

Quote of the Day

In violence we forget
who we are.

Mary McCarthy

Ghani Warns Against Glorification of Terrorists, Saboteurs

KABUL - The government would not allow anyone to call the killers of Afghans the angels of peace by exploiting the freedom of speech, the Presidential Palace said on Saturday.

A statement from the Palace said that the government respected the freedom of speech but would not let anyone glorify the killers of innocent women and children and other saboteurs.

"The terrorists, who inflict miseries on our people on a daily basis to please outsiders, deserve to be eliminated. Our security forces are legitimately fighting against these groups," the statement added.

Afghan leaders, who respected all nations, were pained by disrespect to them, the statement said, adding no



move against national figures was acceptable to the government and people. The Presidential Palace advised the people and media

outlets no to be influenced by the enemies' propaganda aimed at sowing seeds of disunity among them at the critical juncture the country

stood at. However, the president's office did not provide details about the killers and saboteurs. Recent social media

reports quoted High Peace Council (HPC) member Abdul Hakim as describing Taliban the angels of peace. (Pajhwok)

Merkel Urges United States to Stick to International Cooperation

PERL-NENNIG, Germany - German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday urged the United States to stick to multilateral cooperation, saying a trend towards protectionism was a risk to prosperity.

The United States is Germany's most important trading partner and the protectionist rhetoric of U.S. President-elect Donald Trump has unnerved exporters in Europe's biggest economy. Germany holds the presidency of the G20 leading economies this year, a platform Merkel wants to use to safeguard multilateral cooperation.

Speaking after a meeting of senior members of her center-right CDU party in the western German town of Perl-Nennig, Merkel said all countries were better off if they worked together instead



of isolating themselves. A good example was the international response after the global financial crisis that started in the United States in 2008, Merkel said. "The response to the financial crisis was not a response that was based on isolation, but a response that was based on cooperation, on common rules of regulation, including the financial markets," Merkel said. Asked when she would ... (More on P4)...(1)

MPs See Insider's Hand in Kandahar Attack

KABUL - Lawmakers on Saturday said the guest-house bomb attack in southern Kandahar province was 'questionable' and that the attackers had insider's support.

Eleven people, including five diplomats from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), were killed and 18 others wounded in the powerful blast in a guesthouse in the governor's house in Kandahar City, the provincial capital, last Tuesday.

The UAE ambassador and the Kandahar governor were among those wounded in the blast and the deputy governor and other senior officials were among the dead.

Arif Rahmani, a lower house or Wolesi Jirga member from southern Ghazni province, told today's session: "This attack was accurately engineered and was far from the ability of Taliban, the cause of the crime should be unveiled."

Mohammad Naim Lalai Hamidzai from Kandahar called the attack as 'questionable' and said a joint government-parliament delegation should be sent to Kandahar for a comprehensive investigation into the incident.

"The attack has created doubts and suspicion among people," he said.

His colleague, Saleh Mohammad from Kunar province, said anyone who had committed negligence in preventing the attack should be interrogated.

"Wolesi Jirga is responsible to seriously investigate the incident and not to simply ignore it," he said.

Zuhair Saadat, who represents Panjsher province in the lower house, said some people were making propaganda in the interest of the enemy and those involved in the Kandahar attack were enemy infiltrators.

Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim called the last week assault ... (More on P4)...(3)

WJ Rejects Amended Next Year's Budget

KABUL - The Wolesi Jirga or lower house of parliament on Saturday refused to approve an amended version of next fiscal year's budget over what lawmakers called imbalanced accounts.

According to the Ministry of Finance (MoF), about 287 billion Afs has been set aside for general expenses and nearly 178 billion afs for development activities in the budget for the new fiscal year that starts from March 29, 2017.

Thirty-two percent of the budget -- 150 billion afs -- would come from domestic revenues and the rest from the international community in aid.



A 36 percent of the budget would go to the security sector, 21 percent to the infrastructure development, 13 percent to education, six percent to agriculture and the rest to other sectors.

Amir Khan Yar, who heads the lower house's financial commission, presenting his report about the budget to today session, said: "The lawmakers had extensively discussed ... (More on P4)...(2)

Election Watchdog IEC Faces Serious Challenges



KABUL - Institutions overseeing the election process on Sunday said the Independent Election Commission (IEC) has not finalized its election plans and that parliamentary elections will probably not happen this year.

Although the new commissioners were introduced by President Ashraf Ghani more than a month ago, it is still not known what progress the commission has made.

