

Quote of the Day

Peace is an unstable equilibrium, which can be preserved only by acknowledged supremacy or equal power.

Will Durant and Ariel Durant

President Ashraf Ghani

Next Talks to Discuss Taliban Demands

KHOST CITY - President Ashraf Ghani on Wednesday said the second round of peace talks due in the next two weeks would focus on Taliban's demands and problems.

Ghani, who arrived in south-eastern Khost province days after a suicide car bombing killed 33 people, was talking to local officials here.

Mubariz Zadran, the Khost governor's spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News that the president was accompanied by a high-level delegation on his visit to the province.

He was accompanied by Borders and Tribal Affairs Minister Gulab Mangal and a number of his advisors and officials, he said.

Ghani participated in a memorial service for the 33 people killed in the suicide attack last Monday.

The service was held in the Sheikh Zayed University where local officials, tribal elders and family members of the victims were present.

Governor Hakam Khan Habibi assured the president that the people of Khost were united in supporting the government and he was committed to serving his people and improving stability.

The governor also urged the president to equip security forces with advanced equipment, improve the Ghulam Khan Port, build a standard airport in the province and resolve the issue of electricity.

The president, who announced financial assistance for families of the victims, extended his deep condolences to them.

Ghani pledged to work systematically for development of Khost province which he called as strategically important. (More on P4)...(1)



Watchdogs Worry as Hospitals Fill with Civilian Casualties

KABUL - Increasing civilian casualties from conflict in Afghanistan has prompted admonishments from watchdog groups like the United Nations and Human Rights Watch (HRW), but also pleas for greater respect for life from the doctors and medical teams working to save the innocent Afghans who have been victimized.

HRW officials have said that civilians are paying the highest price for the war between the Afghan government and Taliban insurgents, but that militants are disproportionately responsible for the casualties - estimated at 70 percent. At the Emergency Hospital in Kabul, doctors say the number of civilians wounded from the conflict has increased in 2014, with 300 injured transferred to hospital in just the

past three months. Shamila Jawid, a patient at the Kabul Emergency Hospital, says she lost her two legs during an insurgent attack on a vehicle carrying attorneys in Kabul. "I don't know if they enjoy death," Jawid told TOLONews. "I was an attorney and was doing my duty. Now I have lost both my legs, and what did they gain?"

Samiullah, a wounded child from Khost province, says she was just playing outside her house when a rocket exploded and almost killed her.

"In the hospital we only meet those wounded by war, just people that were wounded by bullets, by shells, by mines and everything related to war," a medical coordinator named Michela paschetto said. A number of the patients (More on P4)...(2)

Murree Meeting Highlights Taliban Divisions

KABUL - Last week's first face-to-face talks between Afghan government and Taliban negotiators in Pakistan have thrown into bold relief differences within the militant movement leadership, defence analysts say.

Although both Islamabad and Kabul hailed as a positive development the meeting in Pakistan's tourist resort of Murree, rebel commanders reacted cynically to the talks between Afghan High Peace Council and Taliban representatives.

A string of analytical writings regarding the intra-Taliban rifts appeared in the media following the negotiations in the Urumqi city of China and Pakistan's capital Islamabad. (More on P4)...(3)

UN Report Details Rapid Increase of IDPs, Civilian Casualties



KABUL - A new United Nations (UN) report reveals that the number of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) in Afghanistan has dramatically increased since the collapse of the Taliban regime in 2001.

At least one million Afghans, representing three percent of the country's population, have been forced to leave their

homes due to violence and insecurity, according to the report. Some 40 percent of Afghanistan's current IDPs are said to now live in the north-eastern parts of the country.

The Afghan government and NATO coalition's war against the Taliban has waged on for well over a decade, and has (More on P4)...(4)

AAF to Get MD 530F Helicopters with Rockets

KABUL - The Afghan Air Force (AAF) MD 530F Cayuse Warrior helicopters will be equipped with air-to-surface rockets in a bid to further boost the close air support capabilities of the air force, it has been reported.

The US army has awarded a contract worth \$13.2 million to add the seven-tube M260 launcher for the 70mm (2.75 inch) rockets to United States to the Afghan Air Force, the IHS Janes defence weekly reported quoting US Department of Defense (DoD).

The report further added 19 helicopters in total will have the rocket system added to the Mission Equipment Package (MEP) that already features (More on P4)...(5)

Mullah Omar Backs Peace Talks As Legitimate

KABUL - Taliban supremo Mullah Mohammad Omar has said face-to-face talks and choosing peaceful pathways to end Afghanistan's occupation "are not prohibited in Islam."

"If we look into our religious regulations, we can find that meetings and even peaceful interactions with the enemies is not prohibited but what is unlawful is to deviate from the lofty ideals of Islam and to violate religious decrees," Omar said in a statement on the eve of Eidul Fitr, which marks the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

Omar's statement comes days

after Taliban representatives and Afghan officials held first direct talks in Pakistan and agreed to meet again after the fasting month.

Though no one from the Taliban's Qatar office attended the one-day talks in Murree near Islamabad, the Pakistani government said the talks had Taliban leadership's approval and that more Taliban leaders would join the next round of talks.

However, the Taliban leader did not mention the Murree talks in his statement published on the Taliban's website. "Concurrently with (More on P4)...(6)

Scotland Sends Soldiers to Help Train ANSF

EDINBURGH - Hundreds of Scottish soldiers have been deployed to Afghanistan to help train the Afghan National Security Forces who are lonely fighting terrorists on the ground since January this year.

According to a BBC report, the troops are from 2 Scots battalion of the Royal Regiment of Scotland who will serve for seven months under the ongoing British military support mission "Operation Toral" in Afghanistan.

Lt Col Graham Wearmouth, of 2 Scots Battalion is quoted by BBC as saying that the role of the newly deployed forces is different from before. "You've got to look at what went before and yes, it is not (More on P4)...(7)

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