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[IMAGE]

Executive Summary

While Western media coverage of Afghanistan was largely absent during

the day Saturday, Pajhwok Afghan News reported that a number of Afghans living in the United States had held an anti-Pakistan protest

in front of the Pakistani Embassy in Washington, calling for the immediate stop to the "killing of innocent Afghans." Mohammad Shafiq

Hamdam, a protester and civil society activist, told the outlet

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8/23/2017

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that dozens of protesters, including Afghans and Americans, chanted anti-Pakistan slogans while carrying signs saying "ISI and Pak Army should not intervene in Afghanistan."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying was quoted in a press release as saying that Beijing has always supported an "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned" reconciliation process and would continue to cooperate closely with all parties until peace and reconciliation are achieved. "It is hoped that all parties would stick to the right direction, build up confidence and determination on the peace talk, and make continuous efforts to achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan," the statement read. It also commended the important role played by the relevant parties, and Pakistan in particular, in pushing forward with the peace talks.

Pakistan's The Nation relayed comments by U.S. scholar Dr Kenneth Holland, head of the Center for International Development at Ball State University of Muncie in Indiana, who stated that Washington's aid level to Pakistan would change with the reduction of U.S. engagement in Afghanistan. Speaking at the Strategic Vision Institute

(SVI), an Islamabad-based think tank, Holland noted that Pakistan and the U.S. were now focused on transforming their relationship from aid to trade, saying, "Both countries agree that greater trade between the United States and Pakistan is desirable." He discussed Pakistan's preparations to support this transformation, saying that Islamabad had taken steps to promote trade and investment in a friendly environment, particularly in its energy sector. On the escalating tensions between Kabul and Islamabad, Holland said, "The US does not share Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's new hostile attitude towards Pakistan," which he attributed to the increase in insurgent attacks that have led to higher civilian casualties.

Abdul Ghafoor Hotak, youth director at the Department of Information and Culture in Kunduz Province, told Pajhwok Afghan News that a large number of educated Afghans had taken up arms against the government due to the lack of employment opportunities in the province. "I know people who were member of the youth department for three years and had university degrees as well. When our efforts to find them jobs

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did not bear any fruit they had no choice but to join the insurgents," Hotak said. He cautioned that the security situation in the province would continue to deteriorate unless the government implemented practical measures to reduce the rate of unemployment.

After video of the public beating of a father and his daughter attracted wide attention on social media and local television, the Ministry of Interior said in a statement on Saturday that five people were arrested in Sar-e-Pul Province for their role in the incident. "The father and daughter were beaten by the village resident after a fortune teller accused them of robbery," the statement said. In Badakhshan Province, police officials said that a woman and her husband were "brutally killed" in front of their children by Taliban militants after they discovered that she was a policewoman working at the police headquarters in Shuhada district. In other security developments, Khaama Press reported that 10 civilians who were abducted by unknown gunmen three days ago in Ghazni's Qara Bagh district were released. Governor spokesman Shafiq Nang said that local elders played an important role in securing the release of the hostages.

Other Top News Today

"AAF MD-530 'Jengi' helicopter flies over Afghanistan": Captain Cory Fale, helicopter pilot and MD-530 advisor at Train, Advise, Assist Command-Air (TAAC-Air), praised Afghan pilots for successfully debuting MD-530 helicopters in Nangarhar Province. "The addition of armed MD-530s to the Afghan Air Force is pivotal following the January 2015 reduction in coalition airpower," Fale said, adding, "It was great seeing the pride beaming from the Afghan aircrews as they climbed out of their helicopters from their first combat mission."- Pajhwok Afghan News 15 August 2015

"Ministry of Defense says 199 insurgents killed, wounded in two days": The Ministry of Defense said in a statement that 199 militants were killed and wounded in military operations carried across the country over the past 48 hours. The statement added that 13 Afghan National Army soldiers were also killed during these operations.

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8/23/2017

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-Khaama Press 15 August 2015

"91 Insurgents Killed, 34 Villages Cleared in Nangarhar": A police official in Nangarhar Province said that 91 insurgents were killed in

a large-scale military operation that was carried out by security personnel in Hesarak, Sherzad and Khoghyani districts. He added that

five soldiers and one policeman were wounded in the operation.

-TOLOnews 15 August 2015

Table of Contents

Top News

Afghan police arrest five over public beating video - Reuters

15 August 2015

Kabul -- Afghan police arrested five people near the northern town of

Sar-e-Pul on Saturday after they were filmed beating a man and his daughter accused of robbery by a village fortune teller, the interior ministry said.

A video of the brutal public beating, which shows a man hitting a young woman repeatedly with a large stick while a crowd looks on, attracted wide attention on social media and local television.

The assault occurred earlier this month after a resident of Thughi village near Sar-e-Pul suffered a robbery and consulted a fortune teller to identify the culprit.

"The father and daughter were beaten by the village resident after a fortune teller accused them of robbery," the interior ministry statement said.

In May, film of a young woman being beaten to death by a mob in Kabul

after she was wrongly accused of burning a Koran caused global outrage and underlined the vulnerable position of many women in Afghanistan.

(Reporting by Mirwais Harooni; Writing by James Mackenzie; Editing

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by
Tom Heneghan)

<http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/08/15/us-afghanistan-boating-idUSKCN0QK09H20150815>

Return to Table of Contents

Afghans in Washington hold anti-Pakistan protest - Pajhwok Afghan News

By Javed Hamim Kakar
15 August 2015

Kabul -- Afghans living in the United States have held anti-Pakistan protest and called for immediate steps to stop further bloodshed of Afghans.

Mohammad Shafiq Hamdam, a protester and civil society activist, told Pajhwok Afghan News that dozens of protesters, including Afghans and Americans, chanted anti-Pakistan slogans on the eve of Pakistan Independence Day in Washington.

The protest was held in front of Pakistani Embassy in Washington

The protesters carrying placards inscribed with "ISI and Pak Army should not intervene in Afghanistan and stop killing of innocent Afghans," Hamdard added.

Sulaiman, another protester, said Afghans couldn't tolerate further bloodshed of Afghans since Taliban were Pakistan's puppets who killed international troops in connivance of Pakistan.

Several Americans also chanted slogans against Pakistan and accused Islamabad of supporting terrorists.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/08/15/afghans-washington-hold-anti-pak>

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8/23/2017

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Return to Table of Contents

Diplomatic News

China supports Afghan peace talks, commends Pakistan's role - Daily Times (Pakistan)

15 August 2015

Islamabad -- China has always stood for the 'Afghan-led and Afghan-owned' reconciliation process, believing that the peace talk was the realistic way out to solve Afghanistan issue.

A press release on Saturday, quoting Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying's remarks about Afghanistan reconciliation process, said that China encouraged and supported the peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

It also commended the important role played by the relevant parties and Pakistan in particular, in pushing forward the peace talks.

"It is hoped that all parties would stick to the right direction, build up confidence and determination on the peace talk, and make continuous efforts to achieve lasting peace in Afghanistan," it added.

According to the statement, the Chinese side is ready to cooperate closely with all parties, and will continue to play a constructive role in realising broad-based and inclusive peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

<http://www.dailytimes.com.pk/national/15-Aug-2015/china-supports-afg>

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lks-commends-pakistan-s-role

Return to Table of Contents

China favours role in Afghan peace talks, appreciates Pakistan's efforts - Dawn (Pakistan)

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8/23/2017

UNCLASSIFIED//~~FOUO~~

15 August 2015

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson on Friday said that the country is in favour of playing a constructive role in Afghanistan's peace and reconciliation process, said a report on the government news service Xinhua.