Election Watch Afghanistan (EWA) said IEC has failed to make good progress, and that the commission has not yet recruited all its staff.

"According to the new election law, the commissioners should introduce to the president three professional candidates for the head of the IEC's secretariat and three candidates for the Independent Electoral Complaints Commission's (IECC) secretariat position. Then the president will choose two persons as

secretariat heads of IEC and IECC, but they failed to do such an easy task," said Habibullah Shinwari, spokesman for EWA.

Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan (TEFA) also said political interference in the work of the IEC has slowed down progress by the commission.

"A limited number of commissioners are trying to damage the team's work because of their own interests. Also there are external pressures on the commissioners, especially in the appointment process. And lack of resources is another problem that has created challenges for the IEC," said Naeem Ayubzada, head of TEFA.

Parliament Members (MPs) also criticized the IEC for not having made significant progress in terms of bringing reforms and holding elections. "So long as elections are postponed, ... (More on P4)...(4)

Ghazni Mayor Resigns Amid Claims He Was Sacked

GHAZNI CITY - The mayor for southern Ghazni province on Saturday resigned but some provincial council members said the mayor had been sacked days before.

Feraidon Ahmadi has been serving as Ghazni mayor for the past three years.

Around 10 months back, Ahmadi was removed from his duty and replaced with Nasir Ahmad Lalizai following a presidential order.

However, some people in Ghazni opposed Lalizai's appointment as mayor and demanded Ahmadi's reinstatement.

The president, in response to people's demand, reappointed Ahmadi as mayor but the action was this time opposed by a number of provincial council members.

Feraidon Ahmadi, talking at a press conference today in Ghazni, said he had resigned without any political pressure.

"I have health problems and cannot continue my duty, I hope government leaders would accept my resignation," he said. On the other hand, Abdul Jamay Jamay, a provincial council member, told Pajhwok ... (More on P4)...(5)

Russia Calls for Intra-Afghan Dialogue, End to Violence

KABUL - Moscow has asked the warring parties in Afghanistan, primarily the Taliban movement, to renounce violence and take urgent action to launch intra-Afghan dialogue.

The Russian foreign ministry spokesperson told a media briefing in Moscow. The security situation in Afghanistan remains challenging and number of terrorist attacks on the rise.

Maria Zakharova noted the armed opposition had somewhat scaled back its offensive, a usual tactic in the winter.

While condemning the heinous terrorist attack on January 10, she said there was no justification for such acts. "Our sympathy go out to all victims, fami-



lies of the deceased and colleagues, foreign diplomats.

"We hope that the masterminds and perpetrators of these terrorist attacks will receive the punishment they deserve." The spokesperson was quoted in a statement from the

Russian embassy here. The suicide bombings in Kabul, Helmand and Kandahar provinces killed nearly 50 people and wounded over 90. The terrorists targeted members of parliament in Kabul and the UAE ambassador and diplomats in Kandahar. (Pajhwok)

NATO Report Shows over 10 Pct of Women in Armed Forces



BRUSSELS - NATO on Friday said in a report that the representation of women in armed forces of NATO members has increased to 10.8 percent in 2015, reaching the highest since 1999.

The organization on Friday published an annual review on gender in military.

The report shows progress has been made across the alliance regarding the implementation of the gender perspectives in operations as the part of women in NATO operations rose to 6.4 percent in 2015.

In addition, more than 92 percent of NATO members has included gender perspectives in their military training and exercises.

According to the report, in 2015, 84.6 percent of NATO members have all positions open to women in the armed forces, which is 14 percent more than the previous year. (Xinhua)

Mattis US to Incentivize Pakistan's Cooperation



WASHINGTON - US defence secretary-designate James Mattis has said that the Trump administration would offer incentives to Pakistan to cooperate with the United States on critical issues.

At his confirmation hearing at the Senate Armed Forces Committee, Mr Mattis underlined the need to stay engaged with Pakistan while asking it to do more to eradicate terrorism from the region.

"If confirmed, I will work with the State Department and the Congress to incentivise Pakistan's cooperation on issues critical to our national interests and the region's security, with focus on Pakistan's need to expel or neutralise externally-focused militant groups that operate within its borders," Mr Mattis told the committee while responding to a question.

Mr Mattis, a general who retired from the US Marine Corps in 2013, has long experience of dealing with both Afghanistan and Pakistan, first as a combat officer and then as commander of the US Central Command.

He was known in the armed forces as "Mad Dog Mattis" for his aggressive style but was widely respected as a courageous officer. (Monitoring Desk)



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