

## Quote of the Day

Our task must be to free ourselves by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature and its beauty  
**Albert Einstein**

Mohammad Sarwar Danish

# Illiteracy Rate in Afghanistan is Terrible



KABUL - Mohammad Sarwar Danish, Second Vice President said on Thursday that the high illiteracy rate in the country

was "terrible" and that many of the country's problems are rooted in this. Speaking at a ceremony to mark the start

of the new school year, Danish said: "64 percent of people (in Afghanistan) over the age of 15 are illiterate". He

said the country needs to fight this phenomenon but added that people were now sending their children to school. In

addition, despite enormous achievements having been made in the education sector in the ...*(More on P4)...(1)*

## Taliban Denies Talks with Pakistan on Afghan Peace Prospects



ISLAMABAD - Afghanistan's Taliban disputes media reports that its representatives recently visited neighboring Pakistan and discussed with officials there the prospect of holding direct peace talks with Kabul. The Taliban have long refused to hold direct talks with the Af-

ghan government, calling it a "puppet" of the United States. "We strongly reject [the media reports] because none of our leaders has traveled to Islamabad, nor has he met with any official there," Zabihullah Mujahid, the insurgency's main spokesman, ...*(More on P4)...(2)*

## Sangin District Center Repositioned as Taliban Advances: Pentagon

WASHINGTON - The Afghan authorities have moved the Sangin district center in the southern province of Helmand about 1.2 miles (2 kilometers) south as the Taliban terror group (banned in Russia) has destroyed infra-

structure in the area, US Department of Defense spokesperson Adam Stump told Sputnik on Thursday.

The spokesperson added that the Afghan government, the Afghan National Defense and ...*(More on P4)...(3)*

## Pak-Afghan Cooperation Critical to Eliminate Terrorism: Envoy

### Flag Hoisting Ceremony held at Pakistan Embassy Kabul

KABUL - Pakistan Ambassador to Afghanistan, Syed Abrar Hussain, on Thursday has underscored the need for close cooperation between Pakistan and Afghanistan to address the common challenges of terrorism and extremism. He said both countries were facing social,

economic and security problems and it was essential to forge closer cooperation to overcome these difficulties. He expressed these views while addressing the participants at a flag hoisting ceremony held in the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul. The ...*(More on P4)...(4)*

## Domestic Production would Boost National Economy

KABUL - In an attempt to find new markets for domestic products, 104 local companies exhibited their products at an expo in Kabul under the name of "It is the best, it is Afghan". Members of the Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) said research was needed to find out exactly what people need in terms of products, so as to cut down on imports.

"As a businessman I do not have sufficient information about the domestic needs of Afghanistan and which company imports which products and what are the levels of our domestic production; we need to formulate policies in this respect and we should have credible statistics about the market," said Tawfiq Dawari, ACCI financial assistant. In addition, some businessmen have said that currently there are no statistics on what the domestic markets need and this has led to the increase of imports into the country.

Talking on the implications of domestic production on the national economy, Humayoun Qayoumi, a presidential advisor, urged members of the public to start using domestically produced products.

"In government institutions, domestic products are used, on the basis of orders of the president - there is a 25 percent discount on contracts signed for domestic products," said Qayoumi. Nevertheless, some female businesswomen have said that the lack of proper markets has prevented their handicrafts from being sold in large numbers.

Nazia Haidari is an Afghan woman who works in the handicraft industry. She called on the Afghan government to boost marketing - especially for women's handicrafts. "There is no special markets for women; the government also ...*(More on P4)...(8)*

## Sopko Highlights Major Corruption Cases Among Afghan Forces

KABUL - The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, John F. Sopko, at an event in Duke University in the United States made shocking remarks on 'corruption' among Afghan forces as he said the combination of corruption and poor leadership in the security forces in Afghanistan is the root cause for their 'ineffectiveness'.

"Without question, the top two challenges in Afghanistan are corruption and the lack of capacity of the Afghan security forces. And in many cases, the two go hand in hand," he said.