The statements by spokesperson Hua Chunying come after recent terrorist attacks in Afghanistan which may put a damper on reconciliation efforts.

Hua said that China is consistent in its support for the "Afghan-led and Afghan-owned" reconciliation process, mentioning China's support for peace talks between the Afghan Taliban and Afghan government.

The spokesperson also noted Pakistan's significant role in the peace talks and said that China hopes that those involved in the talks continue to make efforts to ensure peace in Afghanistan.

Pakistan last month hosted inaugural talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban, who are fighting to re-establish hard-line Islamist rule more than 13 years after the US-led military intervention that toppled their regime.

Many in Afghanistan accuse Pakistan of being host to Taliban bases that are used to plan attacks such as the bombings over the weekend.

Pakistan, which faces its own Taliban insurgency, denies that it has actively allowed its territory to be used in this way.

"Our priority of course is reconciliation," Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs and National Security Sartaj Aziz had said.

Three attacks last week shocked Kabul in their scope and brutality. A truck bomb exploded early Friday morning, flattening a city block and killing 15 people and wounding 240 as they slept, authorities said.

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8/23/2017

UNCLASSIFIED//~~FOUO~~

Hours later, a suicide bomber killed at least 20 cadets outside a police academy, while another 10 people died in an attack on a military camp used by US Army Special Forces. On Monday, an attack near Kabul's airport killed five people.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for most of the attacks.

Meanwhile, fighting in Baghlan between Afghan forces and the Taliban has killed two police officers, said Jaweed Basharat, the provincial police spokesman. He said the fighting in the Dahana-I-Ghori district began on Tuesday.

The Taliban, who regularly exaggerate their claims, issued a statement, claiming a much higher police casualties figure.

<http://www.dawn.com/news/1200627/canpa-favours-role-in-afghan-peace-l>

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iates-pakistans-efforts

Return to Table of Contents

RS-NATO News

AAF MD-530 'Jengi' helicopter flies over Afghanistan - Pajhwok
Afghan
News

15 August 2015

Kabul -- Afghan Air Force (AAF) MD-530 helicopters made a successful combat debut against insurgents in Nangarhar province as Afghan National Defense and Security Forces continue clearing the districts of Khogyani, Sherzad and Hisarak districts, a statement said on Saturday.

The MD-530 Warrior, or "Jengi" in Dari, is the newest in the Afghan Air Force's arsenal, providing air power to support the ANDSF. The "Jengi" is designed for high altitude and hot weather operations.

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8/23/2017

UNCLASSIFIED//~~FOUO~~

"The addition of armed MD-530s to the Afghan Air Force is pivotal following the January 2015 reduction in coalition airpower," said Capt. Cory Fale, helicopter pilot and MD-530 advisor at Train, Advise, Assist Command-Air (TAAC-Air). "It was great seeing the pride beaming from the Afghan aircrews as they climbed out of their helicopters from their first combat mission."

Fale, a UH-1N Huey helicopter pilot from F.E. Warren Air Force Base, Wyoming, said his role as a TAAC-Air advisor during operations was to assist with planning, mitigate risk, debrief aircrews and coordinate with TAAC-East advisors in support of the AAF and ANDSF missions.

"The MD-530 was the insurgent's number one concern in Nangarhar," he said. The delivery of the first six armed MD-530 helicopters occurred in March 2015. By early 2016, the AAF will have 16 in their inventory.

The MD-530 is a close-air attack aircraft. Adding to the growing Afghan Air Force, it provides critical offensive air-to-ground capability. Each MD-530 is armed with two HMP 400 .50-caliber machine gun pods, which enables Afghan pilots to effectively engage the enemy.

To accommodate the extra weight of the equipment, the helicopters were upgraded with high-capacity landing gear, allowing take-off and landing with a maximum weight of 3,750 pound (1,700 kg) through the incorporation of jettisonable external stores.

In coordination with Afghan Air Liaison Officers embedded with ANDSF, "Jengi" pilots can bring firepower to bear on the enemies of the Government of Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Fale said.

"The MD-530 is highly maneuverable and makes for a very small target," he said. "The helicopter, in conjunction with coalition trained Afghan aircrews, brings the ANDSF the capability to execute reconnaissance, security, escort, close air attack, and aerial interdiction missions."

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8/23/2017

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[http://www.pakistanwork.com/en/2015/08/15/aaf-md-530-jengi-helicopter-](http://www.pakistanwork.com/en/2015/08/15/aaf-md-530-jengi-helicopter-file)
[file](#)

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Return to Table of Contents

MD-530 makes successful combat debut in Nangarhar - Khaama Press

15 August 2015

The MD-530 Warrior, locally known as "Jengi" has made a successful combat debut against militants in eastern Nangarhar province.

Capt. Cory Fale, helicopter pilot and MD-530 advisor at Train, Advise, Assist Command-Air (TAAC-Air) of NATO's Resolute Support mission said that MD-530 was the number one concern for insurgents during the Nangarhar mission.

"The MD-530 was the insurgent's number one concern in Nangarhar," he said, adding that, "It was great seeing the pride beaming from the Afghan aircrews as they climbed out of their helicopters from their first combat mission."

MD-530 Warrior is a close-air attack aircraft and it has been newly added to the arsenal of the Afghan Air Force. It is designed for high altitude and hot weather operations.

"The addition of armed MD-530s to the Afghan Air Force is pivotal following the January 2015 reduction in coalition airpower," Capt. Fale added.

Afghanistan received six MD-530 aircrafts at the first quarter of current year and it will have a total of 16 of them by early 2016.

[http://www.khaama.com/md-530-makes-successful-combat-debut-in-](http://www.khaama.com/md-530-makes-successful-combat-debut-in-nangarhar-3761)
[nangarhar-3761](#)

Return to Table of Contents

UNCLASSIFIED//~~FOUO~~

8/23/2017

UNCLASSIFIED//~~FOUO~~

Afghan News

Kidnapped a day earlier, 10 individuals freed in Ghazni - Pajhwok
Afghan News

By Saifullah Maftoon
15 August 2015

Ghazni City -- Ten kidnapped people have been released in the
Jaghatu
district of southern Ghazni province, an official said on Saturday.

Unidentified gunmen abducted a dozen individuals on Friday but two
of
them managed to escaped from their captors' custody.

Shafiq Nang, the governor's spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News
that
local elders played an important role in the release of the 10
individuals.

Provincial council member Hassan Raza Yousafi said: "Ten abducted
persons from Hazara community have reached their homes safe and
sound."

Yousafi said: "Civilians and government officials have been
kidnapped
on the route several times. The government should immediately
control
the situation."

Zafar Sharif, a resident of the locality, confirmed the releases
and
said that they got free at around 8: 00pm and had reached homes.

Noorullah, another resident, said: "Unidentified men covering their
faces brought ten persons to our village for few minutes and they
left but I could not recognize anyone since they had covered their
faces."

At least seven persons had been abducted by unidentified persons
last
Thursday and they had been disappeared since then.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid insisted militants did not
have

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8/23/2017

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any involvement in the abduction of the people. He said Taliban had also started investigations to find who had kidnapped them.

Armed militants kidnapped four residents of the district and later they were brutally killed and left their bodies on the scene in Asfandi area last week.

<http://www.pajtwok.com/en/2015/08/15/kidnapped-bay-carrier-10-individuals-freed-ghazni>

Return to Table of Contents

Ghazni Hostages Released - TOLONews

15 August 2015

The remaining ten passengers out of 17 who were abducted in central Ghazni province last week were released on Friday evening, local officials said on Saturday.

