

Afghan-US-India Trilateral Meeting Next Month: Kerry

KABUL - Secretary of State John Kerry has said a trilateral meeting of US, Indian and Afghanistan will be held next month on the sidelines of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

Addressing a press conference with Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj in New Delhi on Tuesday, Kerry said the purpose of the meeting was to enhance cooperation among the three countries on various issues.

A decision on holding the tripartite meeting was not against any country, but was only aimed to bring peace and stability to Afghanistan, the US secretary explained.

He asked Pakistan to bring culprits behind Mumbai and



Pathankot attacks to justice. The US was ready to re-launch its military campaign against the Taliban if the Afghan government demanded so. "We cannot and will not make distinctions between good and bad terrorists," Kerry said. "Terror is terror no matter where it comes from, (or) who carries it out."

India blamed Pakistan for both attacks. Pakistan is trying suspects in the Mumbai attacks, in which 166 people died. Investigations into this year's airbase attack have so far been inconclusive.

In New Delhi for strategic talks with his Indian counterpart, Kerry said Pakistan had made progress in the fight against extremism in recent months. However, he urged Islamabad to push harder against militants on its soil. (Pajhwok)

CEO's Office Calls for Swift Implementation of Accord



KABUL - According to reports, President Ashraf Ghani and the Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah have held a face-to-face meeting and agreed to implement parts of their agreement, but Abdullah's office on Tuesday called for the swift and full implementation of the political agreement - based on which the National Unity Government was formed in 2014.

The CEO's office noted that the Afghan public are fed up with conferences and meetings and that it is the right time for government to take practical steps and deliver on the promises it has made to the nation.

Reports indicate that at the third meeting, Abdullah and Ghani agreed on a number of important issues - including bringing reforms to the electoral system, rollout of electronic national identity cards, appointment of members of the constitution amendment committee and the appointment of the remaining members of the political agreement oversight committee.

"Discussions to implement the four issues were finalized at the recent meeting [between government leaders]. People were assigned to work on implementation of the issues," said Abdullah's spokesman Mujib Rahman Rahimi.

He added: "The view of the

Chief Executive [Abdullah Abdullah] was to leave the single-seat constituency issue and work on it in proper time in order to overcome the problem and prevent another crisis. Teams from the two sides are working on this issue. We hope to finalize technical discussions in order to move the electoral reforms issue to the next stage."

Meanwhile, election observers said that the recent amended draft for the election law approved by the cabinet was not practical.

"There is a huge gap in the views of the two leaders. It is difficult for them to reach a consensus until the end of National Unity Government," head of Transparent Election Foundation of Afghanistan, Mohammad Naeem Ayubzada, said.

The political agreement oversight committee also raised questions over the NUG's intention to take practical steps in order to implement the accord.

"We evaluate the agreement in three dimensions; we assessed it, outlined more items on it, and offered it to the people, media and the leaders. We also highlighted their problems; however, recent developments in this respect nourished our hopes," said Mohammad Natiqi, head of the committee. (Tolonews)

Afghan, EU Officials Call for Distance Between Police & Politics



KABUL - Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah, the European Union (EU) Special Representative to Afghanistan Franz-Michael Skjold Mellbin and Afghan Minister of Interior Affairs Taj Mohammad Jahed Wednesday urged the Afghan security forces and the Afghan National Police (ANP) to refrain from getting involved in politics and instead pay heed to their duties.

Talking on the police's role in security, the CEO confirmed government's failure in addressing certain issues faced by police, but renewed his commitment to supporting soldiers serving the nation.

"We have not done our work properly, but you (police) should be away from political issues and ignore what politicians are saying, you should conduct your duties with impartiality and we (government) will support you," said Abdullah.

They said that the politicization of the security forces, mainly the police force, has been hindering efforts to make the Afghan police neutral.

Meanwhile, the commander of Rolute Support Mission (RS) in Afghanistan General John Nicholson has raised deep concerns over a surge in casualties among the police officers, saying that in July alone up to 900 security personnel were killed.

