

Quote of the Day

Change your thoughts
and you change your world.

Norman Vincent Peale

Modi Inaugurates New Parliament

Parliament Complex is a small tribute to Afghanistan's progress as a nation: Modi

KABUL - Visiting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Friday jointly inaugurated an India-funded new parliament building in Kabul.

"This Parliament Complex is a small tribute to your progress as a nation ... It will stand as an enduring symbol of the ties of emotions and values, of affection and aspirations that bind us in a special relationship," Modi told an inauguration ceremony attended by members of both houses of the Afghan parliament and Afghan government in the new building.

The Indian prime minister said



that India supports Afghan government's efforts to promote peace, stability and de-

velopment in the country and will deepen cooperation with Afghanistan in various fields.

"When you began a new journey in a new century, we were proud to stand with you

and walk with you," Modi said, adding "India will be with you." President Ghani expressed gratitude for India's assistance to the country's reconstruction efforts. "On behalf of the people of Afghanistan and Afghan government, I'd like to express sincere thanks to the Indian people and government for providing assistance to Afghanistan. We remain ever thankful to all the valuable assistance of India," Ghani said at the event. The path of cooperation between India and Afghanistan will be broader, the Afghan leader added.

India will also hand over three military helicopters, which are ready ... (More on P4)...(1)

Activists Warn of Surge in Violence Against Women in North



KABUL - The department dealing with the elimination of violence against the women in Balkh said Thursday that the presence of illegal armed men and local lawbreakers has hindered the implementation of law against women rights violators.

Presence of such elements (local lawbreakers and illegal armed men) in the area has resulted in the increase of violent cases such as honor killings and sexual abuse, said Fawzia Hamid, head of the department dealing with the elimination of violence against the women in Balkh.

22 cases of sexual abuse were recorded in Balkh this year which shows a 30 percent increase compared to previous year, she said. She went on to say, "lawbreakers, illegal armed ... (More on P4)...(4)

Afghan Authorities Claim to Shut Down IS Radio

KABUL - Local authorities in Nangarhar province said that Sadai Khilafat Radio (Voice of Caliphate), which broadcast pro-Islamic State propaganda, has stopped broadcasting in the eastern province.

Mimicking IS's media outreach in Syria and Iraq, the Afghan branch also set up a radio station in Nangarhar, broadcasting at least one hour a day to attract young Afghan men disenchanted by dim job prospects in a war-torn country with an overall 24 percent unemployment rate.

The joblessness is even higher among youths targeted in the IS recruitment drive. Atta Khogyani, ... (More on P4)...(5)

Ghani-Erdogan Discuss Afghanistan, War on Terror, Bilateral Ties

ANKARA - President Ashraf Ghani has said that regional efforts must be stepped up to counter ongoing insurgency and terrorism in the region, after holding talks with his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in Istanbul on Thursday.

He said a stable Afghanistan was in the interests of regional peace and stability. Meanwhile, Turkish president Erdogan has warned the international community



against repeating mistakes in Afghanistan, calling on the world to remain involved in Afghanistan and to not push the war-hit coun-

try to the sidelines. Recep Tayyip Erdogan further added that its troops will continue to stay in ... (More on P4)...(3)

Terrorism, Narcotics Serious Challenges: India, Afghanistan

KABUL - Afghanistan needs to eliminate terrorism perpetrated from "sanctuaries and safe havens" for peace, India and Afghanistan said on Friday identifying terrorism, narcotics and extremism as "serious challenges".

A joint statement, released after a meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, also "strongly condemned" terror incidents in Afghanistan.

The statement said the two sides "exchanged views on the security situation in Afghanistan, which faces serious challenges of terrorism, extremism and narcotics".



"Strongly condemning the barbaric incidents of terrorism in Afghanistan in recent months, the two leaders reiterated that peace in Afghanistan required elimination of terrorism perpetrated and supported from sanctuaries and safe havens," the statement said. Modi, meanwhile "reiterated India's full support to Afghanistan

for strengthening its defensive capabilities for preserving Afghanistan's unity and territorial integrity and ensuring security". Modi and Ghani also agreed that those perpetrating violence cannot be allowed to wield influence over any part of the mountain nation. "...Groups and individuals that perpetrate ... (More on P4)...(6)

HPC Renews Calls on Pakistan to Support Afghan Peace Process



KABUL - The High Peace Council (HPC) has called on Pakistan to abide by its commitments to facilitate the Afghan peace process with the Taliban ahead of the visit by Pakistan's army chief to Afghanistan. Pakistan's dignity is now bound by its commitment it made to the peace process in Afghanistan, Ismail Qasimyar, advisor to the HPC for international relations said on Thursday.