The passengers were abducted in Qarabagh and Jaghori district on Tuesday. Seven of them were released on Wednesday after tribal elders negotiated with the hostage-takers. Ten others were released on Friday evening, a member of Provincial Council of Ghazni, Hassan Reza Yousufi said.

"All the passengers were released and have joined their families in Jaghori," he said.

Earlier, Yousufi warned "if the government does not send troops in to secure the highways of the districts, the highways will become more insecure."

Kidnapping cases have increased substantially in the country in recent months, especially on provincial highways.

In February, armed gunmen kidnapped 31 bus passengers in Zabul. After months of negotiations 19 were released in a reported prisoner swap.

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8/23/2017

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However, the whereabouts of the remaining 12 hostages is still unknown.

<http://www.tolnews.com/en/afghanistan/2015-08-15-ghazni-hostages-released>

Return to Table of Contents

Gunmen release 10 hostages they recently abducted in Ghazni - Khaama Press

By Zabihullah Moosakhail
15 August 2015

10 civilians who were kidnapped by unidentified gunmen three days before in Qara Bagh District of Ghazni province have been released.

Shafiq Nang Safai, spokesman for the governor of Ghazni province said that the release was secured through the mediation of local elders who convinced kidnapers to release them.

Safai added that all 10 countrymen reunited with their family last night.

These people were travelling in two 'Saracha' vehicles when unidentified gunmen stopped and kidnapped them on gun point around 10 am on Tuesday.

Two days after this incident, another group of unidentified gunmen abducted nine more residents of Jaghri District while they were on their way to the provincial capital 'Ghazni city'.

Shafiq Nang Safai said that eleven people were initially abducted but the kidnapers later released a child and an elderly man. He said kidnapers took the nine hostages to an unknown location.

There is no information on the fate of these hostages yet. And no one knows who the kidnapers are.

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8/23/2017

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[http://www.khaama.com/kidnappers-release-10-hostages-they-recently-
abducted-in-g
hazni-3759](http://www.khaama.com/kidnappers-release-10-hostages-they-recently-
abducted-in-g
hazni-3759)

Return to Table of Contents

Unemployment forces Kunduz youth to join rebels' ranks - Pajhwok
Afghan News

By Hidayatullah Hamdard
15 August 2015

Kunduz City -- Some educated youth have no choice but to join ranks of insurgents in northern Kunduz province, an official said.

Abdul Ghafoor Hotak, youth director at information and culture department, told Pajhwok Afghan News in the last five years they could not provide employment opportunities in government departments for over 1,200 youth having bachelors and masters' degrees and 18 with doctorates.

Some of these youth, he said, due to poverty and unemployment had no choice but to take up arms against the government.

"I know people who were member of the youth department for three years and had university degrees as well. When our efforts to find them jobs did not bear any fruit they had no choice but to join the insurgents."

He added these youth now were also convincing others to join them. He went on to say if the government did not take practical measure in bringing unemployment rate down security in the province would deteriorate further.

Sayed Hakim, a resident of Chardara district, who graduated from Education University in Kunduz two years back, said he could not get any job in this period.

He said he has to take care of his family and had no choice but to do manual labour in Kunduz city.

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Sibghatullah Mahmoodi, another graduate from Nangarhar University, said in the last three years he has suffered a lot due to unemployment. He wanted to work as a teacher but could not get the opportunity.

Without knowing high-ranking officials or paying bribes, he claimed, nobody could be hired in government departments.

According to the youth, director more than 65% of the youth in the province leave for foreign countries in search of jobs.

<http://www.pajaweb.com/en/2015/08/15/unemployment-forces-kunduz-youth>

-join-rebel
s%2%80%99-ranks

Return to Table of Contents

Ministry of Defense says 199 insurgents killed, wounded in two days -
Khaama Press

15 August 2015

Ministry of Defense says that 199 militants have been killed and wounded in newest military operations across the country, the ministry's spokesman announced this morning.

General Zahir Azimi, said in a twitter post that 123 insurgents were killed, 76 wounded and 13 others arrested during military operations in past 48 hours.

The statement further states that 13 soldiers from the Afghan National Army also embraced martyrdom during these operations.

This comes as Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have been conducting several large-scale military operations in parts of the country.

These independent operations started after ANSF took full responsibility of security from NATO-led coalition forces at the

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8/23/2017

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beginning of this year.

Afghan security forces have great achievements during this period.

According to the defense ministry, thousands of militants have been killed since then and some areas that were under the control of Taliban for years have been retaken by the security forces.

<http://www.khaama.com/ministry-of-defense-says-199-insurgents-killed-wounded-in-two-days-3760>

Return to Table of Contents

91 Insurgents Killed, 34 Villages Cleared in Nangarhar - TOLONews

By Sonil Haidari
15 August 2015

At least 91 Taliban insurgents have been killed in a large-scale military operation in three districts of eastern Nangarhar province over the past two weeks, local officials said on Saturday.

In addition, 62 Taliban insurgents were injured and 11 others arrested, including a Pakistani.

The operation was launched in Hesarak, Sherzad and Khoghyani districts of the province which border with Pakistan. The operation was launched to clear insurgents and will continue for a month, a spokesman for Nangarhar Police Chief, Hazrat Hussian Mashriqiwal said.

"The insurgents have been targeted by ground and air forces," Mashriqiwal said. "The forces have also re-opened the road through Sherzad and Hesarak district - after insurgents closed it off three years ago."

"So far five military soldiers and a policeman were injured during the operation," he said.

Sherzad, Hesarak and Khoghyani are insecure districts in which the Taliban insurgents have activities and often target local security forces.

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<http://www.tolnews.com/en/afghanistan/2015-08-15-insurgents-killed-34-villages-clared-in-nangarhar>

Return to Table of Contents

JJSN members to observe govt role to facilitate media - Pajhwok Afghan News

By Hassan Khitab
15 August 2015

Kabul -- A number of journalist organizations on Saturday introduced members of Journalist Justice and Safety Network (JJSN) to oversee government commitment in connection with freedom of expression and media support in the country.

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah during their election campaign had pledged to ensure freedom of expression and support media.

Both leaders had signed a 12 articles resolution prepared by different committees of media outlets and JJSN regarding freedom of media.

The JJSN network was structured one year ago, but the leaders of unity government did not materialize their pledges.

Fahim Dashti, executive director of the Afghanistan National Journalist Union (ANJU), said promotion of journalism and facilities to journalists was one of the 12 articles pledge by the unity government.

He said access to information law had been approved and endorsed by the Wolesi Jirga and president. The process of introducing amendment into the law was underway in coordination with the Ministry of Information and Cultural Affairs.

According to Dashti, the purpose behind introduction of the JJSN was to observe implementation of government promises in line with media

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independence and freedom of expression.

Sayed Muzgan Mustafavi, deputy broadcasting director of information and cultural affairs ministry, Danish Karokhel, director of Pajhwok Afghan News, Najib, head of the Journalist Safety Committee, Shah Hussain Murtazavi, director of Hashti Suba h Newspaper, and heads of some others media outlets are members of JJSN.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/08/15/jjsn-members-observe-govt-rol-e-facilitate-media>

Return to Table of Contents

Couple brutally killed by gunmen in Badakhshan - Khaama Press

15 August 2015

Taliban have brutally killed a wife and her husband in front of their children in Badakhshan province.

Sakhidad Haidari, deputy police chief of Badakhshan province said that the woman was working at the police headquarters of Shuhada District.

He identified the policewoman as 'Amina'.

Abdul Marouf Khairkhwa, police chief of Shuhada District said that Taliban militants went to Amina's house in Lab Dara village and carried out the horrific murder around 09:30 pm last night.

