

McCain Assures Ghani of Long-Term Support



KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani and US Senator John McCain on Thursday reiterated their resolve to bolster bilateral cooperation in combating terrorism and extremism.

McCain held a meeting with Ghani at the Presidential Palace, where both leaders discussed human rights, security and America's long-term support for Afghanistan.

A statement from the Presidential Palace said the president expressed his gratitude for the US sacrifice in Afghanistan and the senator reassured of his country's long-term support.

McCain also held a meeting with Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah. The senator expressed optimism that Afghanistan had a bright future ahead. "We will stand with Afghanistan in tackling challenges," the visiting dignitary added.

Abdullah appreciated McCain's efforts for having a clear vision in supporting Afghan forces for the last 13 years. (Pajhwok)

Abdullah and Ghani Still at Odds on Introduction of New Cabinet

KABUL - President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah Abdullah are still at odds to introduce the cabinet of the Government of National Unity.

According to the presidential palace officials, the two leaders are still having some differences on the introduction of the new cabinet. A presidential palace official has told the BBC that negotiations are ongoing between the two sides to resolve the differences and introduce the cabinet on time.

In the meantime, the civil society activists have said that the security and economy of the country have been marred due to delays to introduce the cabinet.

Activists of the Social Justice Movement said Thursday that the ... (More on P4)...(2)

MPs Warn to Summon President on Cabinet Issue

KABUL - The one-week deadline of Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) to the National Unity Government (NUG) on formation of the cabinet has ended with no sign of progress on introducing the nominees.

After criticisms and pressures on NUG were proved useless, the House of Representatives earlier this week set a final one-week deadline to NUG to finalize the cabinet issues or the MPs would make their final decision.

As the deadline have also been in vain, the lawmakers now warn



to impeach President Ashraf Ghani to the Parliament.

"President's impeachment is the final option but before that, we will try to pressurize the government through

other channels," deputy head of justice committee Mohammad Obda warned.

The MPs declared that they would not remain silent on government's reluctance towards Parliament's decision.

"The cabinet nominees should have been introduced after this deadline but unfortunately it didn't happen," MP Saleh Mohammad Saljoqi said. "We are now going to pressurize more the government through our legal authorities."

The Kabul residents also criticize the government for frequently delaying issue, ... (More on P4)...(1)

Journalists in East Facing Daunting Challenges

JALALABAD - The journalists' community in the eastern zone on Thursday said they were facing unprecedented challenges and the government should work out a plan to resolve their problems.

The call came at a one-day conference, arranged by the journalist community and attended by a large number of media professionals, officials and locals in Jalalabad, the capital of the province.

Sher ... (More on P4)...(3)

Afghan War Coming to a Responsible End: Obama

WASHINGTON - Giving thanks to the U.S. troops and their families, the U.S. President Barack Obama has reiterated in his Christmas greetings that the war in Afghanistan was coming to a responsible end.

"Our war in Afghanistan is coming to a responsible end," Obama said in his weekly address on Christmas Eve. "Of course, the end of our combat mission in Afghanistan doesn't mean



the end of challenges to our security."

Stressing the need for continued support of Afghanistan, Obama insisted that the United States would continue to work with the war-torn country until it becomes stable. "We'll continue to work with Afghans to make sure their country ... (More on P4)...(4)

US Chided for New Policy on Taliban Leaders

KABUL - The Transitional Justice Coordination Group (TJCG), a leading civil society coalition, on Thursday voiced its grave concern at the release of some Taliban detainees from the US-run Guantanamo Bay prison.

The coalition also expressed its concerns over the increasing civilian casualties and the delay in cabinet formation. The group urged the government to prosecute former Gitmo detainees, who had committed crimes and set free the innocent. It called on the international community and human rights groups to mount pressure on the US to review its new stance on Taliban leadership.

On Monday, the Pentagon announced US forces in Afghanistan would not target Taliban's supreme leader Mullah Omar and others unless they posed a direct threat to America.

TJCG member Mohammad Yunus Akhtar told Pajhwok Afghan News if the Taliban were not the enemy to the US why the Americans had come to Afghanistan 13 years back. "America's new policy not to target Taliban leadership has raised concerns among civil society groups in Afghanistan," he said. TJCG said it was also worried about the release of Taliban prisoners from Guantanamo because experience showed attacks increased after such releases.

The coalition insisted the innocent prisoners should be set free, but guilty ones should be prosecuted. Pentagon recently handed over four Guantanamo detainees — Shah Wali Khan, ... (More on P4)...(6)

150 Taliban Militants Killed in Dangam Fighting

KABUL - At least 150 Taliban fighters were killed and more than 100 others were injured during the past three days in Dangam district of eastern Kunar, officials said Thursday.

These insurgents were killed in the fighting between the Afghan National Army (ANA) forces and armed insurgents that included Taliban, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and other Pakistani militants, said Major Gen. Muhammad Zaman Wazir, commander of 201 ANA Selab Corpse.

He added 10 security



forces also lost their lives and 38 others sustained injuries.

The Dangam fighting, which has entered the thirteenth day, has been intensified during the last three days, the source noted.

"The bridges destroyed by the insurgents have been hindering our progress," the ANA commander said.

Meanwhile, the Kunar ... (More on P4)...(5)

Illegal Refugees to be Expelled Soon: Khattak

KABUL - The Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government has said reiterated its plan to expel all illegal Afghan refugees, following a spike in insurgent attacks in the northwestern province.

A mechanism would be evolved for the honourable repatriation of legal Afghan refugees as soon as possible, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Pervez Khattak said on Wednesday.

"Similarly, our borders with FATA also need immediate attention to secure province and rest of the country from infiltration of miscreants by sending back and deployment of FC platoons to borders," he said.

