

Quote of the Day

Honesty is the first chapter of the book of wisdom.
Thomas Jefferson

No Precondition for Peace Negotiations: Zakhilwal

PESHAWAR - Afghanistan's ambassador to Pakistan, claiming support for the national reconciliation push, has ruled preconditions for peace talks between Kabul and the Taliban.

In an interview published on Monday, Dr. Omar Zakhilwal said: "The Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) has agreed there will be no pre-conditions for peace talks."

A visible fall in violence during the negotiations would further strengthen the national consensus on a negotiated end to the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan, he told The Express Tribune.

However, he believed the process



should begin soon to keep the people from losing trust and patience. "There is overwhelming support in Afghanistan for peace talks."

Zakhilwal claimed influential leaders, including President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Dr Abdullah, were on the same page on the reconciliation effort.

According to the diplomat, former president Hamid Karzai has thrown his weight behind the four-way talks, whose fourth round is due on February 3 in Kabul. "It defines certain principles that provide the boundaries needed to take the process forward," the former finance minister said of the roadmap for dialogue with the Taliban. (Pajhwok)

Iran Willing to Meet Afghanistan's Demand for Fuel



KABUL - Tehran is ready to meet Afghanistan's demand for fuel through the construction of a terminal and a warehouse, an Iranian official has said.

Ali Osat Hashemi, governor general for Sistan-Baluchistan province, was quoted as saying by a news agency that Iran would transport fuel to the energy-deficient neighbour through pipelines. Given its capacity for load-

ing and unloading transit commodities, the Chabahar Port could emerge as a commercial hub for Afghan and Iranian traders, he believed.

Hashemi made the remarks at a recent meeting with visiting Afghan Consul-General Abdul Rahim Nikpour in the capital of Zahedan province, according to IRNA.

More than 100 Afghan merchants and companies are active... (More on P4)...(1)

Police Infighting Among Afghan Taliban Claims 33 Lives



GHAZNI - Up to 33 Taliban militants have been killed because of infighting between supporters and opponents of Taliban leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor in Nawa district of the eastern Ghazni province over the past week, provincial police chief Aminullah Omorkhil said Monday.

"The clash which erupted between supporters of Mullah Mansoor and his rival Mullah Mohammad Rasoul over the control of Nawa district have left 33 deaths from both sides and Rasoul's supporters finally evicted Mansoor's men from Nawa district on Sunday," Omorkhil... (More on P4)...(2)

Ghazni Police Chief to Come Hard on Land Grabbers



GHAZNI CITY - The police chief on Monday warned no one would be allowed to usurp government land in future in southern Ghazni province.

Brig. Gen. Aminullah Amarkhil issued the warning at a press conference after the provincial council claimed 150,000 acres of land had been usurped in Ghazni.

Amarkhil confirmed thousands acres of land had been grabbed in the province. "No one would dare to usurp public land in future. Such crimes committed in the past would not be allowed in future," he said.

Amarkhil added only mafia groups and powerful individuals were involved in land grabs because common people could not do so. He did not name any powerful individual involved in land grabbing.

A provincial council member, Abdul Jamay Jamay, also confirmed that 150,000 acres of land had been illegally occupied by strongmen and mafia groups in the province.

"The land grabbing is still in practice and the government cannot put hand on mafia groups," he said, asking the government to take action against land grabbers otherwise all public property would... (More on P4)...(4)

Dr. Abdullah

Govt. Trying to Facilitate Education in Mother Tongue

KABUL - Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah on Sunday said the unity government was trying to pave the ground for education in mother tongue in order to enable children to better understand what they were taught, urging cooperation from the countrymen in this regard.

In his message in connection with the International Mother Language Day, Abdullah said language was the best and important means of communication. He said it was language that brought closer people and resolved problems among them.



He said the importance and value of languages was indisputably known throughout

the history. He said mother language could be effectively used as medium of instruction

and opportunity to communicate and this was the reason it was stressed on the occasion of international mother language day each that education should be in language children were familiar with.

"I congratulate all the Afghans on the occasion of this international day and am hopeful all the Afghans will get education in their mother language, which is necessary for children understand better what they are taught. Mother language strengthens the learning capacity of children. It is unfortunate that still... (More on P4)...(3)

Kabul Hopes 4th Quadrilateral Meeting to Pave Way for Direct Talks

KABUL - The national unity government on Monday hoped the fourth quadrilateral meeting scheduled for tomorrow in capital Kabul would pave the ground for direct talks with the Taliban and Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) insurgent groups.

Three of the quadrilateral meetings involving Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the US had previously been held in Kabul and Islamabad.

Representatives from the four nations in the third meeting on February 6 agreed on a roadmap towards resuming the stalled peace talks with militants.

Javed Faisal, the deputy spokesman for Chief Executive Officer (CEO), told Pajhwok Afghan News the fourth quadrilateral meeting



would take place in Kabul on Tuesday.

"We hope the meeting will yield positive results and pave the ground for a clear mechanism on peace negotiations. We also wish that the time and venue for direct talks with militants will also be decided in the meeting," he said.

