

Explosion Rips through Restaurant in Kabul: Police

KABUL - A loud blast rocked the capital Kabul on Friday, apparently caused by a car bomb that targeted a restaurant popular with Afghan officials and foreign diplomats, a police official said. The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the media, said the explosion appeared to have hit "Le Jardin", one of a small number of restaurants in Kabul still frequented by foreigners. No information on damage or casualties was immediately available.



The explosion came days after the Taliban claimed responsibility for a suicide attack near Kabul airport that killed one person and wounded 33 others, the latest in a series of suicide attacks in the city. The attacks have coincided with efforts to revive the stalled peace process with the Taliban that broke down in July. Officials from Afghanistan, Pakistan, the United States and China are due to meet in Pakistan on Jan. 11 for a meeting aimed at laying the ground for talks with the insurgents. (Reuters)

Taliban Claims Responsibility for 'Suicide' Attack

KABUL - The Taliban has claimed responsibility for a bomb blast that rocked the Afghan capital, Kabul, on Friday. The explosion went off on Friday evening in a central residential area of the city, where many guest houses are located. The neighborhood is also home to many Afghan officials. Sediq Sediqqi, spokesman for the Interior Ministry, says security forces are at the site of the explosion and that police are investigating. A brief statement sent to VOA in Islamabad by Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed it was a suicide attack on a foreign restaurant. The statement said Taliban bombers inflicted heavy casualties but did not give a number of attackers involved. An official, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the media, said the explosion appeared to have hit ... (More on P4)... (20)

2015: Kidnappings Spike

KABUL - Armed groups took more than 100 people hostage around the country in the past year - a move that appears to have become a new tactic in the war against government. The Zabul Seven incident, which saw Daesh beheading seven hostages in November, sparked a massive public outcry that resulted in thousands of people taking to the streets in protest over the incident. In Kabul alone, over 20,000 people marched through the city to the Presidential Palace carrying the bodies of the victims through the streets. "Unfortunately insurgents do not respect international war laws and take passengers hostage - including the elderly,



women and children. Unfortunately there is chaos and they have mercy on no one," said AIHRC head Sima Samar. The Zabul Seven protest was the biggest peaceful protest of its kind in the history of Afghanistan. Earlier in the year, however armed insurgents kidnapped 31 bus passengers on the Kabul-Kandahar highway. After months of negotiations they released 19 in an alleged prisoner swap of insurgents children. Yousof is one of the hostages ... (More on P4)... (17)

Traffic Accident ;5 Killed, 25 Wounded

KABUL - A traffic accident on Thursday left five people killed and 25 others wounded on Kabul-Kandahar highway. The accident took place in the jurisdiction of Ghazni's Ab Band District around 06:30 am. Traffic Officer of Ghazni province while confirming the incident said that the truck gutted after colliding with '303' passenger bus causing burn injuries to a number of passengers. Mohammadullah Ahmadi added that three dead bodies and 26 people in wounded condition have been shifted to Hospital. He expressed concern over the health condition of some of the wounded people. Meanwhile, a member of the provincial council of Ghazni ... (More on P4)... (19)

Afghan Doctors Succeed After India, Pakistan Fail to Cure Ill Soldiers

KABUL - For years, Afghans have sought specialist treatment in India and Pakistan due to the lack of medical diagnostic equipment and specialized treatment in the country. One soldier, Dawolat Murad, lost a foot in an attack while fighting insurgents in Helmand. He went to India for surgery and treatment. However, he



returned to Kabul with kidney problems and was treated at the Police Hospital in Kabul. "The patient went to India for leg joint replacement when the patient replaced ... (More on P4)... (21)

Fire At Jalalabad Cotton Market Extinguished

JALALABAD - Firefighters have put down the fire that erupted in a cotton market in Jalalabad city, capital of eastern Nangarhar province, Friday morning. It erupted at around 07:30 am (local time) and continued for about two hours before it was controlled. One person sustained injuries in the fire who was taken to Nangarhar Regional Hospital for treatment. It has burned seven stores and two Corolla vehicles. Eyewitnesses say the fire erupted when a man turned on a gas cylinder and fired it to heat up water close to a cotton shop. Governor of Nangarhar province has expressed sorrow over the incident. Saleem Khan Kundozi has order related directorate to assess the damages and help the store owners. (KP)

