

India, U.S. Face Common Security Problems: Mattis

WASHINGTON - The United States Defense Secretary James Mattis in a meeting with India's National Security Adviser, Ajit Doval, at the Pentagon on Friday said the two countries are faced with common threats, the Associated Press reported. The two sides discussed strengthening the relationship between India and U.S, the report said. "We're delighted to have you here. Democracies like ours need this sort of dialogue and we've had a strengthening of the relationship over the last several years. And no relationship stays the same. They either decline or they get better, they get stronger and our intent here today is to continue to strengthen the



relationship and to make certain it gets stronger every year, between two democracies that have many common interests, many common security challenges," Mattis

said. Meanwhile, India's National Security Adviser said the two countries are interested to work together. "We share the values, we

share the democracy, we all have a very common objective and interest. Both of the regions, that I come from and also globally, that we are able to work together, share

our ideas and thoughts and bring about some new innovative changes and improvements," he added. This was Doval's first meeting with Mattis. (Tolonews)

Taliban Strongholds 3 Km Away from Sar-E-Pul Governor's Office



KABUL - Taliban and other terrorist groups have established strongholds and training camps at least three kilometers away from the local government and police headquarters' buildings in Sar-e-Pul province, soldiers claimed. "The enemy is three kilometers away from us. We have established our base here to protect the local government building," Ahmad Shah, a soldier in the province, said. "We are in the middle of the government building and the enemy. On one side is the Sar-

e-Pul city while on the other side of our base is the enemy," said Sayed Gul, another soldier told TOLONews. Meanwhile, Sar-e-Pul Police Chief Khalilullah Dastyar confirmed the Taliban's presence near the local government buildings and said they are not able to launch a large scale military operation to eliminate the insurgents. He urged the central government to send reinforcements to the province. "Security forces have insufficient...(More on P4)...(6)

Woman Provides Source of Income for 25 Families

JALALABAD - A woman from the Khewa district of eastern Nangarhar province has provided a source of income for 25 families with training on handicrafts. Nazia Latifi, 20, told Pajhwok Afghan News she would extend the business to other families as well, if supported. She has built a handicraft centre in her village, where 25 other women also work. "Besides meeting the needs of my own family through handicrafts, I have graduated from school. Now I have started studying political science at a private university," she said. Latifi set up the center with the help of an organization about three years ago. Only three women worked with her initially, but the number has now increased to 25. "In case of workload, we share raw materials with other families with experiences in this area and we give them pay in return for their work," she added. Latifi personally purchases raw materials from the market and offers her supplies as embroidered bodice, dresses, shawls and other items to local shopkeepers. "We prepare around 350 simple suits, 15 embroidered bras, 11 embroidered suits and many Punjabi suits every month. We sell around 35 to 40 suits a month," she said. She earns 100 to 1,000 afghanis from each suit sold and there are many shops in the market that sell such products. Stitching some suits may take a few hours but other need a month. This depends on designs and embroidery styles. The products are also exhibited and sold at such events, and also on orders from different customers. "The women working with me are widows or those whose husbands have disabilities or mental problems," Latifi explained. "A few days ago, I invited a woman whose husband has mental problems. Their economic situation is very bad. I brought her to my centre and she is working with us now." She said a number of women

Waziri MoD Accelerates Fight against Corruption

KABUL - Authorities in the Ministry of Defense (MoD) said they have swapped posts of at least 1,000 officials accused of corruption in procurement and finance departments of the ministry as part of their efforts to fight the phenomenon. "We have many cases under investigation aimed at fighting corruption in the ministry. At least 6.1 billion Afs was saved in procurements and contracts last year. All these efforts are to fight corruption," the MoD spokesman Dawlat Waziri told TOLONews on Saturday.



Meanwhile, a number of MPs said at the Wolesi Jirga's (Lower House of Parliament) session on Saturday that corruption is a big problem in security agencies.

