

Jalalabad Chance of Rain 36°C 25°C	Ghazni Partly Cloudy 26°C 16°C	Kandahar Partly Cloudy 38°C 28°C	Mazar Clear 38°C 27°C	Herat Clear 36°C 20°C	Bamayan Chance of Rain 19°C 13°C	Kabul Clear 29°C 20°C
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Reports about Omar's Death Being Probed: President Palace

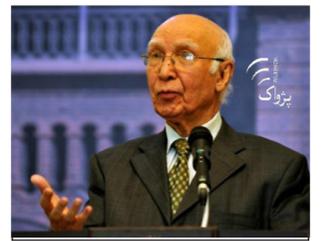
KABUL - Following rumours about Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Mohammad Omar's death, the Presidential Palace said on Wednesday the reports would be investigated soon. Syed Zafar Hashmi, the president's deputy spokesman, told a crowded press conference here they had received information regarding the demise of Mullah Omar through media sources. As and when confirmed, he promised, the government would share accurate information with media and the Afghan nation. He said they were still in the process of looking at the reports.



Fidaee Mahaz, a Taliban splinter group, claimed the death of Mullah Omar in a statement last week. It stated the reclusive Taliban supremo had died two years back and buried in southern Zabul province. The group, alleging sharp divisions within the movement, also accused some Taliban commanders including Mullah Mansoor of killing Mullah Omar Mujahid. An unnamed source close to the one-eyed Taliban leader told a foreign TV channel Omar had passed away in 2012 due to tuberculosis. Only some senior members of the ...*(More on P4)...(5)*

Aziz Reiterates Constructive Engagement with Afghanistan

KABUL - Highlighting Islamabad's efforts to fight terrorism and extremism, a top Pakistani diplomat has reiterated his government's commitment to taking forward the process of constructive engagement with Afghanistan. Advisor to Prime Minister on National Security and Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz held out the assurance at a meeting with a seven-member delegation of the British Parliament at the Pakistani Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Tuesday. A statement from the Paki-



stan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted Aziz as saying Pakistan enjoyed friendly and warm relations with the United Kingdom, which had been further strengthened during the last two years. Aziz highlighted the vision of Prime ...*(More on P4)...(6)*

Five Senior Govt. Officials Sacked over Abuse of Power

JALALABAD - Five senior government officials have been sacked over abuse of power in eastern Nangarhar province. Those fired include police chiefs of Haska Mina and Achin districts as well as three officials from the custom department. A statement issued by Nangarhar Media Office states that these officials were fired after complaints by ordinary citizens. According to the statement, Nangarhar's governor Salim Khan Kundoozi recently paid a visit to the custom department where he met with a number of custom officials and traders bringing goods to Afghanistan through Torkham. The statement adds that a number of traders complained to the governor that they are charged additional tax by the custom department when bringing goods through the border. The press release further adds that after the complaints, the governor investigated the claims and ultimately sacked three officials from this department and introduced them to judiciary. The governor was also receiving non-stop complaints from local residents in Achin and Haska Mina districts regarding the police chiefs, the statement states. "After consultation with the provincial police chief and other security officials as well as collecting more information, the governor issued orders ...*(More on P4)...(9)*

Presidential Palace Employees Have Gone Unpaid for Months

KABUL - Sources inside the Presidential Palace's Administrative Affairs Office have reported that a large number of employees in the executive branch have not been paid their salaries for several months. The sources spoke to TOLONews on condition of anonymity because of the sensitive nature of the subject. Meanwhile, Kabul University Lecturer Qais Mohammadi has substantiated the claims, claiming the number of national unity government employees who have worked unpaid for months could be in the thousands. "The information that we have from the Presidential



Palace is that around 2,000 employees of the Palace and its Administrative Affairs Office have not been paid salaries for the past six months, which is more due to political reasons than financial ones," Mohammadi told TOLONews. Political analysts have suggested the payments could

be getting withheld because elements within the government hope to pressure older employees, many of who transitioned over from the Hamid Karzai administration, to leave their jobs and make room for new staff. According to the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the salaries ...*(More on P4)...(7)*

Kabul Commends Islamabad for Facilitating Peace Talks

KABUL - Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan Janan Mosazai has expressed his gratitude to Pakistan for its facilitative role in the ongoing peace talks between the Afghan government and Taliban. In a meeting with President Mamnoon Hussain at the Aiwan-i-Sadr, Mosazai said Kabul's relations with Islamabad were on the right track due to the vision, dedication and seriousness of the leadership of the two countries. The president said his coun-



try attaches great importance to its relations with Afghanistan. Pakistan was constructively engaged with the Afghan leadership in rebuilding mutual trust and understanding. He lauded the vision of his Afghan counterpart Mohammad Ashraf Ghani. Under his leadership, bilateral relations and cooperation between the two countries had improved significantly, Hussain remarked. The president underscored the ...*(More on P4)...(8)*

