

Jalalabad Clear 17°C 4°C	Ghazni Clear 2°C -8°C	Kandahar Clear 12°C 1°C	Mazar Clear 8°C 0°C	Herat Partly Cloudy 8°C -1°C	Bamayan Partly Cloudy -2°C -13°C	Kabul Partly Cloudy 8°C -3°C
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Daily Outlook Weather Forecast

Berlin Extends Troops Mission in Afghanistan But Demands Reforms

BERLIN - German Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen has said that extending the presence of German troops in Afghanistan does not mean giving a blank cheque to the Afghan government, but said that Afghan officials must take steps to bring about reforms in the electoral system, promote good governance and combat corruption. Speaking before German lawmakers on Friday, she reiterated the call to the Afghan government to abide by commitments made to the international community and ensure implementation of reforms in the country. She said more focus on Kabul by foreign troops has undermined the morale of the Afghan security forces and



it has encouraged the Taliban. In total, 980 German soldiers will continue their mission in Afghanistan until the end of 2016. "The message

coming out of our stay in Afghanistan shouldn't be meant as giving a blank cheque to Afghanistan, we expect that the Afghan government abides by its commitments regarding implementation of reforms in electoral system and economic sector," she said. The Afghan government has promised the international community to take practical steps for reforms that include reforms in good governance, electoral reforms and fighting corruption. "We never asked the international community and friendly countries for a blank cheque. We have introduced specific programs formulated on the ... (More on P4)...(8)

Iran to Drop Lawsuit Against Russia: Official



VLADIVOSTOK - Iran will withdraw a lawsuit against Russia after Russia supplies the first division of the S-300 missile systems, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said here Friday. The lawsuit has not been dropped now, but Iran would withdraw it after the supply of the missile systems, which would happen in the nearest future, Rogozin told Xinhua after a meeting of the state commission for the socio-economic development of the Russian Far East. "The Russian and Iranian sides reached a full understanding: the contract cannot be implemented without ... (More on P4)...(9)

ANSF Retake Part of Helmand from Taliban

KABUL - Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) drove Taliban militants out of the center of a district in the southern province of Helmand on Friday, as they fought back against insurgents who have threatened a series of districts over recent months. Deputy Interior Minister Ayoub Salangi said security forces had retaken the district of Khanishin in the south of Helmand, after it fell to the Taliban this month. "The district of Khanishin is cleared of enemies and Afghan forces inflicted heavy casualties," Salangi said. Helmand, a traditional Tali-



ban stronghold and one of the biggest centers of opium production, has been the scene of fierce fighting over recent months as the militants have pressed their insurgency following the withdrawal of

most international forces last year. The Taliban have been seeking to build on last September's brief capture of the northern city of Kunduz, their biggest ... (More on P4)...(10)

3rd Afghanistan-Central Asia Dialogue under Way in Mazar

MAZAR - The 3rd Afghanistan-Central Asia Dialogue opened in Mazar-e-Sharif in northern Afghanistan on Thursday with the participation of 120 representatives from America, Asia, Europe along with foreign ambassadors to Kabul and political analysts. Panelists at the conference gave their varying reflections on what they thought were essential needs to combat terrorism and promote further integration in the region. Addressing the conference, the acting governor of Balkh Atta Mohammad Noor said that combating extremism and terrorism needs regional cooperation and integration. "Lets join hands and cooperate before terrorists like the Taliban group and Central Asia Islamic Movement and extreme Daesh spread their chaotic shadow on the region," Noor said. In his speech to the participants, chairman of Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies (AISS) Dawoud Mu-



radian said that implications of conflicts in the region not only affects countries but also cultures. The participants expressed grave concerns over the surge in insurgency in Afghanistan particularly the expansion of terror activities in northern parts of the country. ... (More on P4)...(11)

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Concerns Raised Over Digital Migration Process

KABUL - The transport and telecommunications committee of the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) said on Thursday that the lack of transparency on the part Afghanistan's TV digitization program is unacceptable and that the ministry of telecommunication and technology must provide answers. The ministry of telecommunication and technology contracted IBS to carry out the Afghanistan TV digitization process but failed to furnish details on the deal. It is said that there are numerous discrepancies in the agreement and that details are not being made public. "It is the people's right to get the information on the agreement and it is the duty of Afghanistan's Parliament to investigate the deal especially as there was no transparency," said Ghulam Farooq Majrooh a member of the transport and telecommunications committee. Meanwhile telecommunication and technology ministry spoke out about transparency with regards to the digitization agreement and said that the ministry has acted according to procedures and that they will resolve issues regarding the deal soon. "Despite the contract we have prepared a separate procedure and the procedure is the official document of the ministry and the document is applicable over all," said Baryalai Hassam the Deputy Minister: Technical in the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology. It is however believed that one stakeholder in the media digitization company is a TV owner. Media supporting agency (NAI) raised concerns about this issue. "The contract must be given to those who should not have services in the media sector so according to citizen services they could consider justice and equity otherwise there ... (More on P4)...(17)

