

Afghan Army Captures Key Taliban Leader

KABUL - The Afghan army detained a Taliban local leader after a special operation in the country's southern province of Kandahar overnight, the Defense Ministry said on Monday.

"Afghan National Army's Special Operation Force members carried out a special night raid operation against a Taliban hideout in Khakrez district, capturing a Taliban fugitive leader named Mullah Khalifa along with one of his comrade," the ministry said in a statement.

The arrest of the wanted man will further



ensure security in the province with Kandahar city as its capital, some 450 km south of Afghan capital of Kabul, the statement noted. The province, notorious for poppy growing, is also a known Taliban stronghold. The Afghan security forces have beefed up security operations against militants since Tuesday after the Taliban started their so-called annual spring offensive code name "Operation Omari" and step up attacks across the country. The militant group has yet to make comments. (Xinhua)

Conflict Deaths Decline in Logar: Governor

PUL-I-ALAM - Casualties among civilians and security forces reduced last solar year in central Logar province where the security situation has improved compared to the previous year, the governor said on Monday.

Mohammad Halim Fidayi told a press conference here that Logar's security improved during the past one year due to security forces' strong resistance

against insurgent attacks and increased coordination among security organs and people's cooperation with them.

The governor also said the activities of detective organs had improved and drug trafficking had declined in the province.

He said the rebels carried out a total of 163 attacks during the past one year in Logar compared to the ...*(More on P4)...7*

12 Taliban Insurgents Killed in Balkh Clashes

KABUL - At least 12 Taliban insurgents were killed in clashes with security forces in northern Balkh province on Sunday night, local officials said. In addition, a policeman was injured in the clash. The clash took place in Caharbolak district of the province after Taliban insurgents at-

tacked a police outpost, a security official in Balkh, Gen. Abdul Rezaq Qaderi said. Qaderi said that the insurgents came from Jawzjan province to capture the outpost but they faced a strong response from security forces.

However, he did not provide further details about the clashes. *(Tolonews)*

School Buildings Incomplete as Contractors Flee

MAHMOOD RAQI - Education officials in central Kapisa province have alleged some school buildings remained incomplete as contractors have left the province. Deputy Director of Education Abdul Rasul Safi told Pajhwok Afghan News construction work on school buildings in Mahmud Raqi, Nijrab, Kohistan, Tagab and Ala Sai districts had been halted.

He said that they had contacted with the Min-



istry of Education, which was yet to take any step to deal with the situation. Forty percent 160 schools in the province did have no building, where students were taught in rented houses or in the

open air, he added. The construction contracts had to be signed with local companies because they could not leave the province, the deputy director said. "My ...*(More on P4)...8*

Czechs to Keep Soldiers in Afghanistan till at Least 2018

PRAGUE - The Czech government has approved a plan to keep troops in Afghanistan and Mali until at least 2018.

Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka says the government has given the green light to the deployment as part of a plan for foreign missions over the next two years. Sobotka says Czech troops should also stay in other international forces in the Balkans, the Sinai Peninsula and the Golan



Heights.

The current mandate for Czech servicemen in NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan expires by the year's end. According to the Defense Ministry pro-

posal, which still needs parliamentary approval, up to 290 Czechs will be deployed in Afghanistan next year, and up to 270 in 2018. The EU's mission in Mali should include 60 Czechs. *(AP)*

10,000 Paktika Youth Provided Jobs in 4 Months: Governor



SHARAN - The governor on Monday said he had accelerated the fight against corruption and provided jobs to more than 10,000 youth over the past four months in southeastern Paktika province.

Presenting his third 100-day action plan, Paktika governor Aminullah Shariq said his administration had provided working opportunities to 1,052 youth and filled as many vacancies at government departments over the past four months.

As part of the accelerated anti-corruption struggle, many officials including two directors were referred to the prosecution office on corruption charges, he said.

On the launch of Taliban's spring offensive codenamed "Omari", the governor said the rebels had since carried out 28 attacks in different parts of the province, but security forces repulsed these attacks, killing eight insurgents and injuring more than 20 others. "Our security forces are strong enough to fight against enemies and people of the province fully cooperate with security personnel," the governor said of the Afghan forces' achievements. *(Pajhwok)*

Flash Floods in North Afghanistan Kill 38 People Overnight

KABUL - Afghan officials say flash floods in Northern provinces have killed at least 38 people overnight. Remote, northern areas of Afghanistan often see flash floods triggered by heavy rains, which also cause landslides.