He said that the dead bodies contained several knife marks when checked during investigation.

The couple left nine children behind.

This comes less than a week after a woman was thrown into river in Wardoj District of Badakhshan province.

Asadullah Hakimi, police chief of Wardoj District said that the woman was executed for allegedly having links with government.

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Although, officials hold Taliban responsible for both of these incidents but Taliban spokesman has not yet commented on these reports.

<http://www.khaama.com/couple-brutally-killed-by-gunmen-in-badakhshan-3760>

Return to Table of Contents

Unemployment forces Kunduz youth to join rebels' ranks - Pajhwok Afghan News

By Hidayatullah Hamdard
15 August 2015

Kunduz City -- Some educated youth have no choice but to join ranks of insurgents in northern Kunduz province, an official said.

Abdul Ghafoor Hotak, youth director at information and culture department, told Pajhwok Afghan News in the last five years they could not provide employment opportunities in government departments for over 1,200 youth having bachelors and masters' degrees and 18 with doctorates.

Some of these youth, he said, due to poverty and unemployment had no choice but to take up arms against the government.

"I know people who were member of the youth department for three years and had university degrees as well. When our efforts to find them jobs did not bear any fruit they had no choice but to join the insurgents."

He added these youth now were also convincing others to join them. He went on to say if the government did not take practical measure in bringing unemployment rate down security in the province would deteriorate further.

Sayed Hakim, a resident of Chardara district, who graduated from Education University in Kunduz two years back, said he could not get

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8/23/2017

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any job in this period.

He said he has to take care of his family and had no choice but to do manual labour in Kunduz city.

Sibghatullah Mahmoodi, another graduate from Nangarhar University, said in the last three years he has suffered a lot due to unemployment. He wanted to work as a teacher but could not get the opportunity.

Without knowing high-ranking officials or paying bribes, he claimed, nobody could be hired in government departments.

According to the youth, director more than 65% of the youth in the province leave for foreign countries in search of jobs.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/08/15/unemployment-forces-kunduz-youth>

-join-rebel
s%E2%80%99-ranks

Return to Table of Contents

Jawzjan blast leaves 3 dead, 14 wounded - Pajhwok Afghan News

15 August 2015

Shiberghan -- At least three persons were killed and 14 others wounded when a blast ripped through a civilian car in northern Jawzjan province, an official said on Saturday.

Police Chief Brig. Gen. Faqir Mohammad Jawzjani told Pajhwok Afghan News that the bomb went-off around afternoon. The pensioners were on their way to get their pensions when the bomb exploded. The police chief accused armed rebels and said police had launched investigations into the explosion.

Dr. Faridoon Habib, director civil hospital, said the wounded persons had been shifted to northern Shiberghan and Balkh provinces for treatment.

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However, Taliban have not yet commented on the incident.

Civilian killings have been on the rise in recent past. According to United Nations, civilian casualties have been 100 percent increased in last six months.

Around 4,921 civilians' casualties reported while 1,592 among them have been killed and 3,369 wounded during the year.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/08/15/farh-blast-leaves-3-dead-4-wounded>

Return to Table of Contents

Farah highway closed for traffic as fighting ongoing - Pajhwok Afghan News

By Mohammad Humayoon Zaheen
15 August 2015

Farah -- The main Farah Rud-Farah highway has been closed for traffic on Saturday morning in western Farah province after intense firefight sparked between security forces and armed rebels in the area, an official said.

Iqbal Bahar, police spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News the gun battle flared up at 4: 00 am when militants stormed security check posts and security forces offered stout resistance.

"The firefight is still underway but I have no accurate information into casualties," he added.

The main Farah-Farah Rud road linking Farah to southern Herat and Kandahar and central Kabul provinces had been blocked for traffic.

Ahmad Khalid, a commuter who was on his way to Herat from Farah, told

Pajhwok Afghan News that dozens of vehicles had been stranded on the road and waited for reopening of the road.

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Taliban have not commented so far on the incident.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/08/15/farah-highway-closed-traffic-hting-ongoi>
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Return to Table of Contents

Samangan farmers harvest 500 tones of almond - Pajhwok Afghan News

By Ahmad Barat
15 August 2015

Aibak -- Although cold weather has affected the almond harvests in Samangan, farmers in this northern Province have harvested more than 500 tonnes of almond and would earn 214 million afghanis of their sale.

Noor Mohammad, an official at agriculture department, told Pajhwok Afghan News the figures had been obtained from Hazrat Sultan and Khuram Sarbagh districts which have bumper crops.

Samangan has famous quality of almonds and is one of the main products in the province apart from pistachio and walnuts. According to Noor Mohammad, the farmers in the province could earn more than 214 million afghanis.

Last year, almond harvests in the province had suffered due to cold weathers but this year also the cold weather had affected the crop otherwise the province is capable of producing more than 2,000 tonnes of almond in a year.

Ajab Khan, 52, said he was satisfied with the harvests this year. "I'm happy with this year, but last year I could not earn anything from my orchards."

Haji Mohammad Amin, a dried-fruit trader in Aibak city said he was selling Samangan's almonds in Kabul while some other traders exported them to India, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

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<http://www.pakistanwork.com/en/2015/08/15/samanqan-farmers-harvest-500-ton-es-almond>

Return to Table of Contents

Taliban fired shells torch clinic in Badakhshan - Khaama Press

15 August 2015

Heavy rounds fired by Taliban insurgents during a clash with security forces have torched a clinic in Badakhshan province.

General Baba Jan, police chief of Badakhshan province said that over a hundred Taliban militants armed with light and heavy weapons launched a coordinated attack on a number of security check posts in Tagab District on Thursday night.

He added that security forces suppress the attack but unfortunately some heavy rounds fired by Taliban landed on a clinic close to the District center and burned it.

He said that the under construction clinic is almost completely destroyed in the incident.

According to the police chief, security forces did not suffer casualties during the skirmish.

Taliban had not commented on the report by the time it was filed.

<http://www.khaama.com/taliban-fired-shells-torch-clinic-in-badakhshan-3758>

Return to Table of Contents

Unknown Gunmen Kill Nangarhar Principal - TOLONews

15 August 2015

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A number of unknown gunmen shot dead a school principal in eastern Nangarhar province on Friday, local officials said.

The incident took place in Kot district of the province after a number of unknown gunmen shot dead Fazel Mawla, principal of Mawlawi Yousuf school, a spokesman for Nangarhar Education Department, Mohammad Asif Shenwari said.

"The incident happened while Fazel Mawla was on his way to his house from a funeral ceremony," he said.

Meanwhile, the principal's family and a member of the provincial council of Nangarhar have accused the Taliban for the death of Fazel Mawla.

However, the cause of this incident is not yet clear but police have started investigations.

No group including the Taliban has claimed responsibility for the incident attack.

/***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 2 *****/
CITE OSC RESTON VA 838089

<http://www.te.oxnews.com/en/afghanistan/20906-unknown-gunmen-kill-principal>

Return to Table of Contents

Mullah Mansour welcomes allegiance of al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri - Khaama Press

15 August 2015

Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, the new supreme leader of Taliban has welcomed the allegiance of al-Qaeda chief Ayman al-Zawahiri.

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Mullah Mansour said in a statement yesterday that "I... accept the pledge of allegiance of the esteemed (Zawahiri)... and thank him for... his pledge and pledge of all mujahideen under him."

Al-Zawahiri who is believed to be seeking refuge along the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan announced his allegiance to Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour last week and accepted him as his Emir.

"We pledge our allegiance ... (to) our lord, leader of the faithful, Mullah Mohammad Akhtar Mansour, may god protect him." Al-Zawahiri's said in online message.

