

Quote of the Day

Coming together is a beginning; keeping together is progress; working together is success.

Henry Ford

Abdullah Calls for a Regional Counter-Terrorism Plan

NEW DELHI - CEO Abdullah Abdullah on Tuesday addressed delegates at the Counter-Terrorism Conference 2016 in Jaipur, India, and called for a joint counter-terrorism action plan to be formulated and implemented by regional countries. Contextualizing terrorism in Afghanistan he used three periods as examples - the Cold War; post-Cold War; and Post-9/11.

"The failures to follow through, the missed opportunities for regional cooperation, and the continued pursuit of zero-sum policies characterize these three eras. And together they have contributed to creating an enabling environment for terrorism



and its utilization as an instrument of state policy," he said.

Abdullah went on to say that before the imposed conflicts, Afghanistan used to be one of the most peaceful countries in the region, despite rife poverty. "But we became one of the last victims of the Cold War, as the former Soviet Union invaded and occupied our country."

"In defense of our sovereignty and freedom, the Afghan people rose in resistance against the Soviets. And in our just war of liberation, we relied on those in the international community that shared our values and offered us resistance support," he said. ...*(More on P4)...(1)*

US Lawmakers to Press Commander on Troop Levels for Afghan War



WASHINGTON - The top American commander in Afghanistan faces skeptical US lawmakers amid concerns that worsening security conditions demand a greater number of U.S. forces to ensure the gains made in the war-torn country since 2001 aren't lost.

Army Gen. John F. Campbell is slated to testify on Tuesday before the House Armed Services Committee, where members are expected to press him on President Barack Obama's plan to cut American troop levels from 9,800 to 5,500 before he leaves office next January. Obama had backtracked from his initial plan to reduce the U.S. force to 1,000 by the end of 2016.

Republicans have long assailed Obama's exit strategy, arguing that conditions on the ground in Afghanistan, not a calendar, should determine the pace of the withdrawal. With the Taliban staging new offensives and the Islamic State extremist group seeking a presence in Afghanistan, congressional Democrats also are raising the prospect of an extended stay.

"I've always believed that putting a time limit on it is a mistake," Rep. Mac Thornberry, R-Texas, the committee chairman, said Monday. "To say this is going to take five years, 10 years or 50 years, nobody can say that."

Rep. Seth Moulton, D-Mass., warned against a repeat of Iraq. American forces were withdrawn too rapidly and without a long-term political strategy to ensure the progress they made would hold, he said. U.S. troops had to return to Iraq after the resulting instability allowed IS to grow.

"I've never been an advocate for withdrawing troops on a timetable," said Moulton, a former Marine Corps officer who served four tours in Iraq. "If security is worsening with the number of troops we have there now, then we shouldn't cut them below the current level."

Campbell is expected to retire soon and Obama has nominated Army Lt. Gen. ...*(More on P4)...(6)*

CPJ Voices Concern over Threats to Afghan Journalists

PESHAWAR - As the security situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate, journalists have long been under threat, a media protection watchdog said on Monday.

The Afghan government must join media owners and journalists' organisations to find an effective method of reversing the hostile environment, the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) said.

A statement from CPJ condemned the shooting of senior broadcast journalist Mohammad Zubair Khaksar and the beating of freelance reporter Yahya Jawahari.

Coming after a suicide attack on employees of a private TV channel, the incidents had further fuelled concerns for the safety of Afghan journalists, the watchdog said.

"Afghan journalists have long been under the gun, but the pressure on them is mounting as the security situation in Afghanistan continues to deteriorate," said Bob Dietz, CPJ's Asia program coordinator. (Pajhwok)

Afghanistan Joins US-Led Int'l Coalition against Daesh: Kerry

ROME - Afghanistan has officially joined the international coalition against the Daesh extremist group, bringing the total number of participant-countries to 66, US Secretary of State John Kerry said Tuesday.

"Yesterday, Afghanistan, which we all know has its own challenges in which we are, most of us, involved in helping, has also decided to join the coalition, recognizing that it too faces challenges and wants to make its contributions to this effort," Kerry said at the Ministerial Meeting of the Small Group of the Global Coalition to Counter Daesh in Rome.



According to the secretary of state, Daesh has lost 40 percent of the territories it occupied in Iraq and 20 percent in Syria since the last meeting of the Small Group in June 2015. Kerry claimed ...*(More on P4)...(3)*

US

Reconciliation Talks with Taliban Should Continue

WASHINGTON - Despite a series of some high-profile terrorist attacks in the past few weeks, the United States on Monday stressed need for reconciliation talks with the Taliban to arrive at a useful conclusion.

"It is absolutely true that Afghanistan remains a dangerous place; there's no question about that. Today's attack underscores that," State Department spokesman John Kirby told reporters at his daily news conference.

Hours after 20 people were killed in a suicide attack on a police compound in Kabul, he rejected the view that Taliban had no interest in the Afghan-



led reconciliation process. "They're not a monolithic organization the way that some people want to paint them. We still think that that's the way forward. We still think that there's room to make that happen," the spokesman added. He went on to characterise the

deadly bombing as more of a reminder that negotiations were really the answer a process the Obama administration continued to encourage and support.

