

## Uzbekistan Establishes International Center of Aral Sea Region



TASHKENT - The Ministry of Innovation Development of Uzbekistan and the International Center for Biosaline Agriculture (ICBA) signed a memorandum on establishment of International Innovation Center of the Aral region under the president of Uzbekistan, Uzbek media reported.

The center is planned to be located in Karakalpakstan on the territory of the experimental station of Nukus State Forestry.

The document was signed by Minister of Innovation Development Ibrokhim Abdurakhmonov and ICBA Director General Ismahane Elouafi. The ceremony took place in Samarkand at the international forum "Innovative Approaches to Promoting Sustainable Governance and Social Stability of the Aral Sea Basin" that opened on Oct. 16.

The Aral Sea Basin Support Fund will be created under the new center. It is planned to attract funds from the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the Islamic Development Bank. The center itself will be funded by the Innovation Development Support Fund under the Ministry of Innovation Development, as well as by loans and grants from international financial institutions. (Trend)

## Over 30 Policemen Suffer Casualties in Samangan Clash

AIBAK - More than 30 policemen have been killed and wounded in a Taliban attack in northern Samangan province, a local source claimed on Tuesday.

An official, wishing anonymity, told Pajhwok Afghan News the militants stormed security check-posts in the Zerki area of Dara-i-Sauf Payeen district of at 11pm.

Without going into details, he said more than 30 police personnel suffered casualties. Col. Khwani Tahiri, the deputy police chief, was among the dead, he added.

Eight police pick-ups, two tanks, weapons and ammunition were seized by the Taliban, he revealed. The security forces are said to have retreated to the Bek area of Hazrat Sultan district. Police spokesman Monir Rahimi confirmed the clash, saying details would be shared with the media later on. (Pajhwok)

## 4 Civilians Dead in Helmand Roadside Bombing

LASHKARGAH - At least four people were killed on Tuesday when a civilian vehicle struck a roadside bomb in southern Helmand province, an official said on Tuesday.

Separately, 15 militants were killed and five others detained in a US airstrike during a joint operation in the Sangin district of the same province.

Omar Zwak, the governor's spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News the roadside bombing took place in the Khwaja Baba area of Nawa district at around 10am.

He said four people were killed and a fifth wounded as their vehicle hit the roadside bomb.

Omar Omari, the district's administrative chief, said the victims hailed from Garmser district. They were heading to Lashkargah when their vehicle hit the bomb.

He alleged the bomb had been planted by the Taliban insurgents. Emergency Hospital workers told Pajhwok two of the injured had been brought to the hospital from the site.



Separately, at least 15 fighters were killed and five others detained during a joint operation by Afghan and US forces in Sangin district late on Monday night.

Spokesman for 115th Maiwand Mil-

itary Corps Maj. Abdul Qader Bahadurzai said three walkie-talkies, 10 mobile phone sets, one laptop and some ammunition were seized by the security forces. Taliban have made no comment in this regard so far. (Pajhwok)

## Kunduz: 4 APL Personnel Killed in Ongoing Firefight

KUNDUZ CITY - Four Afghan Local Police (ALP) personnel have been killed and as many injured during a fierce clash with the Taliban in northern Kunduz province, an official said on Tuesday.

Police chief Maj. Gen. Abdul Baqi Nuristani told Pajhwok Afghan News the Taliban launched attacks on ALP check-posts in the Kolokh Tepai locality of Qala-i-Zal district.

He said eight ALP personnel had been killed and injured in the ongoing firefight so far. The Taliban also suffered casualties but there was no exact information so far, he said, indicating reinforcements would reach the site soon. Amanullah, a resident of locality, said the Taliban attacked ALP posts in Golokh Tepai and Khost Tepai lo-



calities. "The Taliban have captured several areas. ALP Commander Nabi Gechi has also been captured," he said. Meanwhile, The Taliban also confirmed the attacks in Kunduz, saying the fighters stormed securi-

ty check points in Kolegh, Baghicha Khosh Tapa and Baghar areas. Zabihullah Mujahid, the militant group's spokesman, claimed 17 security personnel were killed in the attack and three Taliban injured. (Pajhwok)

## Payments Companies Hit Deadline for Keeping Data in India

SRINIGAR, India - Global credit card and payments companies like American Express, Visa and MasterCard are facing a challenge in meeting a requirement to store transaction data for all Indian customers within the country.

A new rule took effect Tuesday that directs payment companies to store all transaction data on computers inside the country.

Enacted in April by the Reserve Bank of India, the law gave payment companies six months to ensure transaction data of Indian customers was kept within the country to "ensure

better monitoring" and "unfettered supervisory access to data."

However, the directive clarified that data for foreign parts of such transactions can be stored outside India.

It was unclear if foreign payment vendors like American Express, Visa and MasterCard had met the deadline or if India's central bank would take any immediate action for non-compliance.

Reserve Bank of India officials would not comment.

Press Trust of India news agency reported that some global financial technology had companies sought an extension to the deadline, although most have com-



plied. India has a competitive market for payments and the new rules have been welcomed by domestic companies like Paytm. (AP)

### (1) Three Million...

by aid organizations, Lanzer said. However, new statistics show the situation is "far worse" than anticipated and both national and foreign aid groups are struggling to meet demand. "For many (people) it is the worst situation they have suffered in their lives... If we don't (reach them) there's a risk that these people go into level 5 (famine)," Lanzer said, calling for an urgent response from the international community.