Taliban announced Mullah Mansour as the successor for Mullah Mohammad Omar after his death was confirmed by the militant group last month.

But some senior members of the group reportedly do not agree with the new selection and want Mullah Mansour to leave this post.

Reports suggest that both opposing parties are approaching clerics within their ranks to ease tensions and find a solution to the leadership crisis.

[http://www.khaana.com/news/al-mansour-welcomes-allegiance-of-al-qaeda-
chief-ayman
-al-zawahiri-3763](http://www.khaana.com/news/al-mansour-welcomes-allegiance-of-al-qaeda-chief-ayman-al-zawahiri-3763)

Return to Table of Contents

3 Taliban dead, 6 wounded in Shindand infighting - Pajhwok Afghan News

15 August 2015

Herat City -- At least three Taliban fighters have been killed and six more wounded in internal clash in the Shindand district of western Herat province, an official said.

Ehsanullah Hayat, the governor's spokesperson, told Pajhwok Afghan News the firefight erupted on Friday at around 7: 00 pm and lasted until late night.

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He added the clashes took place between Mullah Nangialai's men and Mullah Nooruddin's brother in Zerkoh locality of the district.

The gun battle, he said left one fighter of Mullah Nangialai and two fighters from the other side dead.

The governor's spokesman said differences between various factions of Taliban was on the rise in Herat.

Mohammad, a resident of Zerkoh in Shindand, said: "This is not the first time Taliban are fighting among themselves. It has happened before also."

However, Taliban have yet to comment on the issue.

<http://www.pakistanobserver.com/en/2015/08/15/3-taliban-dead-6-wounded-shindand-infighting>

Return to Table of Contents

Afghan Taliban Deny Involvement in Kabul Attack - Pakistan Observer

15 August 2015

Islamabad -- Denying their involvement in a truck bombing Kabul that caused diplomatic tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Afghan Taliban claimed that the attack was carried out by the foreign forces.

Following a series of attacks, including the truck bombing incident in Kabul, which left 15 dead and 240 wounded, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani refused to go ahead with the Pakistan-brokered peace talks with the Taliban, saying, "Pakistan still remains a breeding ground from where mercenaries send us messages of war."

Rejecting the claims of Afghan authorities that the Taliban was

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behind the attack, Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid described it as "aimless attack" in the middle of locals' homes.

In a statement issued by the Taliban, Mujahid said neither any leader of Taliban nor any local Mujahideen associated with the group had any involvement in this 'suspicious blast'.

While condemning the incident, the Taliban spokesperson said they will research to the bottom of the incident to expose the actual perpetrators of this attack.

Alleging that the attack was probably orchestrated by the foreign forces to tarnish "the image of the new Taliban leader or for some other malicious objective," Mujahid claimed that initial investigation reveals that the attack was a "targeted air or missile attack" while a large bomb was also deployed which created a huge crater in the ground.

"Locals also witnessed sounds of aircraft and a power blackout prior to the attack which makes it seem as if this attack was preplanned," the Taliban spokesperson added.

<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=270621>

Return to Table of Contents

Religious scholars declare ongoing conflict against Islam - Pajhwok Afghan News

By Javed Hamim Kakar
15 August 2015

Kabul -- Supreme council of religious leaders denounced the ongoing violence and said that continued war was against the principles of Islam, a statement from the Presidential Palace stated on Friday.

Maulvi Ghulam Rabbani Rahmani, a member of the council of clerics, addressing a gathering at the President Palace, strongly condemned

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the killings of innocent women and children in recent attacks in Kabul.

The recent barbaric attacks on civilians were against Islamic law and clear violation of human rights, he said in a statement from the Presidential Palace. He urged security forces should bring the culprits to justice.

Islamic law has been implemented in the country and Afghanistan law has been completely in accordance with Islamic law. The statement said that "around 99.9 percent Afghans are Muslims so how can Jihad decree be issued against Muslims. Issuing decree against Muslims is huge conspiracy against Muslims."

The supreme Council of clerics denounced and the Taliban announcement of extending war and fighting and called the act as against the teachings of Islam.

The Supreme Council asked militants to avoid killings of innocent civilians and Muslim brothers and join the peace process to mitigate the miseries of Afghans. The recent attacks made it clear that others have been fomenting the war inside Afghanistan.

<http://www.paknowk.com/en/2015/08/14/religious-scholars-declare-ongoing-conflict-against-islam>

Return to Table of Contents

Afghanistan faces trade hurdles as a result of Pakistan's actions - Wadsam

15 August 2015

Pakistan is once again causing a major hurdle to Afghanistan's trade with India.

As per the Afghan-Pak Transit Trade Coordination Authority (APTCCA) agreement signed in June 2011, Pakistan would allow Afghan trucks

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to
pass through Karachi, Gwadar and Qasem ports in order to allow
Afghan
products to reach to major markets in India.

Afghan traders have again complained about the restrictions coming
from Pakistan on transit of Afghan goods through Pakistan's soil to
India.

The Afghan Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI) said Pakistan
was a major impediment to expanding the trade volume between India
and Afghanistan.

President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani directed ministers of foreign,
commerce, and transport to study and analyze the trade and transit
issues with India based on APTTCA agreement and brief the next
cabinet meeting.

The political tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan have yet
again soared after a series of deadly insurgent attacks in Kabul
city. The Afghan government has accused Pakistan of providing safe
havens for terrorists and not cooperating with Afghanistan's peace
process.

Afghans have launched campaigns for boycotting Pakistani products.

The Sarai Shahzada, Afghanistan's largest financial institution in
Kabul City, have banned Pakistani currency.

<http://wadsan.com/afghan-business-news/afghanistan-faces-trade-hurdle-s-as-a-result-of-pakistans-actions-232/>

Return to Table of Contents

Afghan football team qualify for 2nd SAARC tournament round -
Pajhwok
Afghan News

By Javed Hamim Kakar
15 August 2015

Kabul -- The Afghanistan football team has qualified for second
round

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of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) under 19 Football Tournament in Nepal, an official of the Afghanistan Football Federation (AFF) said on Saturday.

The tournament started last week in which six football teams from SAARC countries were divided into two groups. Nepal, Bangladesh and Bhutan fall in group-A while Afghanistan, India and Maldives in group-B.

AFF spokesman Syed Ali Kazmi told Pajhwok Afghan News that Afghanistan had defeated Maldives with 4-2 whereas Nepal routed Afghanistan 2-1 in a pool match.

Afghanistan scoring high number of goals qualified for second round of the tournament along with India.

Afghanistan will play against Bangladesh tomorrow (Sunday) at around 1:00 am Afghanistan time.

<http://www.pajhwok.com/en/2015/08/15/afghan-football-team-qualify-2nd-saarc-tournament-round>

Return to Table of Contents

Regional News

'US aid level shrinks with Afghan drawdown' - The Nation (Pakistan)

15 August 2015

Islamabad -- With the US engagement in Afghanistan reducing, an American scholar sees Washington's aid level and pattern for Pakistan changing.

Speaking on Pak-US ties after the drawdown of coalition forces from Afghanistan at the Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), an Islamabad-based think tank, Dr Kenneth Holland, an Afghanistan expert said the two countries were now more focused on transforming the

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relationship from aid to trade. "Both countries agree that greater trade between the United States and Pakistan is desirable," Dr Holland, who heads the Centre for International Development at Ball State University of Muncie, Indiana (US), said.

Dr Holland recalled that there had been fears that after the withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US would attach lesser significance to the region, because of which the level of financial assistance to Pakistan would either stagnate or fall.