Khattak expressed the hope the federal government, in light of the recommendations of an all-party conference in Peshawar, would take bold steps to secure the country. The Dec. 16 Peshawar school attack, which ... (More on P4)...(7)

Abdullah Vows to Protect Freedom of Expression

KABUL - Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah said on Thursday the Afghans had won the freedom of expression at the cost of their blood and no one would be allowed to snatch the constitutional right from them.

During a meeting with media representatives at his office in Kabul, Abdullah pledged the unity government would do all it could to safeguard the freedom of expression in the country on a priority basis.

Over the past decade, he noted, the growth of media outlets in Afghanistan had been unprecedented. "We have achieved at the expense of our blood. No one will



be able to trample on our right to the freedom of speech."

The unity government was ready to study the challenges being faced by media organisations, the CEO said, promising all possible steps to promote responsible journalism and facilitate balanced coverage of key issues.

He went on to reiterate his vow to take practical

steps to bring perpetrators of violence against journalists to justice. On Nov. 23, he had said impunity for perpetrators of crimes against journalists would end.

At today's meeting, he reaffirmed his pledge: "In the first step, we are ready to access the murder cases of two journalists. No one would be exempted from punishment." ... (More on P4)...(8)

IDRC | CRDI Canada
International Development Research Centre
Centre de recherches pour le développement international

INDIRA GANDHI INSTITUTE OF DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH
(An Advanced Research Institute Established by Reserve Bank of India)
Deemed University

IGIDR-IDRC Scholarships and Fellowships

"Capacity Building in Inclusive Development with a special focus on Labor Market and Industrial Policy" Asian Regional Initiative

Indira Gandhi Institute of Development Research (IGIDR) is an autonomous research body located in Mumbai, India and founded in 1987 by the Reserve Bank of India to commemorate its golden jubilee. In its role as Deemed University (since 1995) with the highest rating of the accreditation body of India (since 2002), it offers Masters in Economics and integrated M.Phil/Ph.D. programs in Development Studies.

The International Development Research Centre (IDRC) was established by an Act of Canada's Parliament in 1970 to help developing countries find solutions to their challenges. The Centre supports emerging researchers to develop skills and generate knowledge and innovation for positive change.

IGIDR is initiating a Capacity building program in Inclusive Development with special focus on Labor Market and Industrial Policy, starting from August 2015-July 2016 academic year, with funding from the International Development Research Centre, Canada (IDRC). As part of this initiative, the following scholarships would be available for students who are citizens of the following Asian countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam.

Masters Program in Economics (Maximum of 5 Scholarships per academic year, @ INR 10000 per month)
Master of Science in Economics is a two-year program, which imparts students with a rigorous and hands-on training in Economics, with special emphasis on analytical and problem solving skills as well as exposure to emerging policy issues at the national and international levels. This program involves a successful completion of 15 courses and a Masters thesis on a topic broadly involving Labor Market and Industrial Policy. It is aimed at all those with necessary quantitative prerequisites who would like to be grounded in economic analysis.

Minimum qualification for admission to the M.Sc. program include one of the following degrees or their equivalents:
B.A./B.Sc. in Economics/B.Com./B.Stat./B.Sc.(Physics or Mathematics)/B.Tech./B.E. with at least a second division for Economics discipline and first division for other disciplines. The applicant must have studied Mathematics at the higher secondary or higher level.

M.Phil. Program in Development Studies (Maximum of 3 Scholarships per academic year, @ INR 17000 per month)
The M.Phil. programme is a two year programme, designed for those who would like to acquire a certain level of analytical and applied skills but may not be keen on pursuing a Ph.D. degree. It involves successful completion of course work as well as submission of a dissertation on a topic broadly involving Labor Market and Industrial Policy.

Minimum qualification for admission to the M.Phil and Ph.D. programme include one of the following degrees or their equivalents:
M.A./M.Sc in Economics/M.Stat./M.Sc.(Physics or Mathematics or Environmental Science or Operations Research)/M.B.A./M.Tech./M.E./B. Tech. / B.E. with at least 55% aggregate marks for Economics discipline and 60% aggregate marks for other disciplines. The applicant must have studied Mathematics at the higher secondary or higher level.

Visiting Doctoral Students (Maximum of 3 Fellowships per academic year, @ INR 26000 per month)
Eligibility criteria for applicants include having a Masters degree in any field and be registered for full time Ph.D. at universities from target countries on a topic broadly involving Labor Market and Industrial Policy. Each scholarship is for a maximum period of twelve months during which the candidates will complete at least one major essay of their theses at IGIDR, which would be published as IGIDR working paper after review.

Post-Doctoral Program (Maximum of 2 Fellowships, @ INR 50000 per month)
Post-Doctoral fellowships are available for scholars from the target countries, either newly graduated Ph.D. candidates (within two years of successful submission of their dissertations) or junior faculty, who have submitted their Ph.D. dissertations or obtained Ph.D. degrees with an outstanding academic training and record in the broad areas of Economics, and particularly, Inclusive Development with special emphasis on Labor Market and Industrial Policy. The fellowships would be available for an initial period of one year (and extendable up to a maximum of another year) to those who are preferably within the age limit of 35 years. The grantees will be expected to produce at least two working papers per year; they will also be expected to give at least two seminars at IGIDR each year based on the work done by them at IGIDR.

Funding
All the selected candidates will receive the scholarship/fellowship (as applicable), medical coverage (as applicable), book grants (as applicable), conference travel funding (as applicable) and one round trip economy fare (as applicable).

Application Details
The detailed calls for competitions for all of the above programs, including the eligibility criteria, deadlines and fellowship details will appear soon. Please look up IGIDR website www.igidr.ac.in for further announcements and details.