

Quote of the Day

The best way to predict your future is to create it
Abraham Lincoln

SIGAR Warns Against Further Afghan Drawdown

KABUL - The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) has warned current plans to reduce the number of American troops in the war-torn country will leave Afghan forces with "capability gaps" in a number of areas.

The US government watchdog in its quarterly report on Friday said the gaps could threaten the success of reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.

It said a number of major challenges continued to hinder efforts of the US and its allies at strengthening the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Po-



lice (ANP) and further troop withdrawal would likely exacerbate the situation. "The US ability to influence operational

outcomes on the ground is constricting, while (that of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces) has not corre-

spondingly risen," the report said. It said the US lost much of its ability to directly observe the capabilities and effectiveness of Afghan forces since troop reductions last year, calling it one major challenge. Uncertainty over Afghan troop numbers is also a concern, as is the Afghans' ability to properly manage US financial aid to support the military and police, SIGAR said. The U.S. is currently scheduled to draw down its 9,800 troops in Afghanistan to about 5,500 by the start of next year. This reduction, SIGAR said, could result in "gaps in air support, signals, intelligence and other ... (More on P4)...(1)

Economic Decline Blamed on Foreigners Exit, Insecurity



KABUL - President's special representative for reforms and good governance Ahmad Zia Massoud on Sunday said the withdrawal of foreign forces and insecurity contributed to the country's economic decline. Addressing a gathering marking World Labour Day, Massoud said the unity government was committed to improving the country's

economic and security situation. He said establishment of economic institutions was mandatory for economic development. The special envoy said encouraging foreign direct investment in agriculture and industry sectors and establishment of food storages were the government's top priorities. Massoud said labour ... (More on P4)...(2)

Hekmat Karzai Conflict in Afghanistan is Not Between Afghans



KABUL - The Deputy Foreign Affairs Minister Hekmat Khalil Karzai has said that the ongoing violence in Afghanistan is not as a result of conflict among Afghans but is the result of an imposed war on the Afghan nation.

In his speech during the Fifth Ministerial Meeting of Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia (CICA), Karzai said "We are making a strong case in the international community that the conflict in Afghanistan is not between Afghans but imposed on us."

Karzai further added that terrorism as a regional threat and emphasized on the need for regional cooperation and partnership for countering effectively this phenomenon, describing CICA as a significant platform in this regard. ... (More on P4)...(4)

Helmand Court Convicts 25 Officials of Corruption, Land Grabbing

LASHKARGAH - In a ruling announced on Sunday, an appeals court in the southern province of Helmand found at least 25 individuals guilty of corruption and land-grabbing - a ruling that sparked widespread public support.

Among those who welcomed the move included residents along with some government officials and provincial council members. The ruling comes amid growing calls by the public ... (More on P4)...(5)

Labour Rights Being Trampled on in Afghanistan: AAFTU

KABUL - The All Afghanistan Federation of Trade Union (AAFTU) head on Sunday said that labour rights are trampled on in Afghanistan, asking government and international organisations to pay attention to workers' welfare.

On International Labor's Day, AAFTU chief, Dr. Liaquat Adel, in an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News, noted a sharp rise in illegal immigration as result of growing unemploy-



ment in the country. Around 300,000 Afghans have migrated to Europe due to pove-

ty and joblessness last year, he pointed out. Illegal travel broad was full of risk as dozens of migrants including Afghans lose their lives each month.

However, Adel supported the Afghan youth who travel abroad for getting higher education and returning to their country after studies. "Youths are a great asset to any country and the government should utilise their abilities," Adel observed.

Penury, ... (More on P4)...(3)

MPs Call for Census Law Efforts to be Stepped up



KABUL - Afghan legislators and members of the public are up in arms over persistent delays in ratifying the long-awaited census law.

MPs slammed government on Sunday over its continued reluctance to dispatch the law to parliament for debate.

In reference to speculation over government's lack of commitment to finalize the law, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) said Sunday that the amended draft

law is now with the law commission of the MoJ and that it will be soon be referred to parliament for ratification.