Kirby said the US wanted the Afghan government to continue ...*(More on P4)...(4)*

AREU Ranked Among Top 10 Think-Tanks in Central Asia



KABUL - The Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) has been recognised as one of top 10 think-tanks in the Central Asia by The University of Pennsylvania in its annual assessment published this week.

The ranking, under the initiative "The Think Tanks and Civil Society Program" is an effort to examine the evolving role and character of public policy research organizations, the AREU said in a statement.

The initiative is designed to identify and recognise centers of excellence in all the major areas of public policy research and in every region of the world.

The 2015 report, published online this week, shows that AREU has moved from 14th position in the year 2014, to 9th position in the year 2015.

This year's assessment of research organizations is done under the theme: "Why Think Tanks Matter to Policy Makers and the Public" and the report has been launched globally, in around 60 countries.

"Policies cannot improve ...*(More on P4)...(7)*

US Airstrikes Kill 46 Militants, Destroy IS Radio



KABUL - A total of 46 militants were killed and a radio station belonging to the Islamic State (IS) group was destroyed after U.S.-led coalition forces carried out airstrikes in Paktika and Nangarhar provinces overnight, government officials said Tuesday.

"Acting upon intelligence reports, the pilotless plane of the coalition forces stormed the hide-outs of Taliban rebels in Gomal district (of Paktika province) Monday night killing 17 armed insurgents," Nabiullah Pirkhil, spokesman for the provincial government told Xinhua.

A vehicle of the militants was also destroyed during the raid, the official added.

In airstrikes also launched by the coalition forces in Nangarhar province, 29 Islamic State (IS) militants were killed and a radio station belonging to the militant group was destroyed.

"The foreign forces conducted four air raids against IS positions in Momand Dara of Achin district Monday night, ...*(More on P4)...(8)*

Probe Team Law Violated in Contract-Signing with Ferozi



KABUL - A fact-finding commission on Tuesday said government officials and departments had violated the law by releasing former Kabul Bank executive Khalilullah Ferozi from prison to sign a multimillion township contract with him.

The township project called Smart City is being constructed by Ferozi, who has been sentenced to jail and fined for stealing millions of dollars from the former Kabul Bank that almost collapsed some years back.

The contract-signing ceremony with Ferozi on November 11, 2015 was attended by president's special representative for reforms and good governance Ahmad Zia Massoud, former presidential advisor Abdul Ali Mohammadi, Urban Development Minister Syed Sadaat ...*(More on P4)...(2)*

Japan Helps Afghan Refugees Sheltering in Iran to Go Back Home

TERHAN - Japan is to donate over \$10 million to help welfare of Afghan refugees sheltering in Iran, Japanese Embassy said in a statement on Monday. Japan helps Afghan refugees sheltering in Iran to go back home

The donation is also to improve water supplies at Orumiyeh lake and fight with drug trafficking, read the statement.

Japanese government has voiced readiness to donate about dlr three billion to aid Afghan people in a five-year period to begin livelihood in their home country, said the statement adding that they have also decided to donate dlr 10.130 million through United Nations offices. (IRNA)

No Deal on Forced Deportation of Afghans: Ministry



KABUL - The Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation on Tuesday said 250,000 Afghans applied for asylum in 44 countries in 2015 and the Afghan government would not sign any memorandum of understanding (MoU) with any country on forcibly deporting Afghans.

Of the 27 European countries, Afghanistan has signed MoUs with nine European countries on Afghan refugees, but Sweden has terminated a 2009 MoU with Afghanistan.

"Countries which have signed these MoUs cannot forcefully expel Afghans with disabilities, children, families with no income sources, families financially supported by women and people whose at least one family members is granted

asylum," Refugee Ministry spokesman Islamuddin Jurat said, adding that Afghanistan demanded the MoUs to be renewed.

The government of Afghanistan has decided to sign such accords with Germany, Austria and Greece, but would not sign any deal under which Afghan asylum seekers were expelled from these countries, he said.

He said 250,000 Afghans had sought asylum in 44 European countries in 2015 when 150,000 of them applied for asylum in Germany.

"Any types of repatriation of Afghan refugees should take place under the framework of the MoUs and international conventions and laws," he said. ...*(More on P4)...(5)*

Ghani Accepts Diplomatic Credentials of Seven New Ambassadors



KABUL - President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani accepted the diplomatic credentials of seven new non-resident ambassadors on Monday.

The envoys of Qatar, Georgia, Austria, Greece, Palestine, the Philippines and Maldives presented their respective assignment documents to President Ghani during separate cer-

emonies at Presidential Palace 'ARG' in the presence of Foreign Minister Salahuddin Rabani.

The newly assigned ambassadors discussed various subjects with Afghan side and promised that they would work to improve relationship of their respective countries with Afghanistan. (KP)