Heavy rains and an untimely snowfall last winter triggered the country's "worst drought in living memory" and has wreaked destruction and devastation on farming families, their livestock, food and water supplies as well as forced them from their homes.

For its part, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) in Afghanistan said that this situation surpasses that in South Sudan, which according to the Global Food Security Index- is somewhere between a level three or four with less than 6 million strug-

gling with food security. (Agencies)

### (2) IFJ to IEC: Ensure...

"Attempts to block the media from covering the upcoming elections in Afghanistan raise serious concerns access to information and transparency of the election processes and voting," it added.

"The Independent Election Commission needs to take immediate steps to ensure journalists and media across Afghanistan have easy access to cover the elections." (Pajhwok)

### (3) 'Price of Democracy'...

new is Omaid Sharifi's hope for the legislative election.

The 32-year-old artist, who is voting for the first time, wants to see a new generation of politicians take their seats in the next parliament.

Sharifi, co-founder of Kabul-based street art collective Art-Lords, was inspired to vote by the large cohort of young, educated candidates among the more than 2,500 contesting the ballot.

"I am concerned (about securi-

ty) but I think this is the price of democracy we have to pay," he said.

- Fatima, the housewife -

First-time voter Fatima Sadeqi wants to stop criminals, thieves and corrupt people from entering the next parliament.

The 55-year-old housewife and her eight family members plan to support the same candidate in the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif.

"We are tired of poverty and insecurity," she said.

"I hope the new parliament is a better place, full of good people."

Shirin Agha wants his 10 children to grow up in a peaceful Afghanistan -- and he is willing to die to help make that happen. The 45-year-old potter in the eastern city of Jalalabad is a first-time voter and plans to back "a good Muslim and an honest person".

"I want the new parliament to bring fundamental changes to the economy, education and security so that our children can live in peace," Agha said.

"If my vote can bring these

changes I will take any risk. I will either die or vote."

- Zahra, the university student - A sense of "duty and responsibility" is pushing English literature student Zahra Faramarz to vote -- but she admits being "anxious" about security.

Faramarz's polling station is located in a heavily Shiite neighbourhood of Kabul where the Islamic State group has carried out devastating attacks in recent months.

But the 21-year-old said it was important to vote to ensure her community has a voice in the lower house.

"If we don't, someone else will select the candidates... that is not good for us," she said. (AFP)

### (4) Afghan Forces...

assistance, according to publicly available DoD reporting," it said. ANA corps and police zones generally have improved in some capability areas since Resolute Support began, with some components performing better than others, the report said. For example, the Afghan ministries have improved in

## Germany's Linde Offers Further Concessions to U.S. Regulators in Praxair Merger



BERLIN - German industrial gas producer Linde Group offered U.S. anti-trust regulators further concessions in a bid to win their approval for its planned 42-billion-dollar merger with U.S. rival Praxair, it announced on Monday night. According to Linde, the two companies reached a preliminary agreement with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) in the United States on the divestment of further business units. The development was widely seen in German press as being likely to alleviate fears among investors that the closely-watched deal could unravel in the 11th hour. "Linde Aktiengesellschaft" (Linde) confirms that Praxair, Inc. and Linde aligned on Oct. 1, 2018 with the staff of the U.S. Federal Trade Commission regarding the required sales of business activities in the United States and related commitments and that such remedy package has been submitted to the FTC Commissioners for their decision," a statement published on the website of the Munich-based company read.

Linde and Praxair face a looming legal deadline in Germany for the successful finalization of the merger on Oct. 24. The two companies initially granted each other the right to cancel the deal to create the world's largest industrial gas producer at the last minute if antitrust authorities demand that they divest business units worth more than 3.7 billion euros (4.3 billion U.S. dollars). The statement noted that "successful completion" of the corporate fusion now hinged on securing the FTC's formal approval for the proposed sales and commitments by Oct. 24. Linde added that whether the deal actually materialized was also dependent on the "timely receipt of the required buyer approval by the European Commission". The European Commission has said that it will allow the transaction on the condition that Praxair sells its entire European gas business and gives up local helium subscription rights. The Brussels-based competition authorities argued that customers would face risks of shouldering higher prices due to the small number of alternative suppliers otherwise.

"There are very few companies in the world capable of supplying all these gases," EU competition commissioner Margrethe Vestager explained.

While Linde and Praxair have already agreed to Vestager's demands, they must now still obtain a final green light from regulators in the United States as the biggest remaining obstacle to the merger. (Xinhua)

operational planning, strategic communications and coordination. In general, the ANA is more capable than the police.

This is due, in part, to the ANA having more coalition advisors and monitoring than the police force. The Ministry of Interior, which oversees the police, and the justice system are both underdeveloped, it added.

Corruption, understaffing and training shortfalls have also contributed to the underdevelopment of police, according to DoD and SIGAR.

The Afghan Special Security Forces are the most capable within the ANDSF and can conduct the majority of their operations without coalition enablers. Afghan Special Security Forces' relative proficiency is attributed to factors such as low attrition rates, longer training, and close partnership with coalition forces. The Afghan Air Force is becoming increasingly capable, and can independently plan and perform some operational tasks, such as armed overwatch and aerial escort missions, it concluded. (Pajhwok)