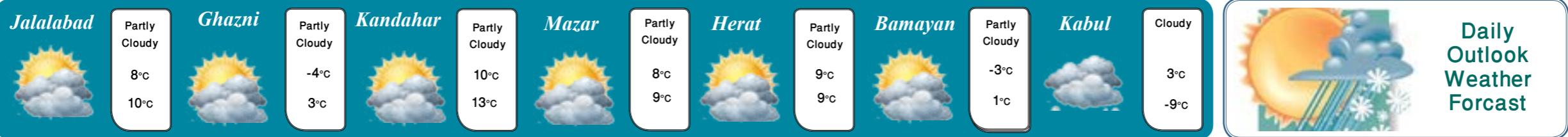


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January 18, 2017



IEC Consultation Meeting Discusses Transparency in Future Elections

KABUL - Independent Election Commission (IEC) on Tuesday held consultative meeting with different groups of people in order to provide a credible environment for the conduct of upcoming Wolesi Jirga and district council elections.

IEC held its first consultative meeting with representatives of political parties in the capital Kabul today. The meeting talked about different issues including minimizing election constituencies. The IEC also discussed its future development programmes with the participants.

IEC chief, Najibullah Ahmadzai, who attended the meeting, said that political parties were the important part of election processes because they were present in all phases of elections.

"We are trying to hold fair,



transparent and free of fraud elections as well as restore public trust on the election process by consulting with political parties and civil society organisations," he said. There are around 7,000 vot-

ing centers placed in residential buildings in all over Afghanistan but the IEC is working on a plan to provide proper locations for the voting centers so people can easily access them, Ahmadzai added.

He said 21 million voter cards have so far distributed and the IEC was responsible to provide a new list of people eligible to vote and avoid distribution of extra voter

cards. An IEC commissioner, Maazullah Dawlati, said that distribution of voter cards process was faced with problems over the past one decade as a number of them were distributed based on invalid documents that paved the way for fraud.

Abbas Basir, representative of Hizb-I-Wahdat Islami party, in the sidelines of the meeting, told Pajhwok Afghan News that election transparency could not be ensured with slogans.

"We worry that changing the location of polling stations and the election system to single seat would pave the way for more interference, we are doubtful about the future of elections," he said.

Basir called political parties' oversight on election processes ... (More on P4)...(7)

40 Percent of Logar Schools without Buildings



PUL-I-ALAM - Forty percent of schools in central Logar province do not have buildings and students have to study under the open sky without basic education facilities, an official said on Tuesday. Education department spokesman Mohammad Shahpur Arab told Pajhwok Afghan News 110 schools across the province were without buildings. He said 23 schools in Puli-Alam, 24 in Baraki Barak district, 22 in Mohammad Agha, 14 in Charkh, 13 in Azra, 10 in Khussi district and five in Kharwar lacked buildings. According to Arab, more than 48,000 students had to study under tents or temporary roofs. Baraki Rajan, Padkhab-i-Roghani, Abdul Rahman, Sabi Kochi, Mir Ghias, Nasaro, Pashtoonabad and business schools are without buildings. "It is a huge challenge for us. An enabling environment is the most important thing in getting education," he remarked, saying the issue had been discussed with the governor's house and charity organisations. Zarghona, a student at Baraki Rajan ... (More on P4)...(8)

Hekmatyar to Appear Soon in Kabul: Amin



KABUL - Hizb-I-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) on Tuesday said it would have a wide presence in future elections and did not worry about the sanctions imposed on the party's leader, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar who would soon appear in the capital Kabul.

Mohammad Amin Karim, head of the HIA delegation negotiating with the Afghan government, told the media today that they did not worry about the sanctions imposed on the leadership of the party as it was the responsibility of the government to remove them.

He said the Afghan government and HIA were working on removing the name of Hekmatyar and the party's other members from the UN black list.

About France's request from UN not to remove HIA leadership from the blacklist, he said that the French government assured them that there was no problem from their

side and differences over the issue was an internal problem of France which has been resolved.

About Russia stance, he said that the Russian government did not take any formal position about the removal of Hekmatyar from UN black list. Amin assured all the sanctions against the HIA would be cleared in the near future.

Arrival of Hekmatyar to Kabul would not be depended

to the removal of his from the black list, but only technical and logistic measures were needed to be taken for his welcoming, he added.

HIA during its efforts in the past stressed on election based government systems so it would widely participate and oversee the upcoming presidential and parliamentary elections, Amin added.

About the releasing of political ... (More on P4)...(9)

ANP Concerned at Tense Kabul-Islamabad Relations



PESHAWAR - Pakistan's Awami National Party (ANP) has voiced its concern over the increasingly frigid relations between Kabul and Islamabad.

Ties between the neighbours, long haunted by mistrust, have deteriorated after a series of deadly attacks and an intensifying Taliban insurgency in Afghanistan.

Afghan authorities believe the security situation will see a marked improvement if Pakistan honestly cooperates with the war-torn country on bringing Taliban to the negotiating table.

At a meeting in Charsadda district on Monday, the ANP leadership demanded a peace process should be initiated in

the region and an early return of IDPs to their homes ensured.

The party also urged the government to hold an All Parties Conference to evolve a mechanism for hearing terrorism cases in courts.

