

Deadline to Name Cabinet Expires Today



KABUL - Various political groups have been mounting pressure on the unity government to give them representation in the new cabinet, a dilemma widely regarded a major reason behind the delay in naming the council of ministers, sources close to the president and the CEO said on Saturday.

No breakthrough could be achieved so far despite only today is left in meeting a deadline the president and the CEO had given to the international community at the London Conference earlier this month.

Another deadline the Wolesi Jirga set for the government Saturday last to introduce cabinet nominees expired today.

After being sworn-in, President Ashraf Ghani promised he would introduce his council of ministers in 45 days, a deadline that already passed.

After the London conference, the president and the CEO said they would form the cabinet within four weeks. This deadline is due to end tomorrow (Sunday).

Rights and Justice Party head Moeen Marastial, also a close aide to President Ghani, told Pajhwok Afghan News political groups had been trying to influence the president and the CEO to give them a lion share in the cabinet.

"A number of groups, political parties, and individuals have expectations from the president and the CEO that they will give them a share in the new cabinet. ... (More on P4)...(2)

Afghan Sikh and Hindu Refugees Aspire to Stay Back in India



NEW DELHI - A large number of Sikh and Hindu refugees from Afghanistan want to stay back in India, as the security situation in their country is not stable. Many of them, especially the young have learnt stitching and operating the computer and desire to be self-reliant.

New Delhi is home to a large number of Sikh and Hindu refugees, who migrated to India during the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan in the early 1980s.

Many of them have been in India for over two decades as refugees. They are waiting for return of peace in Afghanistan.

It is estimated that 50,000 Sikhs and Hindus migrated to India in 1992. Among those living in the national capital, 5,000 of them are still having a refugee status but ... (More on P4)...(6)

Helmand Security to be Beefed up: Yar



LASHKARGAH - The newly-deputed deputy governor of southern Helmand province on Saturday pledged to improve security of this volatile province by building strong coordination among government institutions and the people.

Mohammad Jan Rasoul Yar said this during his first official meeting with the officials. Yar has been recently took charge of his office as deputy governor in compliance with the presidential decree.

Helmand was an important province economically and strategically, he said, adding that he would leave no stone unturned to bolster security of this remote province. Earlier, he served as deputy governor of southern Zabul province.

Acting Governor Maj. Gen. Mohammad Naeem said that Yar had brilliant experience in governance and that the ... (More on P4)...(7)

Council of Ministers Rushed Budget Approval: Abdullah

KABUL - The draft budget for the government this year was reviewed and approved by the Council of Ministers hastily, Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah said on Saturday.

Members of House of Representatives have echoed Abdullah's concerns and pointed out that Parliament has yet to approve the budget, while the Ministry of Finance (MoF) has sought to defend the draft and the transparency of the process went through to formulate it.

Year after year, the national budget is voted on and rejected by Parliament up to three times, and ends up missing the deadline at the start of the



new fiscal year. Now days pass the mark, talks are said to still be ongoing regarding changes to the draft.

"The budget came to the minister's council in its last minutes, and there wasn't even two or three hours of discussion on it," Abdullah said on Saturday. "I think that has caused the problems now in Parliament, and it needs to be reviewed."

Legislators have already spoken out against the draft that was put before them. "The budget was rejected by Parliament, and the government must include national projects, such as the construction of national roads, in the ... (More on P4)...(1)

Ghani Visits Herat Amid Chaotic Situation

HERAT - President Ashraf Ghani, accompanied by a high-level government delegation, left for Herat on Saturday following the chaotic situation of the western province, officials said.

Ghani's visit came three days after he dismissed the acting governor for Herat, Syed Fazullah Wahidi, following increased kidnappings and targeted killings of businessmen, government officials and security personnel.



The acting ministers of defense and interior affairs and also the head of National Directorate of Security (NDS) are said to be accompanying Ghani where he is also expected to announce a new governor for the province. ... (More on P4)...(3)

MPs Announce Next Step to Tackle Cabinet Delay

KABUL - With the one-week deadline proved futile, the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the Parliament) has now decided to meet the government leadership to know the reason behind delaying the cabinet.

While yesterday, some of the lawmakers warned to

summon President Ashraf Ghani to the Parliament for what they believe government's negligence to Parliament's decisions.

The disputed cabinet was once again the main topic of debate at the beginning of new week on Saturday where the lawmakers

quarreled on how to confront the problem.

"Today, in terms of law, we have no government," MP Arif Rahmani said. "Actually we are currently suffering from security, economic and political crises." But later the calm at ... (More on P4)...(4)

Construction of New Kabul City Reportedly Ready to Kick Off

DUSHANBE - Afghan news agency Khaama Press reported on December 24 that construction of a new Kabul city is ready to kick off.

Khaama Press quoted Elham Omar Hotaki, deputy chief of Independent Board of Kabul New City Development (KNC), as saying that they are waiting for approval from the Afghan Presidential Palace to start construction works.

He reportedly said that the Dehsabz-Barikab City Development Authority (DCDA) and KNC had signed five agreements with the companies to construct 55,000 residential houses, and the companies are prepared to start their work.

According to Hotaki, the Kabul New City will be almost two times bigger than the current city of Kabul, adding that the construction of Kabul New City would be completed in two phases within 15 years.

He said that residential houses would be built for 1.5 million residents in the first phase of the construction while ... (More on P4)...(5)

44 Insurgents Killed in Nationwide ANSF Operations



KABUL - At least 44 Taliban insurgents were killed during a nationwide operation led by the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in the past 24 hours, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said in a statement on Saturday.

Eight insurgents were injured and one other was arrested.

The operations were conducted in Ghazni, Kandahar, Paktika, Khost, Uruzgan, Badakhshan, Jowzjan, Sar-e-Pul, Logar and Kunar provinces, the statement said.

"Also, during these operations, the police forces discovered and confiscated light and heavy weapons," it added.

According to the statement, the police discovered and defused 11 different types of IEDs placed by the insurgents in Parwan, Kandahar, Paktia and Helmand provinces.

The statement, however, did not report possible ANSF casualties. (Tolonews)

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