"Unfortunately corruption has increased in Afghanistan's security agencies," MP Aref Rahmani said. "Soldiers' boots, caps as well as their...(More on P4)...(7)

Taliban Plotted Guesthouse Attack in Kandahar: Governor



KABUL - Kandahar governor Humayun Azizi, who has returned home after treatment of his injuries sustained in an explosion in Kandahar, said in an interview with TOLONews that the attack at Kandahar guesthouse was plotted by the Taliban on the other side of the Durand Line - the de facto border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. "The explosion was plotted by the Taliban on the other side of the Durand Line and was carried out here in Kandahar," Azizi said. However, following the attack the Taliban denied their involvement in the incident. The governor said the explosives were placed inside dishes and were taken to the guesthouse - where high ranking officials from Afghanistan and United Arab Emirates had gathered. "The explosives were few, but were highly destructive and powerful. The explosives were placed inside dishes when they were being

PPP Wants Report on Osama Presence Made Public

PESHAWAR - Pakistan's major opposition party says the mystery surrounding the presence of Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in the country is yet to be resolved. Pakistan People's Party Senator Farhatullah Babar (PPP) demanded the publication of the Abbottabad Commission report to clarify ambiguities about the presence of Osama bin Laden in the garrison town. "A thorough inquiry into visa issuance policies and procedures from 2001 onwards, when the global hunt for bin Laden started, is what is needed," Babar said in a statement. He saw nothing new or wrong in a 2010 letter from the Prime Minister House to the Foreign Office, allowing the issuance of visas to Americans, including intelligence personnel. "However its regurgitation at this time is politically motivated and aimed at diverting attention from the real issue," he alleged, arguing national security interests would be advanced only by a credible, investigation into visa policies and procedures. "Investigations must also be made into how many Americans entered Pakistan through the Shamsi airbase in Balochistan, with or without visas, during the days of General Pervez Musharraf," the...

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14 Paktia Girls' Schools Stay Shut as New Year Starts

GARDEZ - The new academic year was officially started in southeastern Paktia province on Saturday, at a time when 14 girls' schools have been closed in the province. The new academic year was launched at an official ceremony in the provincial capital, Gardez. Education director Kuchi Zazi on the occasion said there would be no shortage of text books in the new academic year. He said all textbooks would arrive from Kabul to Paktia next week. The education director said 14 girls schools had been closed in Zurmat district, the largest town of Paktia. "We have problem only in Zurmat district. The closed schools include primary and

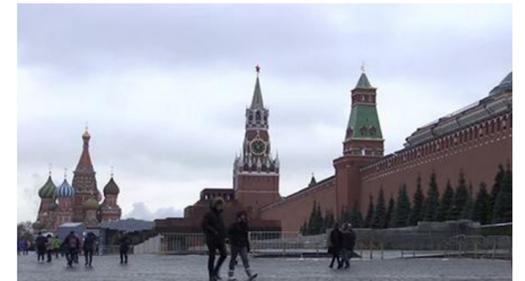


middle. We have launched serious efforts to reopen the schools in cooperation with local elders." Zazi said schools in the remaining 12 districts of the province were open. The Ministry of Education has set Paktia the target of enrolling 20,000 new students,

half of them girls, during the new academic year. Provincial officials said they were optimistic the target would be achieved and even surpassed. Governor Zalmi Weesa also addressed the gathering. He mentioned low quality of education, ...(More on P4)...(8)

Moscow Rejects NATO Allegation of Aiding Taliban

KABUL - Russian has rejected the NATO commander's allegation that Moscow may be assisting the Taliban who have been fighting against foreign forces in Afghanistan, a media report said on Saturday. "These claims are absolutely false," Zamir Kabulov, head of the Russian foreign ministry's department responsible for Afghanistan and the Kremlin's special envoy in the country, told RIA Novosti news agency. "These fabrications are designed, as we have repeatedly underlined, to justify the failure of the US military



and politicians in the Afghan campaign. There is no other explanation." Nato's Supreme Allied Commander Curtis Scaparrotti, who also heads the US military's European Command,

told lawmakers in Washington on Thursday he had witnessed Russia's influence grow in many regions, including in Afghanistan. In a testimony to the Senate Armed...(More on P4)...(9)

North Carolina Troops Scammed \$27m from Afghanistan Aid

MOSCOW - A special investigation into how more than \$115 billion in funding from the US was allocated in Afghanistan found that at least \$1 billion was spent "questionably." Prosecutors have recovered \$27.7 million just from their investigations into troops stationed in North Carolina. John Sopko, special investigator general for Afghanistan reconstruction (SIGAR) berated military use of funds in 2014 when he famously declared that the US had



dumped more money into Afghanistan in 11 years than it spent on 16 countries after World War II as part of the Marshall Plan. Speaking at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, on March 23, Sopko said US

troops designed and executed sophisticated schemes to steal money intended to rebuild Afghanistan. In one case, four military members made 114 requests for fuel as part of mission re...(More on P4)...(12)