

## Quote of the Day

Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower.  
Steve Jobs

### Quadrilateral Coordination Group

# First Round of Direct Peace Talks Likely in Early March

KABUL - The first round of direct peace talks between the Afghan government and all Taliban and other groups is expected to take place by the first week of March 2016 in Islamabad, said a joint press release issued here by the Quadrilateral Coordination Group (QCG) Tuesday.

The fourth round of QCG meeting, grouping Afghanistan, Pakistan, China and the United States, kicked off in Kabul earlier in the day, which is expected to draw a roadmap of the national reconciliation of Afghanistan.

"The QCG member states invite all Taliban ... (More on P4)...(1)



## Armed Group Conditions Its Participation in Peace Talks

KABUL - Hizb-e-Islami (HeI), the second largest Afghan armed group, conditioned its participation in an eventual peace talks on the fact that the process is driven and led by nationals with no foreign interference, today announced an internal source.

Ghairat Baheer, the movement political affairs head, told The Express Tribune that the Kabul government sent a formal invitation to the group leader and former Prime Minister Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Although he avoided giving an opinion on the matter, Baheer appreciated President Ashraf Ghani gesture. The announcement coincides with the four-nation

(United States, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan) meeting in Kabul on Tuesday to promote peace.

"We have always maintained that war is not the solution to the problem," said Baheer in January when calling for the start of talks to end the conflict.

In an interview with the Pakistani newspaper The Nation on October, Hekmatyar defended dialogue among all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan, but without any foreign power intervention. The Express Tribune said today that the Taliban presented several demands to sit at the negotiating table, including the release of their members.

If we ... (More on P4)...(2)

## New HPC Leadership Formally Begins Work



KABUL - Emphasising the independent status of the High Peace Council (HPC), a government body tasked with negotiating peace with insurgents, the Afghan government leaders on Tuesday said the Afghan peace process enjoyed national and international backing.

Top government officials, including President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer Dr. Abdullah, and noted jihadi leaders attended a gathering held to formally introduce the newly-appointed HPC chairman and other members of the council. Renowned spiritual leader Pir Syed Ahmad Gilani has been appointed as new HPC chairman and former vice president Karim Khalili and former Bamyan governor Habiba Surabi as his two deputies.

President Ghani told the meeting that the government and the people of Afghanistan believed that peace was necessary and ... (More on P4)...(3)

## Int'l Partnerships 'Empower' Etisalat Efforts to Develop Internet of things Solutions

SPAIN - Etisalat Group, the leading telecommunications operator in Middle East, Africa and Asia, is accelerating its work with global partners in the field of Internet of Things (IoT). The foundation of an industry forum and new customer trials in several countries are the latest initiatives announced by the company to develop Narrow Band-IoT (NB-IoT) solutions, which will play a critical role in deploying Internet of Things services.

Narrow Band Internet of Things (NB-IoT) is the proposed global standard that enables mobile operators to build Low Power Wide Area networks. LPWA networks are new types of networks to address a large number of IoT and M2M applications that are limited due to cost, coverage or battery life. LPWA networks will improve the deployment of IoT services for Smart Cities and in industries, such as Agriculture, Utilities and Asset Management and is a market estimated to be worth \$589bn by 2020.

Khalifa Al-Shamsi, Etisalat Group Chief Digital Services Officer, said: "Etisalat ... (More on P4)...(4)

## Iranians Asked for Joint Projects, Assured of Investment Security

KABUL - Iranian entrepreneurs have been invited to launch joint projects with their Afghan counterparts in the conflict-devastated country.

Afghanistan's Commercial Counselor in Iran Abdul Hamid Farhang proposed joint infrastructure development ventures in his country, wrecked by decades of war. Mehr News Agency quoted Farhang as saying that foreign investments were secure in Afghanistan -- a member of the World Trade Organisation. The official cited Iran's efficiency ... (More on P4)...(7)

## Security Forces No More in Defensive Mode: Gen. Murad

KABUL - Deputy Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Murad Ali Murad on Monday said the troops were ready for the spring offensive and they were no more in a defensive mode.

He told a press briefing here that the Afghan forces were fully prepared for future challenges.

He said the Ministry of Defence was pulling out troops from parts of the country to prevent troops' casualties in the upcoming spring offensive.