Chaired by ANP chief Asfandyar Wali Khan and attended by party lawmakers, the meeting said tense ties between the neighbours were not in the interest of the region. (Pajhwok)

Hundreds of Youth from Ghazni Die on Way to Europe



GAZNI CITY - Hundreds of people from two districts of southern Ghazni province, in an attempt to make it to Europe illegally, have lost their lives at sea, officials said on Tuesday.

The roads in this northern province are largely dirt tracks which in winter turn into mud tracks that end up being completely snowed over.

"The roads are snowed in every winter due to government's inattention. We will face a crisis if government does not do something about it," he said, referring to the fact that there is no assistance to clear roads of the snow.

"Government will not be able to reopen the roads as they are closed now. Badakhshan residents always face a shortage of food and other facilities due to road closures in winters," said Sayed Omar Bahir, a civil society activist in Badakhshan.

Meanwhile, local officials said at least 23 avalanches have occurred so far in the districts but that there have been no casualties.

"It is ... (More on P4)...(11)

son, two cousins and other relatives have drowned. Two of them have drowned. "Those who did reach Europe have been denied asylum so far. They regret travelling abroad; one of my cousins is living in Germany and another in Indonesia and their mother is suffering from mental illness," Shima added.

Another resident of Jaghori, Sharifa, said one or two persons from every family in the district had left Europe, giving up their education while going along with their families to uncertain destinations.

Many of them have lost their lives on the way, she lamented, asking the government to prevent illegal immigration.

Ali Hussain, a resident of Malsitan district, said his brother had also left Afghanistan along with many other people last year. "My brother and two other people drowned and died," he said.

A provincial council member, ... (More on P4)...(12)

Shayesteh Reaches Agreement with Iran's Paykan

TEHRAN - Afghanistan national football team's captain Faysal Shayesteh has reportedly reached an agreement with Iran Professional League team Paykan.

Shayesteh started professional football career in Germany and started to play for the Afghanistan national football team in 2014.

The 25-year-old midfielder joined Bulgaria's Etar Veliko Tarnovo in 2013 and after one year he moved to Thai club Songkhla United.

Shayesteh currently plays for Malaysian football club Pahang FA. He has made 24 appearances for Afghanistan and scored 17 goals. Paykan has recently signed a contract with French midfielder Jeremy Manzorro. Afghan keeper Owais Azizi was on the verge of joining Iranian football club Naft Tehran in early January. (Monitoring Desk)

Badakhshan Archaeological Sites Grabbed by Strongmen

FAIZABAD - Powerful individuals and government departments have grabbed usurped lands containing important archaeological sites in northeastern Badakhshan province, an official said on Tuesday.

Director of Information and Culture Syed Hussain Naheeb told Pajhwok Afghan News they had been able to retake less than an acre of the grabbed land after several years of efforts.

"We wrested back this small piece of land in the limits of Mir Yar Baig's tomb in forth municipality district of Faizabad, the provincial capital," he said. A case was filed in court which decided in the favour of the department, Naheeb added.

Part of the area surrounding Khirqa-i-Mubarak had been grabbed by the Hajj and Religious Affairs department, he alleged.

Residential plots have been constructed on the land, part of which has been converted into a graveyard, according to the director, who called the grabbing of historical sites a violation of the law.

Naheeb ... (More on P4)...(13)

Farah Airport Being Upgraded to International Standards



FARAH CITY - An airport in western Farah province would be converted into an international facility with the cooperation of the Qatar-based organisation, an official said on Tuesday.

Shaikh Ali Bin Abdullah Al Sani, head of the Al Gharafa who is currently staying in Farah, inaugurated for upgrading the airport to international standards.

Capt. Hamid Zahid, head of the transport ministry's civil aviation department, said the development work would be completed in 18 months by the Global Operation Construction Company.

During the period, the airport runway would be expanded from 1,700 to 2,500 metres. In addition, the terminal, fire brigade system and air traffic control (ATC) tower will be

upgraded.

He put the project cost at \$4.5 million, which would be provided by Al Gharafa. Zahid hailed Qatar and Afghanistan as close friends, calling assistance from Al Gharafa a positive gesture.

Shaikh Abdullah Al Sani pledged more cooperation with and assistance to Afghanistan. He said the airport upgrading was a part of their development projects in Farah.

The organization is all poised to launch another programme worth \$20 million for the development of the livestock sector in the province.

"Earlier we planted a huge date farm in Farah and in future we plan to install a date-processing factory as well," said Abdullah.

He ... (More on P4)...(10)

37 Militants Killed, 3 Detained: MoD

KABUL - About 37 Taliban militants have been killed as the Afghan security forces carried out military operations elsewhere within the last 24 hours, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) on Tuesday. "Afghan National Defense and Security Forces conducted offensives in order to protect lives and properties of people in countryside within the last 24 hours. As a result, 37 insurgents were killed, 14 wounded and three suspects were arrested," the ministry said in a statement.

Among the killed were eight key members of Taliban in southern Helmand province, according to the statement.

The security forces also destroyed four insurgents' strong hideouts and defused six landmines recently planted by the militants, it said. However, the statement did not disclose if there were any casualties on the side of security forces. The Taliban militants, who has been waging an insurgency since its rule was toppled in late 2001, have yet to make comments. (Xinhua)