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US Welcomes Afghanistan's WTO Membership

WASHINGTON - The United States has welcomed Afghanistan's membership to the World Trade Organization (WTO) and termed it as a step forward for a better economy for the country. Speaking at a press conference, the US State Department spokesperson John Kirby said: "We welcome the finalization of Liberia and Afghanistan's terms of accession to the World Trade Organization on the 16th and 17th [December], in Nairobi [Kenya]." He added: "For Afghanistan, accession to the WTO is a major step forward for the Afghan Government's efforts to unlock the potential of the Afghan economy." "Today's announcement is the result of years of work, which has accelerated over the last year, under the leadership of the national unity govern-



ment. WTO accession is a process, and the Afghan government needs to work with parliament and other stakeholders to take steps needed to receive the full benefits of membership." Afghanistan on Thursday joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) calling it a "historic" membership to boost the war-torn nation's economy and build peace. Afghanistan's membership came ... (More on P4)...(13)

Multiple-Entry Visas Expected to Deepen Afghan-Pak Trade Relations

KABUL - Afghanistan's decision to grant one-year multiple-entry visas to Pakistani business people has been welcomed by the Pakistan-Afghanistan Joint Chamber of Commerce and Industry (PAJCCI) as a mean to deepen trade and bilateral relationship. According to the Express Tribune, PAJCCI Chairman Zubair Motiwala said that one of the most important demands of the joint chamber had been accepted by Afghanistan. Motiwala's remarks came at the launching ceremony of the '4th Made in Pakistan Exhibition' in Kabul, organized by the Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry. He said that visas had always ... (More on P4)...(14)

China to Offer Proposals on Syrian Political Settlement

BEIJING - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi will offer proposals on a political settlement and anti-terrorism in Syria Friday in New York. "Wang will offer Chinese proposals on a ceasefire, political settlement, anti-terrorism and post-war construction at the third foreign minister meeting of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG)," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei said at a regular

news briefing. Expressing support for the meeting, Hong said China hopes the meeting can push forward a political settlement in Syria based on the two previous meetings. After the third ISSG meeting, the UN Security Council will hold a ministerial-level meeting on Syria the same day. In the last two rounds of international talks on a Syrian settlement, held in Vienna

in late October and mid-November, the ISSG agreed that formal negotiations between the Syrian government and the opposition must take place before January, and Syria must hold elections within 18 months under a new Constitution. The ISSG includes the Arab League, China, Egypt, the European Union, France, Germany, Iran, Iraq, Italy, Jordan, ... (More on P4)...(12)

India Condemns Murder of Afghan Envoy's Brother

KABUL - India on Thursday strongly condemned the assassination of the brother of the Afghan envoy to India and said there is a "pattern of targeted elimination" of those opposed to the Taliban. At a media briefing Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Vikas Swarup also said that India offers its sincerest condolences to Ambassador Shaida Mohd Abdali, whose brother Haji Sardar Mohammad was murdered in Kandahar province while offering prayers at a mosque on Monday. Haji Sardar was a community elder in Kandahar. "We strongly condemn this barbaric act. Though we do not know who is responsible for this particular incident, we have seen that there is a pattern of targeted elimination of those who are opposed to the Taliban, and other extremists and their methods," the MEA spokesperson said. He said the killing of Haji Sardar "underlines and underscores once again that the single-biggest challenge facing Afghanistan today is terrorism which poses grave risks to the security of Afghanistan and to the stability of the region." Samim Khpalkwak, spokesman for Kandahar province governor, said that unidentified gunmen fired on Haji Sardar in a mosque while he was offering prayers, and fled. Former president Hamid Karzai has strongly condemned ... (More on P4)...(15)

Record EU Humanitarian Budget Adopted for 2016

BRUSSELS - As global humanitarian needs are set to reach a historic high in 2016, the European Commission is stepping up its humanitarian budget to record levels. The European Commission Thursday has adopted its humanitarian aid budget for 2016. With nearly €1.1 billion as an initial allocation, it is the highest EU humanitarian budget for life-saving relief in man-made and natural disasters to date. The record budget comes as global humanitarian needs are increasing due to the growing number of refugees and displaced persons as a result of armed conflict, the increasing impact of natural disasters, climate change and the access to beneficiaries has also become more dangerous. "Next year we'll have a record budget due to tragically high levels of needs. The EU will continue to play its role to address the needs of the most vulnerable and can be proud to remain among the leading global donors of humanitarian assistance in 2016. At the same, I call on other donors to step up their commitments. From the refugee crisis to the impact of natural disasters, a stronger global response is needed." Said Management. Background: In keeping with guidance of the European Council of 23 September 2015, the budget includes a ... (More on P4)...(16)



Abdul Rasool Sayyaf arrives for the inauguration of the Afghanistan Protection and Stability Council in Kabul on Friday, December 18, 2015. The group of Afghan warlords and lawmakers say they have set up the country's first opposition party in 14 years in a bid to pressure the government to deliver on its economic and security promises. (AP Photo/Rahmat Gul)