

Quote of the Day

To exist is to change, to change is to mature, to mature is to go on creating oneself endlessly.

Henri Bergson

Mohammad Younus Qanooni

Centralized Political System Not Viable

KABUL - Former vice president, Mohammad Younus Qanooni, on Thursday said that the current centralized political system was not meeting the needs of the country as power has been monopolized within the presidential palace.

With the current system, power has been centralized to the presidential palace and it has increased Afghanistan's political, military and social issues, said Qanooni while addressing a gathering in Kabul.

He suggested the current political system be changed into a mixed-system where a prime minister can tackle executive affairs.

The current political system must change before the next



presidential elections, he suggested. According to Qanooni, currently Afghanistan's legal, judicial and electoral institutions, including the constitution oversight commission, do not have the required freedom. "Confrontation between the

legislative body and the presidential palace over the past fifteen years has taken roots from the same unhealthy system (centralized political system), you are aware that the judicial system does not have independence because of this system," said Qanooni. Qanooni said that certain forces meddled during the drafting process of the constitution. "The current presidential system is not viable within Afghanistan's political, social and religious contexts," he said. He said that not having a prime minister post in Afghanistan has always led to problems between the presidential palace and the national assembly. "One ... (More on P4) ... (1)

NATO Stresses Need for its Presence in Afghanistan

KABUL - Heads of NATO member countries have said their presence in Afghanistan is needed and that they will continue their cooperation with the country. They also asked all regional players to help with the Afghan security situation.

"In terms of NATO's response to counter terrorism, I believe that NATO is already doing a lot to support counter terrorism efforts. First being present and active in Afghanistan, then supporting a number of activities in the Mediterranean and the Middle East and we have to understand that counter terrorism isn't just a physical fight against terrorism; counter terrorism has a number of levels and facades and NATO is contributing to many of them and will contribute even more," said General Petr Pavel Chairman of NATO Military Committee.



He said: "We are working on bringing these efforts more closely together, to give them more coherence and thus more effectiveness. NATO will continue supporting activities especially in training, in preparation of specialists of the countries mostly affected by terrorism and give them more local capabilities to be effective in this endeavor."

He said it is important to work ... (More on P4) ... (2)

HPC Regional and ISI Interference is Obstructing Peace Talks



KABUL - The Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) Thursday said interference by regional countries and Pakistani military intelligence service (ISI) are hindering the Afghan peace process.

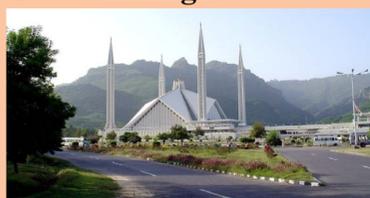
Pakistan's intervention is the root cause of the ongoing war in Afghanistan, the HPC said. "We are extremely concerned about Pakistan's involvement, Pakistan must convince them (Taliban) to talk to us, I can say to you that there is something going on behind the scene," said HPC member Mohammad Ismail Qasimyar. ... (More on P4) ... (4)

NUG Urges Trump Govt. to Put Pressure on Pakistan

KABUL - Afghanistan's National Unity Government (NUG) on Thursday asked the incoming U.S government to increase pressure on Pakistan in order to get them to stop backing insurgent groups that continue to wage war against Afghans.

The spokesmen for President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah on Thursday warned Pakistan that their current policy would have serious repercussions for Pakistan and Afghanistan, suggesting Islamabad should review its stance on terrorism. ... (More on P4) ... (5)

Pakistan Concerned About "Foothold of Terrorist Outfits" in Afghanistan: FM



ISLAMABAD - Pakistan on Thursday expressed serious concerns about the grip of several terrorist groups in Afghanistan. "Increasing foothold of various terrorist organizations and outfits due to persistent instability in Afghanistan is a growing concern for not just Pakistan but other countries in the region and beyond," Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman Nafees Zakaria said.

Zakaria told his weekly briefing that a number of independent studies and assessments have established that the factors impeding reconciliation and stability in Afghanistan are internal to Afghanistan.

To a question about remarks by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani that those who were behind the recent attacks "live, operate and recruit in Pakistan," he rejected it ... (More on P4) ... (6)

Ghani Seeks Haq's Support for Peace Negotiations

KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani has asked a top Pakistani cleric to help convince the Taliban to resume peace parleys with his administration.

Ghani made the request in a telephone call to Maulana Samiul Haq, chief of his own faction of the Jui-S leader who is widely branded as the father of Taliban.

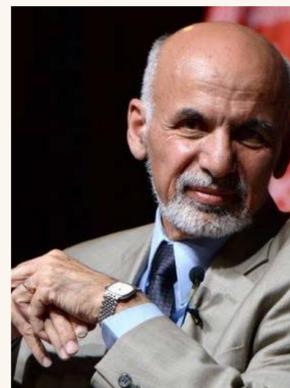
Afghan Ambassador Dr Omar Zakhilwal, who met Haq at his residence in Akora Khattak, arranged the phone conversation that lasted 36 minutes.