Nicholson stressed the need for an educated police force and called for more women to be hired on the force.

"Infact in the month of July, there were over 900 deaths in the Afghan army and in the Afghan police, this is almost a brigade of soldiers or police that we should not forget for one minute, the sacrifice that they are making," said Nicholson.

On Wednesday, Afghan and foreign officials gathered in Kabul to hold discussions on the future of the Afghan police force and to evaluate ways that could help accelerate moves to make police neutral.

As the timeline for the end to the EU police mission (EUPOL) in Afghanistan looms, the Afghan minister of interior said the mission's end could have implications for the conventional... (More on P6)... (2)

21 Suspects with Links to Quetta Shura Held in Kandahar



KABUL - More than 20 individuals having links to Taliban's Quetta Shura have been detained in southern Kandahar province, the spy service claimed on Wednesday.

The detainees were involved in multiple incidents of violence in different parts of the country, the National Directorate of Security (NDS) said a statement. It added the 21 men, involved in terrorist activities, suicide attacks, target killings, assaults on security forces' convoys and other subversive activities, were part of four networks.

According to the statement, all 21 suspects received military training on the other side of the Durand Line and had confessed to their crimes. The Taliban have not commented yet on the NDS claim. (Pajhwok)

ADB Approves \$31.37m Grant for Salang Corridor Upgrade

KABUL - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has approved a \$31.37 million grant to prepare the Salang Corridor rehabilitation project, the bank said on Wednesday.

The grant includes \$15.92 million contributed by the Government of Japan through the ADB-administered Afghanistan Infrastructure Trust Fund (AITF), an ADB statement said. AITF is a donor-financed fund established in 2010 that aims to improve livelihoods of the Afghan people through infrastructure development.

The Salang Corridor rehabilitation project is aimed to improve efficiency and safety of movement of goods and people in Afghanistan and across Central Asia "The Salang Corridor is a critical part of Afghanistan's transport infrastructure," said Ko Sakamoto, Transport Econ-



omist with ADB's Central and West Asia Department.

He said the ADB assistance would support efforts to study the feasibility of three alignment options for the rehabilitation and upgrade of the Salang Corridor, to complete the detailed engineering design and prepare the project for implementation. Built in 1964, the existing 2.7-kilo-

meter Salang tunnel and associated connecting roads, collectively known as the Salang Corridor, is in a dilapidated state and dangerous to travelers because of inadequate ventilation, poor lighting, lack of modern safety features, and a failing road surface due to a lack of regular maintenance and rehabilitation. The Salang Corridor is the... (More on P6)... (1)

India Responds to Afghanistan's Request to Equip Afghan Forces

NEW DELHI - India has responded positively to a request by the Afghan authorities to equip the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), it has been reported.

The Afghan Ambassador to India, Dr. Shaida Mohammad Abdali, has said the request was made by the Afghan Army Chief of Staff General Qadam Shah Shaheem during his visit to New Delhi.

He told RFE that Gen. Shaheem met with his Indian counterpart and other officials of the Ministry of Defense of India on Tuesday to share the demands of the Afghan army.

According to Abdali, the government of India has accepted to deliver the last Mi-25 gunship to Afghanistan and help the Afghan government with the repair and maintenance of some helicopters in Afghanistan's



inventory. Abdali further added that the Indian authorities agreed to send a technical team to Kabul in the near future to assess the requirements of the Afghan forces.

India has remained among the top contributors in rebuilding of Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban regime and has spent around \$2 billion in various sectors in the country.

Afghanistan received three Mi-25 gunship helicopters from India

late in December last year which was the first delivery of sophisticated military equipment to Afghanistan in a bid to help improve the capabilities of the Afghan forces.

In the meantime the top US General in Afghanistan General John Nicholson has welcomed the support by India and said New Delhi should further help with the equipment process of the Afghan forces. (KP)

Efforts in Afghanistan Paying Dividends: CENTCOM Chief

WASHINGTON - America's efforts in Afghanistan continue to pay dividends, the head of US Central Command (CENTCOM) claimed on Tuesday.

