

Quote of the Day

The only source of knowledge is experience.

Albert Einstein

Ghani Reviewing Cases of Death Row Prisoners

KABUL - After branding militants as terrorists, President Ashraf Ghani has begun reviewing cases of death row insurgents, the Presidential Palace said on Thursday. The president's deputy spokesman, Shah Hussain Murtazawi, told a news conference in Kabul that the president had ordered judiciary organs to share with him cases of inmates sentenced to death.

"The judiciary organs shared the first list of death row inmates with the president today," Murtazawi said, without giving the number of the inmates.

"The president is committed to



what he has promised. No one should doubt the readiness of the gallows for hanging terrorists. All our deeds are in

accordance with Islamic rules and the Constitution in any inmate case," he said. He said Anas Haqqani, a leading member

of the Haqqani Network, was not in the list because his case was yet to complete.

About a Taliban delegation's arrival in Pakistan, Murtazawi said: "To us, it is questionable; a terrorist group has no right to travel to a country."

About the Taliban delegation's aim to discuss refugees related issues with Pakistan, he said the Taliban themselves had forced Afghans into migration by intensifying violence and insurgency in Afghanistan.

He added the Taliban, who forced Afghans into migration, could never address... (More on P4)... (1)

Taliban Warns Govt. of Not Executing their Prisoners



KABUL - While reacting on the recent remarks of President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, Taliban said if president's order regarding execution of Taliban prisoners was enforced, they would target judiciary organs of the government.

During his speech to parliament, Ghani had instructed the judiciary departments to submit the list of those prisoners of Taliban whom were awarded with death

sentences, for final review by president.

If the verdict of execution was enforced, Taliban would not remain silent, and would target the officials of judiciary departments, a statement from Taliban said.

"Taliban would also target those individuals and organisations that asked death sentence for the members of Taliban group," the statement stated while warning that... (More on P4)... (2)

UNAMA Prison Health Services Need Improvement

KABUL - Despite showing some progress, health-care services in Afghanistan's prisons need further improvement, said a new United Nations report on Thursday.

Titled 'Assessment of Afghanistan Prison Health Services,' the report details how the health of the more than 25,000 inmates might deteriorate if their incarceration conditions did not meet minimum standards.

With prisoners reliant on the government to protect their health, international law requires national authorities to provide them with access to healthcare services equivalent to those provided in society generally.

In December 2015, the UN General Assembly adopted revised rules establishing the minimum standards of treatment for persons in detention. To assess Afghanistan's compliance with the new rules, UNAMA undertook a comprehensive survey of 31 provincial prisons.

According to the UN mission, the report identifies several gaps in existing prison health services, including uneven availability... (More on P4)... (3)

Top Pakistani Diplomat Rules out Expansion of QCG

PESHAWAR - Pakistan has ruled out the expansion of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG), which has been working for peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

Efforts over the past few months for the resumption of the Kabul-Taliban peace parleys by the group, involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States, have failed to bear fruits.

Speaking to journalists, Pakistani Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry confirmed the visit of Taliban leaders from the Qatar political office to Pakistan's port city of Karachi.

Although the four-nation group had been unable to arrange direct talks... (More on P4)... (5)

EU to Support Afghan Priorities at Brussels Summit

KABUL - The European Union (EU) has said it is committed to supporting the Afghan government's economic programmes and priorities to be presented at the NATO summit in Brussels this year.

The assurance came at a meeting between Afghan National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar and EU External Action Service Managing Director for Asia and the Pacific, Gunnar Wiegand, and EU special representative in Afghanistan Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin in Kabul.

A statement from the National Security Council (NSC) said the meeting conferred on Afghanistan's preparations for the Brus-



sels Summit, the international war against terrorism and the situation of Afghan refugees in Europe.

Gunnar Wiegand condemned the recent devastating truck bombing in Kabul that killed and wounded hundreds of peo-

ple and extended condolences to Hanif Atmar on behalf of the European people.

He said the EU was committed to supporting Afghanistan's economic plans and priorities at this year's Brussels summit. He also shared EU's recommen-

dations with the Afghan national security advisor on the peace process and the anti-corruption campaign.

Atmar said Afghanistan counted on international support in the fight against terrorism and hoped regional countries would also participate in the fight.

He said Afghanistan would go to the Brussels Conference fully prepared as the country had fulfilled much part of its promises it had made at the London and Tokyo conferences including judicial reforms and anti-corruption effort.