There has been a sharp decline in US aid for Pakistan since 2014, a time when Kerry-Lugar assistance programme was ending. The aid, which was about \$1.5 billion in 2010, has now reduced to about \$500 per annum.

The bilateral trade volume has, meanwhile, largely remained stagnant.

Last year it was \$5.3 billion and Pakistan is currently America's 62nd largest goods trading partner.

Dr Holland noted the steps being taken by Pakistani government for promoting trade, including its commitment to promote an investment friendly environment. Pakistan also hosted the US-Pakistan Business Opportunities Conference in March this year. He said Pakistan was particularly keen in getting investment in its energy sector.

Besides the shift to trade, he said, the composition of aid is also changing. The military component of the aid is on decline, while the economic assistance constitutes a greater portion of the aid. The US now annually gives \$500 million in economic assistance to Pakistan, while the military aid is about \$280 million. Since July 2012, the US has delivered over \$1.15 billion in security assistance to Pakistan.

Dr Holland also pointed out the imminent end to the Coalition Support Fund (CSF) - a reimbursement of the expenses made by Pakistan in support of US military operations in Afghanistan - as yet another indication of falling American financial assistance for Pakistan.

"The loss of CSF would be a big setback for Pakistan's treasury,"

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he

said, adding that Pakistanis have been using CSF inflows for reducing their current account deficit.

Outlining the key elements of US policy towards Pakistan, Dr Holland said, it was based on four goals viz elimination of terrorism, nuclear security, building a united and prosperous Pakistan, and addressing Pakistan's energy problems.

The US government, he said, has been appreciative of the Pakistan government's counter-terrorism operations and its efforts to improve ties with Afghanistan and India.

"The United States applauds Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's efforts to promote a peaceful neighbourhood in South Asia, a precondition for tangible progress in the fields of economic growth and development in the region," he said.

"The US does not share Afghan President Ashraf Ghani's new hostile attitude towards Pakistan," he said regretting that Afghan president's attitude had changed drastically.

He attributed the change in President Ghani's attitude to increase in insurgent attacks in Afghanistan that have led to higher civilian casualties.

<http://nation.com.pk/15-Aug-2015/us-aid-level-shrinks-with-afghan-draw-down>

Return to Table of Contents

US Aid to Pak Undergoes Changes - Pakistan Observer

15 August 2015

Islamabad -- With the US engagement in Afghanistan reducing, an American scholar sees Washington's aid level and pattern for

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Pakistan changing. Speaking on Pak-US ties after the drawdown of coalition forces from Afghanistan at Strategic Vision Institute (SVI), an Islamabad based think tank, Dr Kenneth Holland, an Afghanistan expert said the two countries were now more focused on transforming the relationship from aid to trade.

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Afghanistan-as yet another indication of falling American financial assistance for Pakistan.

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<http://pakobserver.net/detailnews.asp?id=270633>

Return to Table of Contents

Five Afghans nabbed in Hangu - The News International (Pakistan)

15 August 2015

Hangu -- The security forces, police and personnel of the spy agencies arrested five suspected Afghan nationals during a joint search operation in parts of the district, police said on Friday. They said that the personnel of the security forces, spy agencies and police conducted a search operation in Kata Kanri and Lakhti Banda Refugee Camp and made the arrests. Those arrested in the search were identified as Gul Agha, Farhan, Dilawar, Buner and another person Ghulam. The arrested persons were shifted to an undisclosed location for an interrogation.

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<http://www.thernews.com.pk/Todays-News-2-334299-Five-Afghans-nabbed-in-Hangu>

Return to Table of Contents

Editorials/Opinions/Blogs

Indian-Afghan Friendship - Daily Outlook Afghanistan

By Dilawar Sherzai
15 August 2015

15th August is the day when India celebrates its Independence Day. On the same day, in 1947, it got completely free from the control of the British Empire as a result of partition of Indian Subcontinent. This day consequently resulted in an India that got its own government, ruled by its own people and made its own constitution. It thus started its slow journey towards a democratic and secular country and today it is considered one of the largest democracies of the world.

India has made some remarkable achievements since its Independence both in political and economic spheres. Apart from being one of the greatest democracies, it is also considered a giant economy in Asia.

India's special emphasis on economic development and growth has enabled it to achieve the current position. And, it has endeavored to follow the same intentions in its regional ties as well. Particularly, in its relations with Afghanistan, India has always pursued economic development, political stability and peace and tranquility.

Afghanistan is one of the countries that have been suffering from the evils of war and instability. It has always required that the international community and the regional countries should support it so that it can stand on its own. However, mostly the other countries have made Afghanistan their battle ground and used it for their own interests. India, on the other hand has always strived to guide its

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support for Afghanistan's stability.

People of Afghanistan also consider India as its friend. The public opinion in Afghanistan is highly in support of greater Indian influence in the country, and it is because of the fact that through most part of its relation with Afghanistan, India has been a true friend.

After the overthrow of the Taliban, India established diplomatic relations with the newly established democratic government, provided aid and participated in the reconstruction efforts. India has provided USD 650-750 million in humanitarian and economic aid, which makes it the largest provider of aid to Afghanistan in the region. India's support and collaboration are mostly in the areas of rebuilding of air links, power plants and investing in health and education sectors as well as helping to train Afghan civil servants, diplomats and police. India has also keen interest in the development of supply lines of electricity, oil and natural gas. And, also providing scholarships to Afghan Students.

The Indian Army's Border Roads Organisation constructed a major road in 2009 in the remote province of Nimroz, which connected Delaram to Zaranj. This has proved to be a reliable alternative route for the duty-free movement of goods through the Chabahar port in Iran to Afghanistan. One of India's key strategies in Afghanistan is to build up transportation links that can help Afghan economy's transportation links.

During Hamid Karzai's visit to India in April 2006, three memorandums of understanding (MOUs) for strengthening cooperation in the fields of rural development, education and standardisation between the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) and Afghan National Standardisation Authority were signed between Afghanistan and India. An agreement providing USD 50 million to promote bilateral businesses between Afghanistan and India was also signed during the visit of the Afghan

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Foreign Minister Dr. Spanta, between 29 June - 1 July in 2006.
During
the same year, India raised its aid package to Afghanistan from
USD150 million to USD 750 million.

During the 15th SAARC summit in Colombo, India pledged another USD
450 million alongside a further USD 750 million already pledged for
ongoing and forthcoming projects. In August 2008, former President
Hamid Karzai visited New Delhi. This visit further strengthened
bilateral relations, and Prime Minister Singh pledged further aid
for
Afghanistan. India's pledge to rebuild Afghanistan reached a total
of
US\$2 billion in May 2011 after Manmohan Singh visited Kabul for a
two-day visit.

India seeks to expand its economic presence in Afghanistan in the
post withdrawal era. In particular, it wants to improve transport
connectivity and economic collaboration with countries in Central
and
South Asia. More such projects are likely to come up, which
includes
setting up Iron ore mines, a 6 MTPA steel plant (by SAIL-Steel
Authority of India Limited), an 800 MW power plant, Hydro-electric
power projects, transmission lines, roads etc. In short, India has
played a significant role in the reconstruction and rehabilitation
process in Afghanistan. India's extensive developmental assistance
programme, which equals around USD 2 billion, is an indicator of
its
abiding commitment to peace, tranquility and prosperity in
Afghanistan during this critical juncture of security and
governance
transition. This makes India one of the leading donor nations to
Afghanistan, and by far the largest among the regional countries.

India seems to believe that development of Afghanistan requires
reliable and lasting investment in Afghanistan that can help it
exploit its natural resource properly. Therefore, India stands at
the
forefront of the promotion of investment in Afghanistan and a
consortium of public and private Indian companies has been selected
to make one of the largest investments in the country's mining
sector, in the Hajigak iron ore reserves.

