Taliban Still A Threat to Nation’s Highways: Lawmakers

KABUL - As Taliban operations continue, efforts to isolate the provincial capitals of Baghlan and Takhar provinces from the main highways, a number of lawmakers in parliament on Saturday raised alarms over what they called ongoing Taliban operations on the highways.

They said the Taliban have a free hand in whatever they intend to do and there is not enough security for passengers travelling on the routes. The statement comes few days after several episodes of hostage taking dramas were seen in some northern regions of Afghanistan including Kunduz, Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar and Ghazni.

The Taliban have been accused of holding hostages and committing crimes on the highways, an issue that has sparked major concerns among residents and travelers. “Majority of areas are controlled by the Taliban including the illegal armed groups that operate over there, only a few areas are under the control of the government,” MP Azim Mohseni said.

“No one can trust security on these routes, passengers feel fear that the Taliban may take them.” MP Qudratullah Zakhi said.

“The Afghan armed services are determined in their mission to secure all regions of Afghanistan including Kunduz, Kabul and Kandahar.” (More on P.9).

Insecurity Helps Lapis Smuggling in Badakhshan: Officials

FAIZABAD - Local officials in Badakhshan on Saturday said that insecurity has mounted the smuggling of lapis lazuli in the province.

The officials said they only way to prevent the illegal business is to boost security in Badakhshan. According to local officials, there are 30 lapis lazuli mines in Karan Manjan district in Badakhshan, where over 10,000 kilograms of the semi-precious stone is illegally extracted by armed militants.

Their salaries ended up in the hands of Taliban. (More on P.10).

Hydroelectric Project Inaugurated in Kunduz

KUNDUZ CITY - A hydroelectric and irrigation dam project, which produces 10 megawatts of power and irrigates over 8,000 hectares of land, was inaugurated in Kunduz, the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) said in a press release on Saturday.

According to the ministry, the hydroelectric project, designed during former Afghan president Daud Shah's reign, the ministry said the project costs one million euros funded by the European Union.

Kunduz province, but getting to exploit the rivalry and gain a foothold in the strategic region.

Zafar Khan was concerned about the looted ammunition. “The Afghan armed services are determined in their mission to secure all regions of Afghanistan including Kunduz, Kabul and Kandahar.” (More on P.9).

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