In a reference to President Ghani's historic speech at the joint sitting of parliament, Atmar said... (More on P4)... (4)

Ghani Calls on Leaders to Foster Unity



KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani on Friday, in video conference with provincial council heads, said that Afghanistan now has a clear definition of the enemy and that government leaders need to ensure insurgents do not divide the country.

He also told those present that a meeting will be held with provincial council heads in Kabul soon. He said among the issues that will be discussed will be that of security, economy, reconstruction, education and health... (More on P4)... (6)

Obama Admin Wants Congress to OK \$1.25b Aid to Afghanistan



KABUL - The Obama administration has urged Congress to approve \$1.25 in its upcoming budget for continued assistance to Afghanistan and \$742 million for Pakistan.

The US special representative told Congress on Wednesday: "We have carefully calibrated our 2017 budget request, balancing global funding constraints and our national interests in stability in Afghanistan and Pakistan."

Richard Olson the \$1.25 billion request for Afghanistan was seventeen percent below the president's 2016 proposal.

"We deem this level as necessary to maintain and expand the development gains made over the last 14 years."

However, he added, the reduction reflected the administration's policy of responsibly shifting to more sustainable levels, as Afghan capacity increased.

Olson said in his opening remarks before the House Foreign Affairs Committee that Pakistan was at strategic crossroads, and it had to make a choice to combat all terrorist groups indiscriminately. (Pajhwok)

Ghani Remarks Boost Morale of Afghan Forces: Noor

MAZAR-I-SHARIF - The acting governor of northern Balkh province on Thursday said if President Ghani truly translated into action what he told a recent extraordinary sitting of the parliament, Afghanistan would be put on the path to prosperity.

Noor, also the chief executive of the Jamiat-i-Islami party, was addressing a gathering marking the Mujahideen's Victory Day in Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of Balkh.

In his speech, Noor acknowledged mistakes of the mujahideen after their victory over the Soviet-backed communist regime.

He called April 27 (1978), when President Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan was murdered and his government overthrown, as "black day" and April 28 (1992), when the mujahideen forces overthrew Najibullah's government, as the 'victory of right over wrong.'

Noor conditionally called as 'hope-giving' President Ghani's speech to the joint sitting of parliament, saying the president had resolved the issue of definition of enemy.

He said if the president's remarks were not tactical and if truly acted upon, Afghanistan would be put on the path to prosperity.

He said such statements boosted the morale of the Afghan security forces and panicked the enemy.

The acting governor once again called on the people to support their national security forces. He called as 'hypocrites' individuals who ridiculed the Mujahideen's Victory Day.

He said the April 28 brought... (More on P4)... (7)

Tajikistan Claims Afghanistan Land: Takhar Officials

KABUL - Local officials from Takhar province said on Friday that Tajikistan has claimed dozens of hectares of land along the Amu River which connects the two countries.

Head of Borders and Tribal Affairs Provincial Department,

Jan Mohammad Nabi Zada, said the problem cropped up due to the lack of a retainer walls along the river Afghanistan.

"Residents of Takhar's bordering districts take their cattle for grazing or go there to

collect wood but they are now fired on by Tajikistan border forces and in some cases they are killed or wounded. In fact, they [Takhar residents] walk on their own soil but Tajikistan claims the ownership of that soil," he said.

He added that a lack of retainer walls on the Afghanistan side, along the river, has added to the problem of residents in the areas - most of whom farm.

"A large area of land has been washed away by Amu River from Afghanistan side due to lack of retainer walls. Tajikistan has retainer walls;... (More on P4)... (9)

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Baghlan Religious Scholars Slam Terrorist Attacks, Support Troops

PUL-E-KHUMRI - Lending huge support to the Afghan National Security and Defense Force (ANDSF), Baghlan religious scholars said at a gathering on Friday that any type of terrorist attack is against the teachings of Islam and that those who kill civilians are not Muslims.

"Those who kill innocent people are not Muslims. They [militants] create insecurity in Afghanistan while taking orders from abroad. Religious scholars should support the security forces," said Baghlan Hajj and Religious Affairs Director Mawlawi Abdul Rasheed Mazhari. "Afghan security forces are defending the son and honor of this soil. All the participants of this gathering are supporting the ANDSF and also we want terrorists eliminated," said religious scholars Mawlawi Mohammad Kazim.

Meanwhile, some Baghlan residents termed religious scholars' role as effective in ensuring and boosting security in the country. "The role of religious scholars is crucial in bringing peace and security to... (More on P4)... (8)