JUI-S spokesperson Maulana Yousaf Shah quoted Ghani as saying that many Taliban leaders, who had studied at the Darul Uloom Haqqania in Akora Khattak, respected Haq as their

teacher. The president urged the cleric to use his clout with the Taliban and persuade them to resume the long-stalled peace dialogue. He hoped the JUI-S leader would work for ending the bloodshed in Afghanistan.

"Haq told the president that peace in Afghanistan and Pakistan was a must and it was the responsibility of the unity government to play an active role in ending conflict," the party spokesman told reporters. The Afghan people, government and Taliban were all responsible for driving foreign invaders and ending the occupation of their homeland, the religious scholar remarked.

Haq reportedly said Afghanistan would have to resist pressures from external powers, particularly the US, to achieve a political settlement.



Last month, Zakhilwal met senior Pashtoon political leaders in Islamabad and wooed them into cooperating ... (More on P4) ... (3)

HIA Slams Taliban as an Ignorant, Fanatic Group



KABUL - Attacks on the civilian population have no justification and are against Islamic principles, said Amin Karim, a top aide to Gulbudin Hekmatyar, the leader of Hizb-e-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) party on Thursday.

In response to a question regarding the lifting of UN sanctions against Hekmatyar, Amin said that the group's leader would soon arrive in Kabul whether the UN removes sanctions against him or not.

He called the Taliban a fanatic and ignorant group and condemned attacks on civilian targets. "Hizb-e-Islami views bombings in public places such as mosques, hospitals, offices as an un-Islamic act. Hizb-e-Islami was the first party which denounced the Taliban as a

fanatic and associated and ignorant party," said Karim. Hekmatyar's aide went on to say that the continuation of UN sanctions against Hizb-e-Islami's leader was not the reason for Hekmatyar's delay in returning to Kabul.

"The Hizb-e-Islami leader and Hizb-e-Islami party are resolute about the coming of its leader in Kabul and no issue will change the decision," he said.

In response to this, CEO Abdullah Abdullah's spokesman Mujiburrahman Rahimi said: "Of course, when Mr. Hekmatyar and his companions enter Kabul, they will abide by the laws of Afghanistan just like other citizens of Afghanistan."

Referring to the recent peace accord signed between Hizb-e-Islami ... (More on P4) ... (7)

Obama Makes Farewell Call to Afghan Leaders

KABUL - The Afghan government says President Barack Obama made a farewell phone call to President Ashraf Ghani and Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah congratulating them on progress fighting corruption and offering his condolences for recent attacks.

Mohammad Haroon Chakhansuri, the Afghan president's spokesman, said Thursday that Obama spoke of the close cooperation between the two countries, which have been battling a Taliban insurgency since the 2001 U.S.-led invasion.

The Taliban have gained ground in recent years. A series of attacks last Thursday killed at least 58 people, including five diplomats from the United Arab Emirates.

Ghani's spokesman quoted him as



saying Obama had played a "fundamental" role in the "good relationship" between the two countries. (AP)

Afghan Journalists Face More Threats as Violence Spreads

KABUL - Afghan journalists say they are facing more risks than ever as both insurgents and unscrupulous government officials increasingly threaten, assault, and even murder reporters.

At least 13 journalists were killed in Afghanistan last year, making it the deadliest year on record for Afghan media, the Afghan Journalists Safety Committee (AJSC) said on Wednesday.

"This is an ugly, worrying and

serious trend, and if certain actions are not taken, 2017 could be worse," said AJSC head Najib Sharifi.

Journalists are increasingly in the firing line of a conflict between the Western-backed government and Islamist militants like the Taliban, who threaten several major cities. Besides the 13 deaths, the press group documented at least 88 incidents of assault, intimidation, abuse, ... (More on P4) ... (8)

53 Insurgents Eliminated in Past 24 Hours, Claims MoD

KABUL - Fifty-three insurgents were killed and 30 others injured in different provinces during the past 24 hours, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said on Friday.

The militants suffered the casualties during operations in Nangarhar, Kapisa, Paktia, Paktika, Uruzgan, Zabul, Kandahar, Farah, Kunduz, Baghlan, Balkh and Helmand provinces.

A statement from the ministry said 21 Haqqani network and Daesh fighters including foreigners were killed in the Khak-i-Afghan district of Zabul. Another three rebels were wounded.

In the Choorra district of central Uruzgan province, the security forces killed six Taliban and wounded seven other, the ministry said. Five fighters were killed and 13 wounded in the Maiwand district of Kandahar.

The ministry said that a similar operation in the Achin district of eastern Nangarhar province lead to the elimination of five members of the Islamic State.

In a clash with security personnel in the Tagab district of Kapisa province, three armed insurgents were killed and five injured. Six suspects were detained.

During raids operations in Paktia and Balkh province, two militants were killed and two others wounded. ... (More on P4) ... (9)

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