ISIS Photo Purports to Show Captured Taliban Fighters in Afghanistan

KABUL - The loyalists of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group have released a photograph which purportedly shows a group of Taliban fighters captured apparently during a clash in eastern Nangarhar province of Afghanistan. The photograph was shared by the affiliates of the terror group in social media earlier on Thursday. Although the authenticity of the photograph could not be verified, however the photograph carries a sub-

title in Arabic language, saying the fighters were captured from Nazian district of Nangarhar province. The affiliates of ISIS terror group and the Taliban militants have engaged in bloody clashes during the recent months and with the emergence of ISIS loyalists particularly in Nangarhar. The Russian special presidential envoy on Afghanistan Zamir Kabulov said earlier that the loyalists of ISIS terror group demonstrates a hostile position toward the Taliban lead-

NDS Prevents Suicide Bombing in Laghman

KABUL - The National Directorate of Security (NDS) on Thursday prevented a suicide bombing in the capital of eastern Laghman province. A statement released by NDS stated that Ihsanullah S/O Zabihullah was assigned by the militant commander Samarqand to carry out attack in a crowded area of Mehtarlam city but he was arrested before he could reach his target. NDS has confiscated the suicide vest Ihsanullah had with him at the time of the raid in Chehalmati village. Mean-



while, six insurgents have been killed in joint security operation conducted by Afghan commandoes and police in Laghman District. Sarhadi Zwak, spokesperson for the governor of Laghman province said the operation ... (More on P4)... (18)

Outlook Horoscope

Aries (Mar. 22-Apr.20)



The emotional landscape has changed abruptly, leaving you to wonder about the complexities of relationships. This unexpected shift can mark the start of something new as cracks appear in a brittle shell that once kept you safe. It's time to emerge and face the world on your own terms, so don't get sidetracked by trying to repair the breach.

Taurus (Apr.21-May 20)



Although you deserve a day of rest, you're buzzing around today as original ideas and beautiful images cascade into consciousness. But you must be careful because your thoughts may not be as brilliant as you believe. Your unconventional desires could even border on craziness now, so listen to what a trusted friend says before doing something outrageous you'll later regret.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)



Your friends may seem unreliable today, disrupting previous plans that required their participation. This unpredictability can be challenging, since you must make choices based upon your ability to deliver on your promises. Unfortunately, you can't depend on the unflinching support of others at this time. Don't expect any extra assistance; if someone comes through for you, take it as a pleasant surprise and graciously accept their support.

Cancer (June 21-July 20)



Your reputation among your tribe might radically change today. If you experience a minor setback, it's only reality's way of pointing out something that needs your immediate attention. On the other hand, others may think that you're a real genius if your unconventional idea actually works. Either way, the status quo is about to shift beneath your feet.

Leo (July 21-Aug. 21)



You may shut the door in an attempt to keep out extraneous noise today. Yet everything is moving so fast now that you must deal with the sheer rapidity of the speed of change, even if you're not happy about it. Any misguided attempts to stick to your current position are futile; the more you resist the future, the faster it arrives. Let go and dance with the uncertainty.

Virgo (Aug. 22-Sep 22)



You typically can be counted on to play it safe, but you're suddenly tempted to step outside the box today and surprise someone with your willingness to take a risk. However, you may end up on an unexpected detour, even if you're acting in a cautious manner. Hidden tensions that express without warning are either initiated by you or else they happen to you. Naturally, a proactive strike is better than waiting for something to happen.

Libra (Sep 23-Oct. 22)



You are fighting the Goldilocks syndrome today. Finding a happy medium may be impossible because your reactions to trivial events seem to be too much or too little. You might even grow annoyed because people assume you want everything while you feel as if you're not asking for enough. Rather than blurting out your needs impulsively, let them sit and simmer a while before sharing them.

Scorpio (Oct.23-Nov.22)



You're mesmerized by rational explanations of complex mysteries today as you seek answers to the unsolvable questions of life. Whether you find yourself studying ancient philosophies or quantum physics, you are quick to grasp complicated concepts now. But don't close your heart as you open your mind. There's no way around it.

