

Quote of the Day

Do right. Do your best. Treat others as you want to be treated
Lou Holtz

Corruption Still a Problem in Afghanistan: MEC

KABUL - An anti-corruption monitoring group said that despite "small signs" of progress in the fight against corruption, Afghanistan's official commitment to effectively address the problem is weakening, eroding public trust in the administration's ability to govern. The independent Monitoring and Evaluation Committee, or MEC, in its half yearly report released in Kabul Thursday, also expressed its concern about the ability of members of President Ashraf Ghani's national unity government, or NUG, to work together to effectively address issues related



to corruption. "I have seen lack of political will, weak state, lots of

impunity, selective justice, not existing system of checks and balances, inefficient in-

stitutions," observed senior MEC member Slagjana Taseva while addressing a news

conference in Kabul. She emphasized the need for strong leadership to improve anti-corruption efforts. "Trust is diminishing" "The government desperately needs to make sure that public trust and confidence are still there on the government's ability to fight corruption and in our conversations we have found that that trust is diminishing," noted MEC chairman Shaikat Hassan. He warned that 70 percent of Afghanistan's budget comes from international assistance and if there is a weakening of the... (More on P4)...(1)

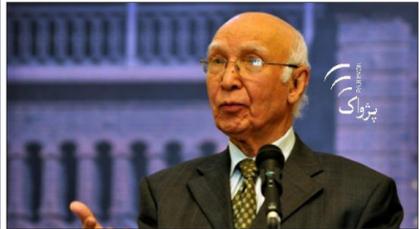
Gen. Dunford Rules of Engagement Pose No Risk to Troops



KABUL - President Barack Obama's rules on the use of force in Afghanistan are putting US troops at risk, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen. Joseph Dunford said on Thursday. Gen. Joseph, testifying before the house appropriations subcommittee, said combat units in Afghanistan had no restrictions in protecting themselves. Self-protection was distinct

from deliberate, strategic military strikes that were orchestrated and approved by higher commanders, the Star and Stripe quoted the general as saying. But Rep. Rodney Frelinghuysen, chairman of the subcommittee, said many lawmakers worried that US soldiers were being put in danger because they were not provided air support and other... (More on P4)...(2)

Aziz Renews Support for Afghan Reconciliation Process



ISLAMABAD - The Wolesi Jirga speaker has called for frequent parliamentary exchanges between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, currently in Pakistan at the head of a lower house delegation, met National Security and Foreign Affairs Advisor Sartaj Aziz in Islamabad late on Thursday. The destinies of Afghanistan and Pakistan were intertwined and the two countries should continue concerted efforts to enhance collaboration, he said. Cordial relations between the neighbours were marked by common religion, geography, history and strong people-to-people contacts, the advisor said. Aziz reaffirmed Pakistan's continued support for long-term peace and stability in Afghanistan through an Afghan-led reconciliation process. The Wolesi Jirga delegation is visiting Pakistan from February 23 to 27 on the invitation of National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq. On Wednesday, the delegation met Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who welcomed the decision on talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban as a positive signal. "We desire a comprehensive and enduring partnership with Afghanistan that contributes to the security and prosperity of the two nations," the premier told Ibrahim. (Pajhwok)

Hanif Atmar

India's Role Vital in Regional Stability



KABUL - National Security Advisor Mohammad Hanif Atmar on Thursday said Afghanistan considered India as a regional power and its role as vital in resolving regional issues. Atmar expressed these views during a meeting with India's ambassador in Kabul Manpreet Vohra at his office, National Security Council (NSC) spokesman Tawab Ghorzang said in a statement. He said Atmar termed India's involvement as essential in resolving regional disputes and thanked the Indian government for its assistance with Afghanistan in military and economic sectors. Atmar urged the Indian government to extend its support for peace and stability in Afghanistan. He said the 6+1 group's efforts were important for stability in Afghanistan. The group formed in 2012 comprises Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, India, Russia, the US and Iran. The grouping is aimed at effectively combating terrorism and bringing peace and stability to Afghanistan. In his meeting with Atmar, the Indian envoy once again reiterated his government's commitment to provide equipment to Afghan security forces and support the Afghan government-initiated peace process. Both sides also discussed a wide range of issues of bilateral interest. (Pajhwok)

AI Report Reveals Widespread Human Rights Violations in 2015

KABUL - Amnesty International (AI) in its annual report revealed widespread human rights violations in 2015 and the organization voiced its deep concerns over the situation in Afghanistan. The report states that insecurity, civilian casualties, violence against women and other criminal activities have considerably increased in Afghanistan. The report said that the Afghan



government has failed to fight crime and bring criminals to justice. "Human rights have been treated as if it's some kind of add-on whereas from an Amnesty International perspective, human rights is an absolute necessity, it's a fundamental prerequisite," said Salil Shetty, Secretary General of Amnesty International. Musa Mahmoodi, a... (More on P4)...(3)