Lt. Gen. Murad said militants used all their resources in 2014-15 against the country's security forces to show the international community

## Russia to Hand Over 10,000 Ak-47s to Afghan Forces

KABUL - The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) will receive 10,000 Ak-47 assault rifles from Russia on Wednesday (Today) as part of Moscow's efforts to equip and bolster the capabilities of the Afghan troops.

The delivery of the rifles will be done in a ceremony to be organized in military section of the Hamid Karzai International Airport in Kabul.

The Afghan National Security Adviser Mohammad Hanif Atmar and officials from the Embassy of the Russian Federation are also expected to attend the ceremony.

The delivery of the assault



rifles is part of Russia's support to bolster the capabilities of the Afghan security forces to fight the menace of terrorism.

Russian President's special envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir

Kabulov said late in December last year "Russia has been consistently pursuing the policy of providing comprehensive assistance to Afghanistan in the establishment of a peaceful, independent, stable

and self-sufficient state, free from terrorism and drugs." The Afghan government has stepped up efforts to attract the regional as well as global support to equip the Afghan national security forces. (KP)

## Erdogan Urges No Distinction Between Terror Groups



ISTANBUL - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday called on the international community not to make a distinction between terrorist organizations.

"Making distinctions between good and bad terrorist means supporting terrorism," the president said in his opening speech delivered at a meeting on Somalia in Istanbul.

He noted that Turkey does not differentiate between terror

groups like al-Shabab, Islamic State (IS), al-Nusra, the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), Syria's Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD) and its armed wing People's Protection Units (YPG).

He urged all countries to embrace the same point of view for an "effective" counter-terrorism and to stand united against terrorism and countries that support it. Washington's insistence ... (More on P4)...(5)

## Finland to Deport Rejected Afghan Asylum Seekers



KABUL - The Finnish Embassy in Kabul on Tuesday said Finland hoped to conclude an agreement with Afghanistan on the return of Afghan asylum seekers as soon as possible.

In a statement, the Embassy said Finnish Under-Secretary of State Pirkko Hamalainen was in Kabul on Monday and Tuesday (February 21-23) to discuss the Memorandum of Understanding between Afghanistan and Finland regarding the return of Afghans who are not granted asylum in Finland. "Not everyone who

comes to Finland is entitled to protection under the Refugee Convention," the Embassy said in the statement.

Earlier this month, Finnish President Satin Niinisto said that "we must help those who are in distress or being persecuted." "At the moment, however, we cannot help those who are merely seeking a better life or feel that their circumstances and future are difficult in their home countries". In 2015, over 32,000 asylum seekers entered Finland. Among them ... (More on P4)...(6)

## Afghan Migrants, Stalled at Macedonian Border, Sent Back to Athens



ANKARA - Greek police have begun removing hundreds of migrants from a camp at the country's border with Macedonia.

The migrants, most of them from Afghanistan, were placed on buses bound for the Greek capital of Athens early Tuesday, where they will be housed in an army-built camp. Thousands of migrants have been encamped at Idomeni since Macedonia imposed

tighter restrictions on migrants seeking to enter the country.

The deadlock along the Greek-Macedonian border is part of the biggest refugee crisis to plague Europe since World War II. More than one million migrants and refugees, fleeing war and poverty in Iraq, Syria and elsewhere, arrived in 2015, many of them traveling from Turkey to nearby Greece. (VoA)

## Ulema Pledge Support to Polio Vaccination Campaign

KABUL - A number of religious scholars (Ulema) from Afghanistan and other countries on Tuesday announced their support for the eradication of polio in Afghanistan campaign. Delegates attending a two-day conference stressed the



need for a serious campaign to be conducted country-wide and called on government to establish a fatwa center in Kabul - in order to make fatwas on important and certain issues in the country.

"We have reached an agreement that running polio vaccination campaigns is not against Islam and that this campaign should be supported countrywide," said a member of the Afghanistan Ulema Council Samiullah Raihan.

"Also we agreed that families should thoroughly support the campaign and the international community must cooperate with the Afghan government in this regard," he added.

Meanwhile, Public Health Minister Ferozuddin Feroz welcomed the support by religious scholars and said: "This support by you is a good step towards implementing health programs in Afghanistan - particularly for increasing women and children's access to healthcare services and also for eradicating polio in the country."

Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah also attended the session where he called on religious scholars to raise public awareness about polio and other children's diseases during their sermons.

"I praise your two-day work in the session. Now that you return to your villages, it is your duty to help government in implementing the polio vaccination campaign and also to encourage the people to cooperate with the drive," Abdullah said. (Tolonews)