Sagittarius (Nov.23-Dec.20)



You're mesmerized by rational explanations of complex mysteries today as you seek answers to the unsolvable questions of life. Whether you find yourself studying ancient philosophies or quantum physics, you are quick to grasp complicated concepts now. But don't close your heart as you open your mind. There's no way around it; your emotions must play an integral role in your mental breakthrough now for it to have meaningful value.

Capricorn (Dec.21-Jan19)



If circumstances at home seem overly complicated today, you might be ready to try a more diplomatic approach to the dilemma. Nevertheless, everyone's emotions can quickly escalate once you start talking. Ironically, you may secretly enjoy the fireworks, since the unplanned free-for-all could catalyze stagnant issues and provoke radical change. No matter how disruptive the discussion becomes.

Aquarius (Jan 20-Feb.18)

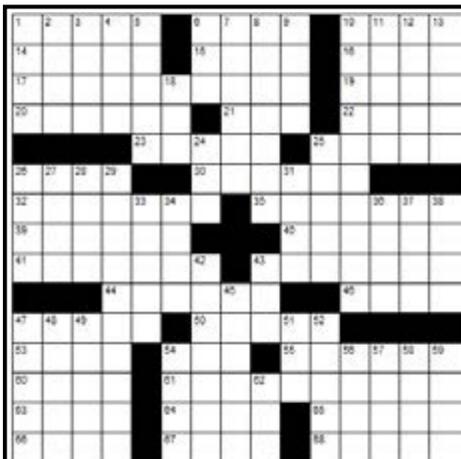


Your emotions are at odds with your logic today, especially if you are tempted to behave in a way that conflicts with your core values. It's tricky to embrace a strong desire that pulls you off balance, but suppressing an attraction won't make it go away. You're being gifted now with a unique opportunity to heal a wound that you have carried within your heart for a long time.

Pisces (Feb.19-Mar.20)



Although you may still be reveling in the holiday spirit, your mind is already thinking about your future career objectives. Thankfully, your current sense of duty holds you in good stead on the job now. But you can't perform the same old tasks in the same old way and expect to feel inspired. Be daring in your communication today, whether it's by email, phone or in person.



Across
1. Cheap shots, 6. Doing nothing, 10. Participate in games, 14. More or less, 15. Anthracite, 16. Expect and wish, 17. Acts as an agent, 19. Former Italian currency, 20. Record player, 21. Consumed food, 22. God of love, 23. Hindu loincloth, 25. GMan, 26. 365 days, 30. Anus, 32. Render unnecessary, 35. Otagia, 39. Twist or pull violently, 40. Array, 41. Kaffir corn, 43. Accept as true, 44. Emissary, 46. CCCC, 47. Donkeys, 50. Backward-looking, 53. Ancient Peruvian, 54. Martini ingredient, 55. Exaggerate, 60. State of mind, 61. Flood, 63. Sea eagle, 64. Arid, 65. Move forward suddenly, 66. Bucks and does, 67. An old spelling of "True", 68. Factions.
Down
1. Taverns, 2. Foment, 3. Lasso, 4. Prickle, 5. Horse, 6. Frozen water, 7. Give, 8. Framework of strips of wood, 9. If not, 10. Showing little emotion, 11. France's longest river, 12. A cook might wear one, 13. It makes dough rise, 18. Comes after Mi and Fah, 24. Mineral rock, 25. Hearing-related, 26. Ouches, 27. River of Spain, 28. Affirm, 29. Instigator, 31. Docile, 33. Throbs, 34. Goon, 36. Algonquian Indian, 37. Apiary, 38. XXXX, 42. Sailor, 43. Wager, 45. Incumbency, 47. Intended, 48. A loud sleeping sound, 49. British biscuit, 51. 16 1/2 feet, 52. Ellipses, 54. Essence, 56. Decorative case, 57. Peel, 58. Venetian magistrate, 59. 1 1 1 1, 62. Not used.

Yesterday's Solution
amusement, beer, better, commitment, copes, crowds, expectations, family, farewell, future, games, gone, happy, hope, improve, lights, noisemakers, party, pity, proper, resolution, spirit, streamers, tear, toasts, upbeat, wine, wire.