The statement comes just weeks after government finally decided to include ethnicity in the transcript of the population registration law and electronic National identity cards (e-NIC). "The law was amended a month ago. However the law so far has not reached parliament, they ... (More on P4)...(6)

Ulema Conference on Peace in Afghanistan Soon: Rabbani



KABUL - The foreign minister acknowledged on Sunday efforts for peace talks with the Taliban had made little headway, saying an Ulema conference would discuss reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Speaking in Meshrano Jirga, or upper house of the parliament, Salahuddin Rabbani said no progress had been achieved towards peace talks with the insurgents so far. National consensus was needed because peace efforts could not succeed without input from the people, he observed. Rabbani said an Ulema Conference under the aegis of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) would be arranged soon in a Muslim country on security and stability of Afghanistan. He said a decision on holding the conference was made in the OIC meeting in Istanbul. Chief Executive Officer (CEO)

Dr. Abdullah Abdullah had represented Afghanistan at the event. Rabbani did not provide more details, but said preparatory meetings for the conference would be held in Saudi Arabia. The conference will be attended by prominent religious scholars from different countries. The decision comes as the quadrilateral mechanism for peace in Afghanistan recently ran into a deadlock. The four-nation group was expected to pave the ground for direct talks in March 2016, but it failed to do so. President Ashraf Ghani has boycotted the group, saying Pakistan should demonstrate its commitment to fighting terrorism. He also warned of dragging Pakistan to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) over its failure to end bloodshed in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

Provincial Health Budget Plan Approved

KABUL - The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) on Sunday reported that cabinet has approved the much-awaited provincial health budget plan.

Health directors from all provinces will discuss the plan at a three-day seminar in Kabul in the near future, the MoPH said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Ahmad Jawad Osmani, head of the admin and finance department at MoPH said the budget plan has been finalized after a delay of two years. He said that persistent delays for approving the plan have delayed the spending of \$17 million USD which had been allocated for capacity building at the health directorates in the provinces across the country.

"Health services are provided in various provinces through provincial health directorates and health institutions in cooperation with the ministry of health. But the budget is aimed to boost the capacities of health directorates in 34 provinces of Afghanistan," Osmani said.

Health officials from 34 provinces are expected to attend a three-day seminar in which they will discuss the professional utilization of the budget. According to the plan, \$500,000 USD will be allocated to each province.

"It will boost the capacity of health directors in the provinces. This enables them to come up with more energy and better management while providing health services and to develop the health system in the provinces," said Faraidoon, head of Jawzjan health department. "Satisfactory health ... (More on P4)...(7)

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Afghanistan's Penal Code Revised: Officials

KABUL - Members of a commission responsible for amending the country's laws on Sunday handed over a revised version of Afghanistan's Penal Code to the Ministry of Justice.

They said they grouped articles of the penal code and other relevant laws into one document - as the previous code had been "irregular".

The head of the commission, Mohammad Ashraf Rasuli, said they had revised and amended some articles of the law.

"We needed to revise Afghanistan's Criminal Law. For instance, some issues remained in the law from the past which now are not part of principles of international law," Rasuli added.

Meanwhile, Justice Minister Abdul Basir Anwar said the move by the commission will help judiciaries to improve their activities and prevent misunderstandings while implementing the law.

"Naturally, faced with lots of laws [on criminal issues] it makes it difficult for an attorney to defend a case or for a judge to make a final decision on a case; therefore, the then president [Hamid Karzai] decided in 2010 to make the country's ... (More on P4)...(8)

Ghani, Abdullah Meet Visiting Australian Governor-General

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah met with the visiting Australian Governor-General Peter John Cosgrove on Saturday respectively, said a statement from the Presidential Palace here on Sunday.

Ghani thanked Australia for its contribution in the rebuilding process of Afghanistan, the statement said, adding the Afghan president appreciated the services of Australian troops in Uruzgan province and giving training

to Afghan forces there. During the meeting, Cosgrove assured his country's long-term support to economic development of the conflict-hit country, saying, "Australia is committed to help Afghanistan achieve economic development.

Foreign leaders usually pay unannounced visit to Afghanistan obviously due to security concerns and media get information after their departure. Afghan government Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah, in a separate meeting with the Australian Governor-General, expressed his ... (More on P4)...(9)