"We, along with our coalition partners, have made tremendous investments in that country over the last 15 years," Gen Joseph Votel told reporters at a Pentagon news conference.

"The Afghans today are in the lead and they are taking the fight to the enemy through their sustainable security strategy," the general said.

The Afghan forces were doing well while dealing with tough challenges in places like Helmand province, demonstrating resilience and the capability of defending their sovereign spaces, he remarked.

Meanwhile, the train, advise and assist and counterterrorism efforts in Afghanistan were also proving effective, to



include its fight against the ISIL affiliate and the Islamic State in Khorasan.

"During a recent visit to Afghanistan, I spent time with our train, advise and assist teams, and with the corps commanders leading the Afghan forces.

"Across the board, I was extremely impressed by their skill, their determination and their extraordinarily high level of resilience," Votel said.

The commander said the recent combined operations against the Islamic State in Khorasan had resulted in destruction of 25 percent of their forces.

With President Obama's decision to keep 8,400 US troops in the country through 2017 and the additional powers that had to target the Islamic State, the Afghans would continue to build on the momentum achieved to date, Votel concluded. (Pajhwok)

Chaman Border: ACCI Seeks Tit-For-Tat Action Against Pakistan

KANDAHAR CITY - Indignant over the continued closure of the Chaman border crossing, Afghan traders on Wednesday urged Kabul to sever transit trade links with Pakistan if the Friendship Gate continued to stay shut.

Pakistan closed the key border crossing in the south earlier this month after some Afghans burnt a Pakistan flag at Vesh, on the Afghan side of the frontier. Several rounds of talks on the issue have since fizzled out.

As a result, Afghan traders claim suffering losses of millions of dollars. They slam the move a flagrant violation of all principles -- something that has once again strained relations between the neighbors.

On Tuesday, another flag meeting between Pakistani and Afghan border officials in Chaman failed to break the impasse over re-opening of the border crossing. Pakistani officials said burning of the flag as an unacceptable act.

The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) deputy chief said negotiations between the two sides were still ongoing. But the Spin Boldak-Chaman Friendship Gate remained closed, he deplored.

Khan Jan Alokozay, in an exclusive interview with Pajhwok Afghan News, lashed out at Pakistan for setting harsh conditions for lifting the blockade. If accepted, the terms would harm Afghanistan's sovereignty, he said.

He did not elaborate on the conditions, but well-placed sources say Pakistan has demanded an apology from Afghanistan over the torching of its flag and guarantees that such incidents would not recur.

Additionally, Islamabad also says the Friendship Gate will be opened as a formal border, with military ceremonies taking place every morning.

Alokozay said they had approached President Ashraf Ghani and the ministries of foreign affairs and commerce on the issue. ACCI has been told that Kabul is trying to find a solution to the problem through diplomatic channel. On a daily basis, he complained, Afghan entrepreneurs had been suffering massive losses that dealt a huge blow to the country's economy.

In the given situation, Alokozay noted Afghanistan had only two options: Looking for alternative trade routes or mobilizing the global fraternity against Pakistan for flouting bilateral trade agreements.

He explained President Ghani had asked airlines to airlift fresh fruits to India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). The official hailed the presidential recommendation as a positive step.

However, he voiced concern over the trucks laden with perishable commodities like cooking oil, milk and medicine. "I don't see the fate of these containers stranded across the border," the ACCI deputy chief said. Importers have to pay \$200 daily per container. Alokozay called on the government to halt Pakistan's transit trade with Central Asia through Afghanistan. "It's unacceptable that our items perish and Pakistan continues to have normal transit trade.

"Our annual bilateral trade volume with Pakistan amounts to \$3 billion. This trade we can have with other countries as well. We may face problems for a month or so, but the situation will return to normal and we will not have to seek favours from anyone."

At a meeting on Tuesday, ACCI agreed with traders on doing no business with Pakistan as long as the Chaman... (More on P6)... (3)