The officials said Monday that the flash floods struck the provinces of Takhar, Badghis and Samangan. Heavy rains have also hit the capital, Kabul, with no major damages. Takhar's natural disasters director Abdul Razaq Zinda says 13 people, including women and children, died in Kalafgan and Bangi districts. He says scores of houses were damaged, especially mud-brick structures.

In Badghis province, local spokesman Ahmad Khalid Safi says 19 people died in Muqur district. And in Samangan province, spokesman Seddiq Azizi says flash floods killed six people - three women and three children - and damaged about 20 houses. *(AP)*

Turkmenistan Steps up Security Measures

BISHKEK - The tensed situation is observed in Mary Province of Turkmenistan bordering with Afghanistan since early April, reports the Chronicles of Turkmenistan. The alert condition of border and military forces

is raised. More troops and armor vehicles were deployed to the borders. The clashes between the Taliban and the governmental troops of Afghanistan are ongoing three weeks in a close proximity to the Turk-

men border. Turkmen authorities fear hostilities may extend to the territory of Turkmenistan. Security measures were stepped up on border crossing points with Afghanistan. *(AKIpress)*

Govt. Blasted for Giving Ariana Airlines Hajj Contract

KABUL - Officials from Aviation Companies Union have accused government of giving the transfer contract for Hajj to Ariana Afghan Airlines without having followed a proper bidding process. Their argument is that the airline will not be able to shoulder the responsibility successfully on its own. "Awarding the contract to transfer pilgrims [to Saudi Arabia for Hajj] without considering the country's laws is illegal and is kind of a monopoly practice," said Farid



Paikar, head of the union. Meanwhile, a leaked document in TOLONews' possession, which was sent by Kam Air to the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs, reveals that the airline company quoted \$60 USD less per per-

son than that quoted by Ariana Afghan Airlines. Kam Air reportedly quoted \$920 USD per person, from Kabul to Saudi Arabia. Officials from Hajj and Religious Affairs Ministry ...*(More on P4)...10*

Local Residents Drive Back Taliban in Kunduz's Qala-E-Zal

KABUL - Local residents in Qala-e-Zal district of northern Kunduz on Monday helped security forces drive insurgents back from their district after an hour-long clash, local officials said Monday.

Officials said that Taliban insurgents attacked the district at 5:00am local time and took control of the district governor's

compound for almost an hour before being ousted by security forces along with the help of local residents.

However, officials said that reinforcements have arrived in Qala-e-Zal and that the Afghan air force is also supporting ground forces in ongoing clashes with the insurgents in some parts of the district.

Qasim Jangalbagh, the provincial police chief has also arrived in the area so as to lead police forces in fighting the insurgents.

TOLONews correspondent Tariq Majidi, who is reporting from Kunduz, said Jangalbagh confirmed that insurgents have been driven back from Aqtiba, the capital ...*(More on P4)...12*

96 Militants Killed in Fresh Clashes in Afghanistan

KABUL - Some 96 militants have been killed and 93 others wounded by clashes and airstrikes across Afghanistan within one day, the Afghan Defense Ministry said on Monday.

"The Afghan National Security and Defense Forces launched several operations in Nangarhar, Ghazni, Khost, Kandahar, Zabul, Badghis, Nimroz, Jawzjan, Balkh, Faryab, Baghlan, Kunduz, and Helmand provinces within the last 24 hours, killing 96 and injuring 93 armed insurgents," the ministry said in a statement.

The statement that provides daily operational updates also confirmed the loss of five army soldiers over the same period.

"The army helicopter gunships and

artillery had supported the ground forces during the above raids. The joint forces also seized weapons and defused several roadside bombs and landmines planted recently by the militants," the statement noted. A Taliban key commander named Muhibullah Haqyar was killed following a clash in Qalay-i-Zal district, Kunduz province overnight, an Afghan official told Xinhua earlier on Monday.

Afghan security forces have beefed up security operations against militants since Tuesday after the Taliban started their so-called annual spring offensive code named "Operation Omari" and stepped up attacks across the country.