India also realizes the fact that there can be stability in
Afghanistan only if all the major actors and countries have a stake
in its stability, development and growth. Realizing this India has

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been increasing efforts to attract regional and trans-regional investment into Afghanistan that provides a reliable alternative to the dominant narrative of extremism and offers job opportunities to its population, by initiating events like the Delhi Investment Summit

on Afghanistan in June 2012. Recognizing that the region holds the key to peace in Afghanistan, India has an important role in confidence building measures in the region in accordance to the Istanbul Process.

It also helped initiate a dialogue on Afghanistan through different platforms like the Afghanistan-India-US trilateral and the Afghanistan-India-Iran trilateral platforms that seek to bring together international partners with disparate worldviews to follow the common goal of securing peace and prosperity in Afghanistan. India also expressed its assistance to international cooperation on Afghanistan at the UN and at various international conferences that are focused on the future of Afghanistan, including the seminal Tokyo Developmental Conference in July 2012.

India's support for Afghanistan is of immense importance and the people of Afghanistan also realize this fact and they wish that India should keep its assistance continue until it is able to stand on its own.

http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=12837

Return to Table of Contents

China-Pak Economic Corridor: Benefits for Afghanistan - Daily Outlook
Afghanistan

By Akhtar Munir
15 August 2015

China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a comprehensive development programme which would play a crucial role in improving the economic and strategic environment of the region. The project links Pakistan's Gwadar Port to China's north-western region of Xinjiang through highways, motorways and gas pipelines. The Corridor is of immense

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significance not only for Pakistan and China but also for other regional countries, in terms of economic and social development, particularly Afghanistan. The CPEC also connects China to Europe and Middle East through Pakistan. The implementation of the project would bring economic revolution as well as change the fate of the regional countries.

As an immediate neighbor, sharing a long border with Pakistan, Afghanistan will, indeed, be a major beneficiary of the economic corridor as its completion will also contribute to the economic prosperity of Afghanistan. Pakistan wants to see Afghanistan a peaceful and prosperous country and is making efforts to improve road connectivity with Afghanistan as both the countries have shared future and goals. In this article, I would like to explain how Afghanistan can be a major beneficiary of CPEC particularly its two alignments. The western alignment of the corridor which originates from Gwadar and runs through Khuzdar, Zhob and finally reaches Islamabad via D.I. Khan. In fact, the western alignment will have an additional connectivity to link Afghanistan through Chaman. This route will provide an easy and short access to Afghanistan to reach to the sea port of Gwadar which is almost 600 kilometer shorter than the existing transit route being used by the traders and people of Afghanistan. This link will tremendously help facilitating and promoting trade between the two neighbouring countries as well as reducing travelling time. It is worth- stating here that the Frontier Works Organization (FWO) has already completed 502 kilometer length of the 870 km western alignment connecting Gwadar with other parts of the country.

Like the western alignment, the eastern alignment of the corridor will also improve road connectivity between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

This section of the corridor will run from Karachi to Lahore and onward to Islamabad while passing through internal Sindh and parts of southern Punjab. The eastern alignment will pass through the motorways starting from Karachi to Lahore (work on the Karachi-Lahore Motorway has already been commenced) and onward to Islamabad and

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Abbottabad. The completion of the motorways' network will help to shorten the distance as well as reduce travelling time between the two neighboring countries. Besides Afghanistan, businessmen and traders from Central Asian states will also benefit from the corridor

as they can easily export their goods to Middle East and European Countries through Gwadar Port. Apart from improving road connectivity, China-Pak Economic Corridor will also generate economic

opportunities as well as play a vital role in economic integration of

the region and countries like Iran and Central Asian States will be able to benefit from this project. The corridor is, hopefully, destined to bring rapid industrialization as well as greater investment to Pakistan which would have certainly healthy impact on Afghan economy. The Afghan businessmen and traders as well as general

public will be in position to capitalize upon the emerging economic opportunities as a result of materialization of the corridor. CPEC has a greater regional and economic value as it would encourage other

regional countries including Central Asian States to follow suit by entering into similar arrangement with China. The project has enormous potential to reshape the economic outlook of the regional countries.

Improving road connectivity and infrastructure development in Afghanistan are the major priorities of Pakistan. In this regard, Pakistan has undertaken a number of projects including 75Km Torkham-Jalalabad Road and 46 km road between Peshawar and Torkham. The Peshawar-Torkham road has almost been completed whereas the second lane of Jalalabad-Torkham road will, hopefully, be completed within a year. In order to further facilitate Afghan transit trade and boost Pak-Afghan trade, Pakistan has constructed two roads leading from D.I. Khan to Angoor Adda and Ghulam Khan linking Paktika

and Khost provinces of Afghanistan respectively. These strategic trade links, built by Pakistan, will enormously facilitate the trade

and transit links between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Apart from the above-mentioned roads, plans are afoot to construct motorway between Kabul and Peshawar and the homework on this project

has already started. Similarly, laying Railway lines between Peshawar

and Jalalabad and Chaman and Spin Boldak is also the priority of

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Government of Pakistan. The completion of these projects, in the years ahead, would tremendously contribute towards the social and economic prosperity of Afghanistan. In addition to the road infrastructure, Pakistan has been playing active role in the reconstruction and development of Afghanistan and has built hospitals and educational institutions. Pakistan completed these projects despite its own financial problems as the war on terror has inflicted US\$110 billion losses on Pakistan's economy. The construction of these projects reflects the sincere endeavours made by Pakistan for the rebuilding of Afghanistan. It also shows the high degree of importance being attached by Pakistan to its ties with Afghanistan.

In view of the emerging favourable economic predicament, both neighbouring countries are required to further strengthen their ties and capitalize on the economic opportunities to be generated by the China-Pak Economic Corridor. It is high time that both sides need to join hands to work together for economic development as well as make determined efforts to overcome the challenges of militancy, terrorism and social and economic impoverishment being confronted by the two countries.

http://outlookafghanistan.net/topics.php?post_id=12836

Return to Table of Contents

Unhappy Neighbour - The Nation (Pakistan)

By Editorial
15 August 2015

Pakistan diplomatic relations have taken a turn for the worse, even with Pakistan making consistent overtures for peaceful negotiations.

We were mediators, but Afghan mistrust has tried to make us a party to their troubled relationship with the Taliban.

Following the Afghan President's anti-Pakistan outburst last week, protestors have held angry demonstrations outside the Pakistan embassy in Kabul. The diplomats believe that Afghan MPs and members

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of the country's intelligence service orchestrated the protests, calling for a 'Jihad against Pakistan.' This is a disturbing and worrisome development as the Pakistani embassy has been attacked twice before - in 1995 and 2003- leaving one casualty and the ambassador injured. The way accusations have been flinging around irresponsibly by higher officials in Afghanistan; such an attack on the embassy could be imminent. Where is the Afghan protest against the Taliban? If terrorism is such a curse, why aren't they blaming the terrorists?

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai, staying true to his stance on the Afghanistan Pakistan relationship, had marked International Youth

Day last Wednesday with a hate filled speech about Pakistan being the sponsor and perpetrator of terrorism. One can expect such behaviour from the previous President and he has always had a deep dislike for Pakistan. But the present government allowing such negativity towards its very friendly and forthcoming neighbour is simply outrageous. One

of the parliamentarians from Kandahar, Abdul Jabbar Qaharman, said on a talk show that lessons should be taught to Pakistani ambassador as his country is promoting terrorism in Afghanistan, and a member of the religious clerics' council, Mawlvi Ahmed Gul, told protesters that Jihad (holy war) is legitimate against Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency and the Punjabi military.