Gambia, Russia Sign Historic Anti-Drug Accord that Involves Afghanistan

KABUL - The Gambia and the Russian Federation have signed a historic agreement meant to strengthen cooperation between the two countries in the fight against drug trafficking. Much of the focus fell on the major flow of drug trafficking via Africa and North America and the high cause of destabilization of and trafficking in Afghanistan. Russia's RT reported that illegal drugs have become for terrorist quasi-state groups what gold and foreign currency reserves are for other economies, the head of the Russian state anti-drug agency Victor Ivanov said at



an international conference in Africa this week. The overall annual income from the illegal drugs trade exceeds \$500 billion. This money fuels the financial and organizational basis for new powerful entities that then compete with traditional states, Ivanov said at the Moscow-African anti-drug dialogue event that took place in Gambia's capital Banjul. "Illegal drugs form some sort ...*(More on P4)...(10)*

Balkh Education Sector on Road to Improvement: PC



MAZAR-I-SHARIF - Provincial Council (PC) members in northern Balkh province on Wednesday claimed that in the wake of their efforts, the education sector was showing considerably improvement. Mohammad Ibrahim Khairandish, head of the provincial council, told Pajhwok Afghan News around 300 people daily referred their

problems to the council's office for solution. Most of the problems pertained to the education sector and imbalanced development projects in the Mazar-i-Sharif, the provincial capital, the public representative added. Most of the problems, he said had been resolved as a result of provincial council's efforts. He said that hectic efforts were ...*(More on P4)...(12)*

Kandahar Gardens, Farmlands Parched by Water Shortage



KANDAHAR CITY - Farmers and gardeners from several districts of southern Kandahar province are worried water shortages could leave their crops parched. While some of the towns are going without water, others are faced with an acute scarcity of the resource. But authorities say they are working on a plan to ensure the equitable supply of water to all growers so as to deal with the problem effectively. The water level of Delhi dam, which irrigates most of farmlands in Shah Walikot, Arghandab, Zherai, Panjwai, Maiwand, Dand and Daman districts, has considerably fallen due to ongoing repairs. As a result, farmers from Arghandab, ...*(More on P4)...(13)*

IWA Calls for Reform in Access to Information

KABUL - Officials at Integrity Watch Afghanistan (IWA) on Wednesday criticized the Kabul government for failing to take action to amend the country's access to information legislation in such a way that would enhance access among those who still lack it, especially women. IWA officials emphasized that amending the law could open the way for higher literacy rates among Afghan women. But activists say they have sent civil society, media and international expert-based proposals for reforms to the access to information law and the government has stalled on responding for

months. "We, in agreement with each other, sent a proposal to the president of Afghanistan to bring amendments in to the access to information law so that all people of Afghanistan have equal access to it," IWA representative Habib Muqbel said on Wednesday. The pervasive lack of awareness and sensitivity when it comes to women's issues in Afghanistan is one of the key reasons activists believe Afghan women should have more of a stake in the access to information law. "Inadequate access to information is why more than 70 percent of people, especially women, ...*(More on P4)...(11)*

PC Warns 7 Takhar Districts will Fall to Taliban

TALOQAN - The head of northern Takhar provincial council feared that seven districts in the province might fall to Taliban due to shortage of security forces in the province. Esmatullah Qurbani, head of provincial council, told a press conference that Dash Qala, Yangi Qala, Khwaja Bahu din, Durqad, Chah-i-Ab, and Rastaq districts could easily come in Taliban control. The links to other six districts with Taloqan would be cut off, had Khwaja Ghar fall to militants, he warned, adding that security forces

should mainly focus on security of Khwaja Ghar district. The number of security forces was small while there is lack of coordination among security forces in Khawaja Ghar district, Qurbani said. Col. Mohammad Agha Daood, Takhar deputy police chief, rejected Qurban's assertions and said that Taliban were not strong enough to capture the district. "We have enough security forces for the security of Khwaja Ghar district," he said, rejecting the claims about lack of coordination among the security forces. (Pajhwok)

Ghani off to Germany for Foot Injury Treatment

KABUL - President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Wednesday flew to Germany for the treatment of his foot injury, a statement from the Presidential Palace said. The statement said the president left Kabul in the afternoon for Germany. He decided to leave for Germany after consultations with his doctors. The president suffered foot injuries while observing National Olympic Day a month ago. He delayed his trip due to important visits to other countries and Eid-ul-Fitr celebrations. (Pajhwok)

Coalition Advisers, Afghans Assess Potential of Kandahar Airfield

KANDAHAR CITY - As the coalition draws down, so does the need for bases and facilities throughout the country, meaning a number of these assets will be made available for the government of Afghanistan, as well as private companies and investors. A statement from the NATO Resolute Support mission said that to ensure these facilities are used to boost the economic capacity of Afghanistan; a group of advisers from Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan and the US Department of Commerce are working collaboratively with provincial and national leaders to assist in developing an effective transition plan. "The military or the government does not need all of these assets, so we, as the part of the Commerce Department, in conjunction with CSTC-A, have been asked to do commercial assessments of key bases in Afghanistan to determine their commercial viability to attract both local and international investors," said Walter Koenig, the Commercial Service Officer for the Afghanistan Investment and Reconstruction Task Force. The assets on each base vary from location to location, and can be used by a variety of different entities, from agriculture to mechanical companies to military specific training facilities. "The benefits are the private sector gets the much needed infrastructure at a very low initial cost, all of these assets are able to be retained and used to enable further investment," ...*(More on P4)...(14)*