The militant group has yet to make comments. *(Xinhua)*

Iran Promise Stern Action against Afghan Girl's Killer

KABUL - The killer of an Afghan refugee girl will be brought to justice and the murder case investigated thoroughly, a top Iranian police commander has promised.

The six-year-old girl named Setayesh Quraishi was kidnapped, sexually assaulted and then killed in the Varamin area southeast of Tehran on April 9 by her neighbour.

IRNA quoted the police commander Col. Abdolreza Nazeri as saying: "All are equal before law." The 17-year-old killer has confessed to his crime during police interrogations.

Col. Nazeri claimed the victim's family was satisfied with the handling of the case by Iranian police.

Meanwhile, Iranian Ambassador to Afghanistan Mohammad Reza Bahramisaid his country's vice-president had met the family of the victim.

The VP promised the culprit would be tried for the brutal murder and rape of the child. The incident in Khairabad area has fuelled outrage in Afghanistan and elsewhere. *(Pajhwok)*

20 Insurgents Join Reconciliation Process in Kapisa

MAHMOOD RAQI - Twenty militants have joined the government-initiated reconciliation process in central Kapisa province, an official said on Monday.

Maulvi Abdul Momin Muslim, head of the provincial peace committee, told Pajhwok Afghan News the surrendering individuals earlier conducted insurgent activities on the Ala Sai-Tagab road.

He said the rebels had shunned militancy as a result of efforts by the peace committee and security officials. The step would help improve security on the Ala Sai-Tagab Road, he hoped.

Mohammad Ajmal, a resident of Shkot village, said people from his area were among the insurgents. He warmly welcomed their return.

The guerrillas have not yet commented on the issue. *(Pajhwok)*

Daikundi Floods Leave 9 Dead, Several Hurt: Governor

KABUL - Flash floods in central Daikundi province have killed nine people, including four women, and wounded five others, the governor said on Monday, warning of serious trouble if urgent assistance was not delivered.

Masooma Muradi, in an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News, about 30 residential houses in each district had been damaged

and more than 80 percent of crops destroyed by the flood in Oshtroy, Miramor, Sang-i-Takht, Bandar, Khadarand Gete districts

She asked the central government and international donors to provide essential relief to the affected people. Several national and international organisations have been contacted, but only the Natural Disaster Man

...*(More on P4)...11*

6 Police, 5 Taliban Dead in Attacks on Farah Checkpoints

FARAH CITY - Six policemen and five Taliban have been killed in clashes in the Pusht road of western Farah province, an official said on Saturday. Ghausuddin, the town's administrative chief, told Pajhwok Afghan news the insurgents stormed police check-posts in the Shahr-i-Kohna, Nawbahar and Mullah Aman areas. Seven

Taliban and two policemen were also wounded in the ensuing firefight, the official said, claiming the assailants were pushed back after hours of fire exchange. Abdul Jabbar Shaeq, a doctor at the Farah Civil Hospital, said the bodies of three policemen were evacuated to the hospital from Kansak area - the clash site. *(Pajhwok)*

Poppy Nearing Maturity in Balkh but Authorities Silent

MAZAR-I-SHARIF - Poppy crop grown in some districts of northern Balkh province has produced flowers, but the authorities are silent on it.

Just before reaching maturity, the poppy plant produces a flower and after about a week, the flower petals fall off, leaving a capsule. Raw opium gum is harvested from this capsule.

Balkh province was declared poppy-free about six years ago, but once again farmers have resumed growing the cash crop in some districts and in some areas, the plant has reached maturity. The illicit plant is grown in various areas of Chamtal, Char Bolak, Dawlatabad, Sholgar and Balkh



districts, with the bulk of the crop is cultivated in Chamtal and Char Bolak districts.

Farmers acknowledge growing poppy crop is illegal, but they say the government's negligence towards agriculture development has compelled them to grow the illicit plant. Provincial government officials

also confirm poppy cultivation in the said districts and say if the Counternarcotics Ministry launches an eradication campaign, there will be no problem in its implementation.

A resident of Naw Shehr area in Chamtal district, Attaullah, told Pajhwok Afghan News the poppy ...*(More on P4)...13*