry out coordinated attacks in the city, security sources said.

At least 17 suspected terrorists were arrested last night after the police and intelligence special forces raided a house in Bagrami district of Kabul, Kabul

Police Chief Abdul Rahman Rahimi told TOLONews.

"Yesterday we were informed that the insurgents are about to distribute the suicide vests in the city to carry out a series of attacks," Rahimi said.

One of the suicide bombers blew himself up during the raid, he said, adding several ...*(More on P4)...(7)*

**550 Schools Stay Closed Across the Country**

MAZAR-I-SHARIF - Acting Minister of Education Mohammad Asif Nang on Wednesday said that 1,000 schools banned by militants in restive areas of different provinces had been reopened.

Another 550 schools still remained closed in the militancy-hit areas, he said at the opening ceremony for a professional and technical studies complex in Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of northern Balkh province.

Most of the closed schools are situated in 70 insecure districts, depriving 25,000 students of getting education. But reliable sources revealed that a total of 1,200 schools remained closed across the country.

For his part, Nang said Kandahar was among the provinces where the number of closed schools was high. All of the shut schools are located in Pashtun-dominated localities, he explained.

Three years back, he recalled, the number of closed schools stood at more than 1,650. The conflict has killed education officials and students.

Over 4,000 officials, including teachers, have been killed as result of explosions, suicide attacks and bombardment in the past seven years, the acting minister said. *(Pajhwok)*



**IS Fighters Run Training Centre, Find Foothold in Farah**

FARAH CITY - Gunmen linked to the Islamic State (IS) have established a training centre in the Khaki-Safaid district of western Farah province, local officials said on Wednesday.

The district chief, Abdul Khaliq Noorzai, told Pajhwok Afghan News the IS - a group fighting in Iraq and Syria - had emerged in ...*(More on P4)...(6)*

