

<b>Jalalabad</b> Partly Cloudy 21°C 11°C	<b>Ghazni</b> Partly Cloudy 9°C -4°C	<b>Kandahar</b> Clear 11°C 1°C	<b>Mazar</b> Partly Cloudy -2°C -8°C	<b>Herat</b> Clear 2°C -9°C	<b>Bamayan</b> Clear 3°C -7°C	<b>Kabul</b> Partly Cloudy 12°C 0°C
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# More than 1,400 Medals Awarded over Past Two Years

KABUL - The National Unity Government (NUG) has issued 1,480 medals to officials from different government departments in the past two years. According to the constitution, only the president has the authority to award a medal of this nature. "It is the first time that medals are not given to political people, but are issued to people who have shown that they are competent and deserve a medal," said Shah Hussain Murtazawi, deputy spokesman of president. However, Chief of Executive Officer (CEO) spokesperson, Mujib Rahman Rahimi said medals should not be issued to people based on their political relations.



"The CEO wants a discussion to be held before a medal is awarded in order to make sure they deserve

it. Also medals should not be given to people based on political and tribal relations," Rahimi said. Documents received by

TOLOnews show that most of these 1,480 medals were issued to the Ministry of Defense (MoD), Ministry of Interior (MoI), and Ministry

of Education (MoE), National Directorate of Security (NDS) and to the office of the first vice president. Out of the 1,483 medals, 532

were issued to the MoD, 288 to the MoI, 125 to the NDS, 105 to the first vice president's office and 169 were distributed to staff at the MoE and the balance handed out to officials from other departments. "When a general is supposed to receive a medal, then that general must have managed and have won a few battles," said Ghulam Hussain Nasiri, a member of parliament. "When medals are being issued based on political relations, then they lose their national value," said Tahir Hashimi, a university lecturer. However, medal recipients from years ago, said in the past ...*(More on P4)...(8)*

**Do More to Safeguard Our Rights, Jawzjan Women Ask Govt.**

SHIBERGHAN - Some women in northern Jawzjan province have accused the government of failing to effectively promote awareness about violence against women, a failure that has given rise to violations of their rights. They allege some religious leaders in the province criticised women going alone out of homes in connection with different tasks, including jobs. This sort of preaching has resulted in the curtailment of women's movements. Saira Shakeb Sadaat, administrative chief of Faizabad district, claimed: "I myself have heard one religious leader saying in his sermon at a mosque that every woman who goes out of her house to discharge duty was apostate (infidel)." She said the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs and the Ulema Council were not doing much to spread awareness about women's rights and their role in society in districts and villages. She blasted the religious scholars, drawing salaries from the state exchequer, for stirring up public sentiments against the government and women. Halima Sadaf, a Provincial Council (PC) member, believed there was more respect for women in the past when they were given all their rights. She lamented they were currently faced with risk of abuse and violations of their rights. She lampooned the appointment of a man as gender officer, asking if there was not a qualified woman in the entire province for that position. Referring to the killing of a boy and a girl, she quoted the ...*(More on P4)...(10)*

## New Commissioners to Start Work Today

KABUL - The commissioners are expected to officially start work today (Saturday). "Our work will be different from the work of former commissioners. Because we start our work based on the new law and I ensure Afghan people that they will trust in the election process," he said. People expect the new commissioners to make the voter list and date of parliament and district council elections their priority. "This commission should bring reforms in the election procedures and approaches and in the election commissions," said Habib ul-Rahman Nang, a member of Afghan Civil Society and



Elections Network (AC-SEN) Preparing the list of voters and bringing reforms in the election commission approaches are the main parts of the electoral reforms that should be brought in the commission. "According to the election

law, the new commissioners should provide a list of voters, announce the election date and take steps for having a transparent election," said Masoom Janan Abdul Rahimzai, executive director of Free and Fair Election Forum (FEFA) of Afghanistan. The new commissioners of

independent election commission (IEC) will choose a chief and deputy for the IEC within the first few days of work. Then the commissioners will submit a list of three candidates for the head of IEC secretariat to Ghani, who will appoint one a chief and deputy. *(Tolnews)*

## Hoisting of Paki Flag near Durand Line Provocative Act: MoFA



KABUL - Afghanistan on Friday condemned the hoisting of Pakistan's flag and military activity in the border town of Chaman in southwestern Balochistan province. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs denounced the events near the Durand Line, which Afghanistan does not recognise as a formal border, as

improper and provocative. A statement from MoFA said the Pakistani action was violation of bilateral commitments. "We want to warn Pakistan that this action in the current sensitive situation could further vitiate bilateral ties." The ministry urged Pakistan to focus on counter-terrorism ...*(More on P4)...(9)*

## Regional Rail Connectivity via Afghanistan Stressed



PESHAWAR - Tajikistan and Pakistan have agreed on the need for railway connectivity through Afghanistan to strengthen trade and economic relations. The agreement came at a meeting between Tajikistan's Ambassador Sherali S. Jononov with Pakistan's Railways Minister Saad Rafiq in Islamabad. Pakistan served as a bridge

for the Central Asian nations to forge trade links with the world, the diplomat remarked, calling connectivity the basis for regional cooperation. He believed railway connectivity was important for Pakistan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, particularly in the context of economic growth. ...*(More on P4)...(12)*