Direct talks with Taliban militants would begin after the quadrilateral meeting,

Faisal said, adding the Afghan government intended to talk with all armed opposition groups, including Taliban, HIA and the Haqqani Network.

He said new appointments to the High Peace Council (HPC) would be announced based on a presidential decree in the near future. He said the fresh appointments were part of reforms in the council. (Pajhwok)

Afghanistan to Harvest 4,000 Kg Saffron this Year: Ministry

KABUL - Officials from the ministry of agriculture and irrigation have said that Afghanistan will harvest 4,000 kg of saffron this year as farmers across the country continue to cultivate the valuable herb.

They said that this year saffron will be cultivated over 900 hectares of land in 24 provinces as government is taking measures to provide technical and financial cooperation to farmers.

"Based on the statistics, this year more than 4,000 kg of saffron will be harvested which shows a visible increase compared to previous years," Lutfullah Rashid,



spokesman for the ministry of agriculture said.

He said that the ministry has provided training to at least 200 farmers on how to help them cultivate the herb and it has also taken more inclusive programs to expand saffron cultivation. Meanwhile a number of experts have said that Afghan saffron maintains a prominent reputation in world markets, call-

ing on the government to undertake inclusive measures to develop the field through effective marketing systems. It is said that Afghanistan's climate and soil are ideal to grow saffron. Based on statistics, Afghanistan can produce more saffron than any other saffron producing country if necessary support is provided to farmers. (Tolonews)

Taliban Blow up another Power Line Utility Pole Coming from Tajikistan

BISHKEK - The Taliban blew up another power line utility pole connecting Afghanistan with Tajikistan on Sunday night, reports the RFE/RL. The electricity supply was not cut off despite the damage.

This is the second time of explosion of the power line utility pole providing electricity from Tajikistan. The Taliban damaged two trunk lines in Baghlan province supplying Tajik electricity to Kabul on February 10. The line was restored two days later, and more than 100 MW of electricity were delivered to Kabul from Tajikistan.

The operation on elimination of the large group of Taliban movement has been going in Baghlan province since this January. The militants had already bombed the power line



utility poles coming from Uzbekistan. Thus, Kabul is experiencing difficulties with the power supply over the past weeks. Afghanistan last week asked Tajikistan to increase the volume of electricity supplies to 150-180 MW. (AKIpress)

Corrupt Officials to Face Music Soon, Warns Paktia Governor



GARDEZ - The governor of southeastern Paktia province on Monday vowed to eliminate administrative corruption and introduce corrupt officials to the attorneys.

Nasratullah Arsala expressed these views during a meeting with civil society activists and tribal elders at his office in Gardez, the provincial capital. He said high-ranking officials lacking the capacity to work effectively had been removed and efforts were in place to

improve the administrative affairs.

The governor pledged to refer soon some top provincial government and military officials involved in corruption to the attorney's office for further investigations and proceedings. In the past three months, six employees of the education department and four policemen have been introduced to the attorney's office after they were accused of corruption. (Pajhwok)

Baghlan Rally Demands End to War in Dand-I-Ghori

PUL-I-KHUMRI - Hundreds of people on Monday rallied in northern Baghlan province, demanding an end to ongoing clashes between Afghan forces and militants in Dand-i-Ghori and Dand-i-Shahabuddin areas.

The clashes in Dand-i-Ghori area of Pul-i-Khumri, the provincial capital, have been ongoing for the past one month and the violence in Dand-i-Shahabuddin on the outskirts of the city began a week ago. As the clashes continued, the insurgents destroyed three power pylons in Dand-i-Shahabuddin, cutting off power supply from Uzbekistan to Kabul. The power supply was restored last Saturday after hectic efforts spanning three weeks.

Around 800 residents of Zamanikhil, Hussainkhil, Dand-i-Shahabuddin areas and Baghlan-i-Markazi district on Saturday rallied and said dozens of civilians had been killed and wounded during the clashes that forced hundreds of families into leaving their homes.

They said the war that destroyed mosques, houses and farmlands should be brought to an end as soon as possible. Borjan, a resident of Wazghari village of Dand-i-Shahabuddin, said: "The ongoing conflict should be stopped at any cost."

He held both Taliban and Afghan forces responsible for civilian casualties and attacking people's homes. Borjan said the Afghan forces operation was not well organised and should be immediately stopped.

Ali Mohammad, a resident of Salangi village of Dand-I-Ghori area, said: "It has been third week we are displaced to Pul-i-Khumri and living with our relatives due to the clashes in our area."

He said one of his sons, who had been keeping their house in their village, was injured during the clashes. "We want an end to the ongoing violence and the government should resolve the problem through peace talks with militants," Mohammad said.

The rally coincided with a rocket fire blamed on militants hitting the deputy governor's office in Pul-i-Khumri city, leaving one person dead and four others wounded.

According to the Ministry of Refugee and Repatriation, more than 350,000 families have been displaced due to insecurity in the province. The displaced families are said to be in desperate need of assistance. (Pajhwok)