

Quote of the Day

New Year's Day

We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day.
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Putin Wins Russian Presidential Election, Likely to be Sworn in on May 7

"According to preliminary results, Vladimir Putin won in the election with an unprecedented number of votes," Pamfilova said.



MOSCOW - Russia's incumbent President Vladimir Putin won 76.6 percent of ballots after 99.83 percent of the votes were counted in the presidential election Sunday, Central Election Commission (CEC) Chair Ella Pamfilova con-

firmed Monday. According to the Russian law, a candidate garnering more than half of the votes goes to the Kremlin. Communist Party candidate Pavel Grudinin,

Putin's nearest rival, got 11.9 percent of votes, while the head of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, received 5.66 percent, according to the CEC. Five other candidates received ...*(More on P6)...(1)*



Afghanistan, Iran Trade \$2.48b Goods in 11 Months

KABUL - Afghanistan and Iran traded 5.32 million tonnes of non-oil commodities worth \$2.48 billion in 11 months till Feb. 19, a news report said on Monday.

In terms of tonnage and value, the commodity exchange growth of 18.64 percent and 8.92 percent growth respectively, compared with last year's statistics.

The Financial Tribune reported Iran exported 5.30 million tonnes of goods worth \$2.46 billion to Afghanistan during the period, indicating an increase of 18.79 percent.

Similarly, Iran imported from Afghanistan 22,673 tonnes of goods worth \$18.71 million during the period.

Exports from Afghanistan, seventh biggest export destination for Iran, fell by 7.84 percent. Afghanistan's exports made up 0.07 percent of Iran's total imports. *(Pajhwok)*

HPC Says Peace Offer Has Support of Ulema



KABUL - The High Peace Council's secretariat said the Taliban has not yet responded to the peace offer but that the council has picked up positive signals. Afghanistan's High Peace Council and the Ulema Council held a joint press conference in Kabul on Monday where the HPC secretariat said government's recent peace offer to the Taliban now has widespread support including that of the country's Ulema.

Mohammad Akram Khpalwak, head of HPC's secretariat and the President's Senior Political Adviser, said the peace offer had the support of the youth, civil society, volunteer groups and the Ulema.

He also said the HPC has held meetings around the country and has garnered support from provincial Ulema councils.

Khpalwak said the HPC will expand peace programs from districts through to villages.

According to him the Taliban has still not responded to the peace offer made by President Ashraf Ghani at last month's Kabul Process meeting but that the HPC had picked up a number of signals that has given the council hope.

He meanwhile called on the Taliban to send representatives to the upcoming Ulema peace conference in Jakarta in ...*(More on P6)...(2)*

Iran-Afghanistan to Resolve Chabahar Problems

KABUL - Iran's envoy said his country would work with Afghanistan to find solutions to the Chabahar challenges.

Iranian ambassador to Kabul Mohammad Reza Bahrami said in an interview with TOLONews that Iran and Afghanistan governments will work together to resolve problems around Chabahar Port.

Among the problems is the lack of a standard banking system that limits work and development in the port.

Bahrami said in order to overcome these challenges, Iran and Afghanistan will work together to find appropriate solutions.

According to Bahrami, sanctions in place against Iran by some countries that affect Iran-Afghanistan relations should be removed.

"Those limitations that affect Iran-Afghanistan ties and have been imposed on Iran, should be removed," said Bahrami.

Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) meanwhile said US sanctions against Iran have slowed down the work process at Chabahar and Iran wants these limitations removed by gaining support from other countries.

ACCI's international relations department head Azarakhsh-Hafizi said currently the world's financial systems will not even allow the transfer of \$500 million USD that India wants to invest in Chabahar.

"Although we can send suggestions to our international partners, we are not sure that such issues against Iran will be resolved. Because ...*(More on P6)...(3)*

Saudi to Host Global Scholar Moot on Afghanistan

KABUL - An international scholar conference on Afghanistan is scheduled four months later in Saudi Arabia (SA), a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said on Monday.

Hussain Oni Bestal, ambassador of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC), briefed Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabbani about preparation for holding the ulema moot during a meeting, the MoFA statement said.

The multi-national ulema conference would be attended by scholars from Islamic countries in mid July.



The OIC envoy extended multi-dimensional support to an Afghan-owned and led peace process. Rabbani termed OIC support for the Afghan peace as vital and hailed Bestal's efforts for an effective OIC role in Afghan affairs. *(Pajhwok)*

Afghanistan to Face UAE in Push for a Top Spot



KABUL - UAE are out of the race but can jeopardize Afghanistan's World Cup qualification plans in Tuesday's match.

Afghanistan will take on the United Arab Emirates in their second Super Sixes match in the national team's race for a spot in next year's ICC World Cup.

Both Afghanistan and the United Arab Emirates were a part of the last ICC Cricket World Cup in

2015, but while UAE are already out of the race for a spot in the 2019 edition, Afghanistan are still in the hunt, if only just.

While Afghanistan won their first Super Sixes clash against West Indies last week, they had carried no points into the round from the group stage and consequently sit in fifth spot in the points table with two points.

The UAE ...*(More on P6)...(4)*

ADB Director Reaffirms Support for Afghanistan's Infrastructure Development

The Asian Development Bank's (ADB) Director General for Central and West Asia Department, Werner Liepach has reaffirmed commitment to support Afghanistan's infrastructure development and reform priorities, a statement from the ADB said on Monday.



KABUL - Liepach, concluded a 3-day visit to Kabul today, where he met with President Ashraf Ghani and Minister of Finance Eklil Ahmad Hakimi to discuss ADB's overall country operations, progress under the Country Partnership Strategy, the

statement said.

ADB director also met with Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation, and Livestock Nasir Ahmad Durani; Senior Infrastructure Advisor to Afghanistan President Humayon Qayoumi; Minister of Public Works Yama Yari; Chief

Executive Officer of Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat Amanullah Ghalib; and Director General of Afghanistan Railway Authority Ahmad Yama Shams.

"ADB is fully committed to improving the lives of the people of Afghanistan through developing essential infrastructure in the current difficult situation," Liepach said.

"I met President Ghani today and I am impressed by his leadership and efforts towards development in Afghanistan. ADB will work closely with the government to mobilize additional resources—including through the Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund—to ...*(More on P6)...(5)*