Cordial Ties Central to Peace in Region: Afghan, Pakistani MPs

KABUL - Afghan and Pakistani legislators have called for boosting all-round bilateral cooperation in the interest of durable peace and stability in the region. Members of the National Assembly warmly received Wolesi Jirga Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim and his delegation. Both sides agreed frequent exchanges of visits would strengthen relations between the neighbours. National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq, welcoming the visiting MPs, hoped such exchanges would usher in a new era of improved parliamentary links between the two countries. Afghanistan and Pakistan had seen so many hardships, Opposition Leader Syed Khurshed Shah said. With the passage of time, he thought, relations between the two countries would im-



prove. Defence Minister Khwaja Muhammad Asif said Pakistan was the largest stakeholder in a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan. The future of both countries was inter-linked, he added. Awami National Party's MP Haji Ghulam Ahmed Bilour urged Pakistan and Afghanistan to sit together to resolve their issues. Their peace and prosperity were linked with peace in the region, he believed. Mahmood Khan Achakzai, Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party leader, said the time had come that the leadership of two countries should work seriously for peace in the region. Aftab Ahmad Khan Sherpao, convener of the Pak-Afghan Parliamentary Friendship Group, underlined the need for enhanced people-to-people contacts to strengthen relations. (Pajhwok)

Thousands of Afghan Refugees Want to Leave Germany and Return Home: IOM

BERLIN - Restrictions faced by Afghan refugees in Germany urge them to return to their homeland, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). About one thousand refugees from Afghanistan, residing in Germany, filed applications for voluntary repatriation, Khaama Press Agency reported on Thursday. According to the agency, the number of Afghans willing to return back home is constantly rising. Afghanistan's embassy in Berlin reported that the number of refugees who want to leave Germany has significantly increased over the last few years. As reported by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the main reasons for such trend are several restrictions as well as limited opportunities refu-



gees have to face. Recent reports reveal that many refugees staying in Europe found their life there contrary to their expectations. More and more migrants therefore prefer to go back home, especially given the fact that most of their family members stayed there. Germany and Afghanistan are currently working to help Afghan migrants return home. According to the agency, on Wednesday morning, a group of 125 Afghan migrants was brought to Afghanistan by a chartered plane with the assistance of the two governments. Europe is currently struggling to cope with a massive refugee influx, with thousands of refugees and migrants fleeing conflict-torn countries in search of safety and refuge. EU... (More on P4)...(5)

Pakistan Approaching Taliban Factions for Afghan Peace Talks

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan on Thursday said it is approaching all factions of Taliban and other groups to bring them to negotiating table for the direct peace talks with the Afghan government. The comments came days after Afghan, Pakistani, Chinese and U.S. officials agreed to facilitate the direct talks between the Afghan government, Taliban groups and Hizb-e-Islami by the first week of March. Pakistan will host the talks, according to a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the 4th meeting of the Quadrilateral Coordination Group. "All Taliban factions had been invited to participate through their authorized representatives in the first round of direct peace talks, expected to take place... (More on P4)...(4)

France Promises Scholarships for Nangarhar Students

JALALABAD - France on Thursday promised scholarships for students of eastern Nangarhar province for master and doctorate level besides assistance in various other sectors, an official said. The governor's spokesman, Attaullah Khogyani, told Pajhwok Afghan News French ambassador to Afghanistan Jean Michel Marlaud on Thursday arrived in Jalalabad, the provincial capital, and held a meeting with deputy governor Mohammad Hanif Gardiwal. Gardiwal thanked the French envoy for always assisting high schools in Nangarhar. He told the French envoy that Islamic State and other armed militants had been extensively subdued in Nangarhar and development and other projects in the province faced no challenge and threats. He said in order to counter negative propaganda about the situation in Nangarhar, exhibitions of local products, tournaments of different games, poetry sessions and other similar activities had been carried out to depict the real picture. The deputy governor also demanded special assistance from France with the Nangarhar University and said Nangarhar youth should be facilitated to pursue higher studies in France. Jean Michel Marlaud said he would meet officials of the Nangarhar University, the education department and others... (More on P4)...(6)

Afghan Passport Identified as the Least Powerful in the World

KABUL - The Afghan passport has been identified as the least powerful in the world for the restrictions the Afghans face in terms of visa-free travel, according to an updated index by a London-based consulting firm. The index found Germans held the most powerful passports in the world for third year in row in 2016, according to the index update, cited in a report by Washington Post. A number of the European nations and the United States, Japan and Canada are closely following Germany as the top nations holding the most powerful passports in the world. The only countries listed below Afghanistan are South Sudan and Palestinian territories, according to the index update, with South Sudan being the youngest sovereign state in the world and Palestinian territories less diplomatically recognized by countries in the West. The index update by Henley & Partners attempts to quantify the power of passports based on the judgments of the top passports in the world by the amount of visa-free travel they entitle their owner to. The update by the London-based consulting firm comes as United Arab Emirates (UAE) imposed restrictions on Afghan nationals travel who are mainly heading towards Dubai for business and tourism. The issue with UAE reportedly emerged with the issuance of the new electronic Afghan passports amid concerns that the citizens of the other countries misused the Afghan passports. However, the issue was later resolved as an agreement was reached between the two countries to improve the information quality of the newly issued e-passports. Meanwhile, the demand by Afghans to apply for passports has increased last year with the deteriorating security situation across the country, forcing many Afghans to travel abroad, specifically to the Western countries by risking their lives and travelling through dangerous routes. (KP)