The government of Pakistan has been very accommodating to say the least, lending its soil to bring peace and prosperity between warring factions of the Afghan Taliban and the new government. If the situation has deteriorated to such a degree that the Pakistani diplomats fear an attack on the embassy then maybe Pakistan should also consider taking a stand. Diplomacy is clearly failing to pacify the Afghan government, when as the weaker country, they should be the ones trying to appease Pakistan, if Pakistan is so powerful that it can cause so much trouble in Afghanistan.

<http://nation.com.pk/editorials/15-Aug-2015/unhappy-neighbour>

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Return to Table of Contents

Difficult neighbours - The Nation (Pakistan)

By Inayatullah
15 August 2015

Pakistan can ill-afford strained relations with its neighbours lying on the east and the west. There were high expectations that with President Ghani's advent relations between the two countries would improve especially after his promising visit to Pakistan and reciprocal visits by our prime minister and the army chief. Encouraging steps were taken on both sides. Pakistan went to the length of stating that Afghanistan's enemies were Pakistan's enemies and that it would make its contribution in fighting militants there. The bonhomie didn't last very long. And now we find that Ashraf Ghani is using strong language accusing Pakistan of harbouring anti-Afghanistan terrorists on its soil and that Pakistan was sending war-like messages. Though some damage control has been attempted, the relationship continues to suffer because of lack of trust. Mention may here be made of a high level delegation headed by foreign minister Salahuddin Rabbani accompanied by Acting Defence Minister and head of the Afghan intelligence agent agency. While grievances were exchanged on both sides, the two countries agreed to work together to curb and control terrorist activities perpetrated from across the border. Hopefully the recently escalated tension will subside in the days to come.

Even the much appreciated meeting arranged by Islamabad at Murree between the Afghan Taliban and the government of Afghanistan has remained inconclusive with the postponement of the subsequent session at the end of July because of a sudden release of news by Kabul of Mullah's Omar's death. It is not clear why this information was communicated just before the scheduled meeting was to be held. This news has also impacted Taliban's internal affairs. Mullah Mansoor's successive leadership is being disputed by one of deceased's sons and like minded influentials. Will the new leadership agree to the

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renewal of talks started at Murree or will this valuable initiative peter out with differences remaining unresolved in the Taliban Shura?

One thing about Afghan Taliban's relations with the American/Nato-sponsored-and-supported-government in Kabul which this scribe finds somewhat puzzling is that why may, at all, the Taliban negotiate with the new government which more or less is the creation of Taliban's enemies?

Taliban as we know are the sworn enemies of USA which dismantled their government and for more than a decade used their lethal state of the art war machinery to destroy them. They failed to defeat them, had to admit their failure publicly and withdraw the bulk of their combat forces. If for certain reasons including friendly pressure from Pakistan, they appear somewhat inclined to take to talks, their first condition is bound to be a total departure of all US/Nato forces from the country. As things stand both Washington and Kabul are determined to a keep ten to fifteen thousand American troops stationed in Afghanistan. Can in these circumstances Taliban enter into a settlement with a dependent or client government currently in place?

Another matter of ambiguity are the surprising statements on the part of our Prime Minister and the Army Chief that Pakistan would be helping Afghanistan government fight its enemies which obviously are the Taliban with whom Pakistan has had a good relationship and whose government was recognized as legitimate before Washington decided to invade the country.

The other neighbor in the east is perhaps more difficult to engage. It managed to bilateralize the settlement of disputes through the Simla Agreement. Yes the UN linked Kashmir issue still needs to be /***** BEGINNING OF SECTION 3 *****/
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resolved but the matter has to be resolved bilaterally which means meetings between representatives of the two governments. But no

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such meetings focusing on the issue are held. India comes up with one excuse after another. The way the unfortunate Mumbai incident has been used to put down and corner Pakistan speaks volumes for India's real intentions. Not even the simpler matters like Siachin and Sir Creek can be settled.

Pakistan is keen to restart the talks. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has gone out of the way more than once. All that he has met with are rebuffs and hostile statements. Imagine a prime minister of a neighbouring country calling Pakistan 'a nuisance' while visiting another country. Statements made by Prime Minister Modi in Bangladesh in which he glorified Indian's role in breaking up Pakistan were to say the least highly provocative. The UFA meeting between two Prime Ministers remained unproductive for many weeks because no date for the National Security Advisors was fixed. The joint statement was a lopsided expression of wishful thinking and tilted towards India's concern about Pakistan's terrorist activities. Rightly realizing the somewhat disconcerting wording of the joint statement and subsequent accusations hurled at Pakistan in regard to the Gurdaspur incident also restarting of unprovoked firing across the Line of Control and the Working Boundary, our security Advisor, Mr. Sartaj Aziz has been expressing reservations about the proposed meeting schedule. Good that he wants an agenda which includes India's involvement in Pakistan in trouble spots like Balochistan, Fata and Karachi.

Earlier this week the Indian High Commissioner in Pakistan addressed specially convened meetings in Lahore. His speech at the human Rights Commission was interesting in the sense that he chose to confine his remarks to highlight the positive aspects of the history of relations between the two countries. He referred for instance to the Indus Basin Treaty and how it has held. He was silent about the real disputes and bones of contention like Kashmir and Siachin. When pressed at question time to say a few words about Kashmir, he advised to keep it sidelined while focusing on other matters such as trade

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and religions tourism. It was surprising to learn that no tourist visas at are being issued at present. The one big stick India keeps wielding is terrorism. It is India which forged the words first that

Pakistan was the epicenter of terrorism in the world. It is quick to

point its figure at Pakistan whenever a terrorist incident takes place. It uses a well-worked-out public diplomacy to justify its stand internationally.

Mr. Sartaj Aziz will be going to New Delhi for a meeting with his counterpart on August 23. Hopefully he will raise the question of India's terrorist activities in Pakistan and provide convincing evidence. He should also raise the issue of violation of human rights in Kashmir which has suffered brutal state terrorism for decades.

The writer is an ex-federal secretary and ambassador, and a freelance political and international relations analyst.

<http://nation.com.pk/columns/15-Aug-2015/difficult-neighbours>

Return to Table of Contents

Other News

Al-Baghdadi repeatedly raped US hostage Mueller before her murder - Khaama Press

15 August 2015

ABC news reports that the US counter-terrorism officials believe that

ISIS leader Abubakr al-Baghdadi has repeatedly raped American hostage

Kayla Mueller before her murder.

Kayla Mueller's parents Carl and Marsha Mueller have told ABC news that they were told by the government their daughter was severely tortured and that she was considered as the property of al-Baghdadi.

"We were told Kayla was tortured, that she was the property of al-Baghdadi, we were told that in June by the government."

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The news agency further states that after the kidnapping, Kayla Mueller was held captive in the home of a top ISIS commander Abu Sayyaf with whom al-Baghdadi would make contacts for the abuse.

US officials have told the news agency that it was during these visits that al-Baghdadi would sexually abuse Kayla Mueller.

US officials have said that this information was gathered after taking statements from two Yazidi girls who were being held as sex slaves in Abu Sayyaf's compound.

Mueller, 26, was murdered by ISIS earlier this year after spending 18 months in their captivity.

She was kidnapped by ISIS gunmen after leaving a hospital of Doctors Without Borders in Aleppo, northern Syria in August 2013.

<http://www.khaama.com/al-baghdadi-repeatedly-raped-us-hostage-mueller-before-her-murder-3758>

Return to Table of Contents

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