"Commanders in the Afghan military steal the food that you pay for and force their soldiers to buy it back. We hear story after story of commanders who steal the fuel, sell it to the Taliban, who take the weapons we-you-pay for



and sell it to the Taliban," Sopko said. "The irony of it is, the terrorists are at the end of our supply chain." He mentioned about 'ghost soldiers' among Afghan ...*(More on P4)...(5)*

## Russia 'Perhaps' Supplying Taliban in Afghanistan

KABUL - Russia may be supplying the Taliban as they fight U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, a top U.S. military commander said Thursday.



"I have seen the influence of Russia of late - an increased influence - in terms of association and perhaps even supply to the Taliban," General Curtis Scaparrotti, NATO's Supreme Allied Commander and U.S. Army General, told a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing.

Scaparrotti did not elaborate on what kinds of supplies might be provided or how direct Russia's involvement could be.

His comments are built on suspicions raised last

month by General John Nicholson, the U.S. commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, who testified that Russia is giving the Taliban encouragement and diplomatic cover. Nicholson did not, however, address whether Russia was supplying the terrorist group.

"Russia has been legitimizing the Taliban and supporting ...*(More on P4)...(7)*

## US Turns Down Russia Invitation to Afghan Peace Conference

WASHINGTON - The United States won't attend a multinational peace conference on Afghanistan next month in Russia, a State Department official said Thursday.

The reasons: The U.S. wasn't consulted before receiving the invitation and doesn't know Russia's objectives for the gathering.

The official said that Washington wants to work with Moscow on regional efforts

to end the 16-year war, and that Secretary of State Rex Tillerson would bring up the matter when he visits Russia in April. The official wasn't authorized to speak publicly on the matter and demanded anonymity.

Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, India and several Central Asian nations are among the invitees to the Moscow conference. Afghan and U.S. officials say the Taliban aren't ...*(More on P4)...(9)*

## MoD Welcomes India's 'Willingness' to Help Air Force

KABUL - The Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) on Thursday welcomed India's decision to consider whether to pay for repairs to grounded helicopters and transport planes from the Afghan Air Force as part of their willingness to step up military assistance to Kabul. The Defense Ministry spokesman Dawlat Waziri said the friendship between Afghanistan and India does not mean enmity with another nation.

He said New Delhi has positively responded to Kabul's call for military assistance.

"We want India's cooperation in any sector which is in the interests of the two countries. India is a friend of Afghanistan and we are independent countries," Waziri told TOLONews. Meanwhile, commenting on what India's willingness for military support to Afghanistan reveals, military analyst

Muhsen Mukhtar said India knows what Afghanistan needs militarily. "India knows the military needs of Afghanistan, because Afghanistan is of unique importance to India and wants a stable Afghanistan," Mukhtar said.

This comes after Reuters reported that India estimates it would cost close to \$50 million USD for new parts and repairs to 11 grounded ...*(More on P4)...(10)*

## McCain Concerned at Situation in Afghanistan

WASHINGTON - A day after meeting visiting Foreign Secretary Salahuddin Rabbani, top American Senator John McCain expressed his concern over the current situation in Afghanistan.

The goal should be defeating the Taliban and breaking the stalemate, said McCain, chairman of the powerful Senate Armed Services Committee, who feared Afghanistan might fall off the radar of the Trump administration, which is focused on defeating the ISIS in the Middle East.

"It is interesting to me that while we have all the focus understandably on Raqqa and Mosul, the situation in Afghanistan is relegated to a C-7," McCain said in response to a question from reporters during a breakfast meeting with the Defense Writers Group.

McCain, who is well connected in the region and is highly respected in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, said: "The relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan is probably at an all-time low." However, he



said the new chief of staff of the Pakistani Army was much more ...*(More on P4)...(6)*

### Envoy

## Britain will Support Transparent Elections



of Herat to oversee the process of development projects funded by his country in the area. He said that the UK and the entire international community are waiting for the Independent Election Commission (IEC) to announce the date for the country's parliamentary and district council elections.

"Well first of all I do know that the independent electoral commission is looking at having some electronic solution here in Afghanistan. In the UK for example, we do everything still with pencil and paper, we don't use an electronic solution ... but if that is the direction ...*(More on P4)...(11)*

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