## Balkh Farmers Say Only Poppy Meets their Needs

MAZAR-I-SHARIF - Farmers in northern Balkh province say they grow poppy crop in their fields because food crops could not meet their needs, while local officials say they are committed to eradicating the banned plant. Poppy is widely cultivated in Chamtal and Charbolak districts and averagely in Sholgar, Balkh, Dawlatabad, Dehdadi Khalam and some other districts of Balkh. Farmers say they lack needed facilities to grow other crops and growing poppy is their livelihood. Local officials did not say how much area is cultivated with poppy but insist they would eradicate the plant wherever seen. Mohammad Rafiq, a farmer in Bargah village of Chamtal district, said: "I cultivated around 10 acres of my land with poppy crop this year, I am not alone, all farmers here grow poppy because we are obliged to do so." Harvest from other crops cannot help farmers earn enough and meet their needs. Haji Mir Khan, a farmer in Charbolak district, said most farmers in the district grew poppy. "I had not grown poppy for years, but other crops do not meet our needs," he said, adding that he last year cultivated onion in five acres of land, ...*(More on P4)...(14)*

## Afghan Soldiers Freed from Taliban's Captivity

MAIMANA - Six Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers have been freed from Taliban's captivity in northwestern Faryab province, an official said on Thursday. The soldiers had been abducted after a private helicopter they were traveling in made an emergency landing in Pashtun Kot on November 14, 2015. At that time, the Ministry of Defense (MoD) had said two ANA soldiers and a foreign national were killed during a clash with Taliban militants



after the landing. The rebels took hostage another 18 soldiers and crew members. Detective manager at the first ANA battalion in Faryab, Maj. Amanullah, told Pajhwok Afghan News six

of the kidnapped soldiers were released from a Taliban jail late on Wednesday. The soldiers released were in good health and efforts were underway to free the rest ...*(More on P4)...(11)*

## Coordination Centre set up to Cut Violence against Women in East

JALALABAD - For the first time ever, provinces in the eastern zone have set up a coordination centre in an attempt to curb violence against women, officials say. At a news conference here on Wednesday, women affairs directors from Nangarhar, Kunar, Laghman and Nuristan hoped the situation of females would improve with the creation of the coordination centre. Over the past several years, they said, violence against women had significantly fallen in the eastern zone. Women's condition had improved a lot as a result of different initiatives, they added. Zahida Faizan, Nuristan women's affairs director, claimed the level of violence against women and their involvement in hard labour had decreased. However, she regretted lack of support from the central government. Her counterpart from Nangarhar, Anisa Imrani, said they held a quarterly meeting in Jalalabad to take stock of women's issues. The discussions would help resolve myriad problems facing women, she hoped. *(Pajhwok)*

## Access to Safe Water, Public Toilets Promised



KABUL - A three-day conference on sanitation concluded on Thursday in Kabul and through a resolution the participants stressed Afghans' continued access to clean drinking water. The first conference of its kind was jointly organized by the ministries of rural rehabilitation, public health, education and urban development. Officials from UNICEF and some other government or-

gans also attended the event that began on Tuesday and concluded today. Access to healthy water, better sanitation and good nutrition were key points of the resolution letter signed by the mentioned organs at the conference, according to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). MRRD deputy minister Ahmad Shahir Shahryar told the ...*(More on P4)...(13)*

## Asylum Seekers on Hunger Strike in Norway over Rejected Applications

OSLO - A total of 22 Afghan asylum seekers at a reception center for unaccompanied minors in northern Norway have started hunger strike after receiving negative reply to their asylum applications, public broadcaster NRK reported on Thursday. The asylum reception center is located in the Vestvagoy municipality in northern Norway's Lofoten archipelago, the report said. Bjorn Fridfeldt, regional director for the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) in northern Norway, said the asylum seekers have received negative decisions and have started a protest. According to Gyri Mentzoni, a volunteer in the organization "Refugees welcome to Vagan," the Afghan asylum seekers started hunger strike on Wednesday night and decided not to participate in any activities and other things. "They are absolutely desperate. They are afraid and terrified. This is the last thing they really can do," Mentzoni told NRK. The UDI for the time ...*(More on P4)...(15)*

## Saffron Offers Jobs, Tackles Drug Problem in Afghanistan



KABUL - Afghanistan's booming saffron industry is raising hope for an economy that has been struggling with prolonged difficulties for decades. Afghan saffron industry is helping the country's economy both directly through offering jobs and opportunities and indirectly by tackling issues such as the drug problem. Most saffron workers are women who don't have many other job options. They partake in different steps of the process from picking the delicate flowers to ultimately packing the final product. The industry also helps Afghanistan by replacing opium cultivation which will in turn reduce the country's drug problem. Afghanistan's saffron is in high demand and exported to countries from France to Turkey, India and the United States. *(Press TV)*