KABUL - President Ashraf Ghani through a decree has amended the rank of generals to the interior and defence ministers on the occasion of Afghanistan’s 97th Independence Day.

The decree read out at a gathering marking the country’s 97th Independence Day in Kabul said the promotions had been approved.

The decree also said families of the fallen security personnel would receive additional aid packages on the occasion of Eidul Aza. Speaking at the gathering, President Ghani thanked the security forces for their sacrifices, saying every service member and officer of the armed forces was protecting the honour of the Afghans who stood behind the security forces. He said the Afghan… [More on P4, 16]

On World Humanitarian Day, Joint UN and OIC Visit to Afghanistan Kicks Off KABUL - At the start of a three-day visit to Afghanistan, high-level officials from the United Nations and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) on Friday commenced World Humanitarian Day in Kabul urging increased international partnerships to address the root causes of humanitarian needs, reduce communities’ vulnerability to disasters and raise awareness of Afghanistan’s protected humanitarian zones.

In his address at the event, Afghanistan’s Interior Minister Lt. Gen. Abdullah Habibi said 60 police and security officials had also been approved. Defence Minister Lt. Gen. Abdullah Habibi and Interior Minister Lt. Gen. Taj Mohammad Jalil were promoted to the rank of general. In addition, appreciation letters and medals for 450 defence and security forces had also been approved in the decree.

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Concerns Raised over Increase in Child Soldiers FAIZABAD - Public concern is mounting over the rising number of teenagers and child soldiers joining the ranks of public uprising groups in Badakhshan province. Numerous children under the age of 15 have been taken as fighters in many battles. Mahbubullah is one such fighter, who has participated in many battles. Mahbubullah said that he has lost many friends during the past that 70 percent of the insurgents but does not get paid to do it. He said the insurgents behead them or cut off their hands or feet, “I want peace and security for my country,” he said. Mahbubullah said that he has lost many friends during the past 15 years, including significant numbers of local police and residents in Badakhshan province and that they fear a backlash by the Taliban if the situation prevails.

They said that one year after the Taliban took control of Kunduz city, government… [More on P4, 12]

We Salute Your Courage, Hard Work, Kerry Tells Afghans WASHINGTON - US Secretary of State John Kerry on Thursday said Afghanistan continued to make progress towards a more democratic and secure future. “We stand with you - if you ever feel your courage your hard work and your commitment to build on it in the years ahead,” Kerry said in his Independence Day message.

Kerry extended congratulations to the Afghans and best wishes to the people and government of Afghanistan on behalf of President Obama and the American people on the occasion of Afghanistan’s 97th anniversary of independence. Though the many challenges Afghanistan has faced and the many sacrifices endured, there is much to celebrate, Kerry said.

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