The statement comes a few days after Pakistan's national security advisor Sartaj Aziz said that Sharif, during his Kabul trip, will hold discussions with Afghan officials on issues of common interests such as the peace process, border issues and enhancing cooperation on intelligence sharing.

Efforts have been intensified over recent weeks by Pakistan in a bid to revive the stalled peace talks with Taliban, a move which appears to have been welcomed by the Afghan officials.

On Thursday, Afghanistan's Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah said that Kabul has noticed a change in Pakistan policies, particularly with Islamabad's assurances of working for sustainable peace and stability in the war-ravaged country.

"It will take time for common Afghans to be on-board. They have doubts which need to be removed through actions," CEO Abdullah Abdullah said in an interview with Pakistan's The Express Tribune news on Wednesday.

According to the peace council, whenever Pakistan shined a green light for peace talks, the security situation deteriorated rapidly, an issue that Afghan government urges must be stopped.

"Whenever ... (More on P4)...(2)

Gen. Raheel Visits Afghanistan on Sunday



ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's military said its army chief will travel to Kabul on Sunday amid efforts to revive peace talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban.

In a statement released on Friday, the Pakistani military said Gen. Raheel Sharif will meet with Afghanistan's political and military leadership during the day-long visit.

The move comes two weeks after a regional conference held in Islamabad called for the resumption of Afghan-Taliban peace negotiations. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and envoys from Washington and China also attended the conference.

The first-ever direct talks between the Taliban and Kabul were hosted by Pakistan in July but the process collapsed after Afghanistan announced that longtime Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar had died in a Pakistani hospital two years earlier. (APP)



Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (2nd L) and President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani (2nd R) inaugurate Afghan new parliament building in Kabul on Friday December 25, 2015. Visiting Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani on Friday jointly inaugurated an India-funded new parliament building in Kabul. (Xinhua/Rahmat Alizadah)

Afghan and Taliban Forces Trade Blows in Sangin Battle

KABUL - At least 20 civilians killed in past 24 hours, officials said Friday, as Afghan Special Forces re-take police headquarters.

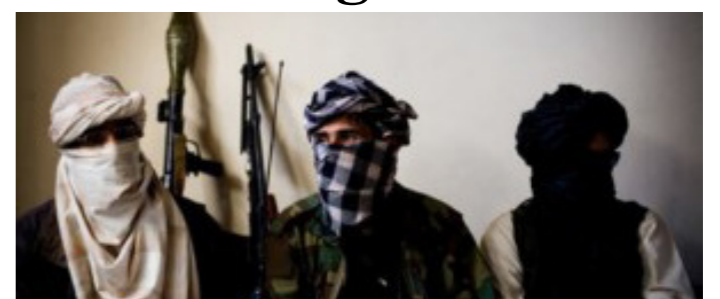
Afghan special forces troops are locked in an intense battle with Taliban fighters in strategic Sangin district, after re-taking some government buildings from the armed group, officials said.

At least 20 civilians have been killed during the past 24 hours of fighting, local council officials told Al Jazeera.

The fight for control of the town in Helmand province has raged for days, with both sides claiming to have the upper hand.

The most recent battle on Friday morning was taking place around the town's central bazaar, said Al Jazeera's Qais Azimy, reporting from the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah.

"The government [fighters]



have been able to get control of the police headquarters and the district chief's office," he said.

Our correspondent said that about 100 Afghan special forces soldiers are believed to have dropped into the Sangin some time on Thursday and that they were now waiting for reinforcements and supplies to be trucked in.

"They are desperately looking to open the road between Lashkar Gah and Sangin so they can supply the soldiers there," he said.

"But they are facing difficulties on the 70km stretch of

road. There are a lot of improvised explosive devices and mines that have been placed by the Taliban, which makes it hard to travel. And they are facing ambushes as well." He added that several hundred civilian families are believed to still be in Sangin, mainly those who could not afford to leave.

While not confirming that they had lost control of the police headquarters, a Taliban spokesman told Al Jazeera acknowledged that the special forces troops had won some ground in Sangin.

"... (More on P4)...(7)