Tajikistan Concerned about Terrorists in Northern Afghanistan

Tashkent - The Turkic foreign minister on Tuesday welcomed Afghanistan's call for unconditional peace talks with the Taliban.

"We welcome the call of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani for starting negotiations with the Taliban without preconditions," Mevlut Cavusoglu said, while addressing the Tashkent Conference on Afghanistan, in the Uzbek capital.

In February, the Afghan president offered an olive branch to the Taliban, who have waged a brutal insurgency in the country since the last 17 years. Ghani said a ceasefire would be enforced, a political framework would be established, and steps will be taken to free Taliban prisoners.

"We want all the groups in Afghanistan to recognize the Afghan government, endorse peace and become part of legitimate politics," Cavusoglu added.

He emphasized the need for participation of regional and international partners in the reconciliation process.

Cavusoglu also vowed Turkey's support for a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, noting his country's $1-billion financial support since 2001.

Speaking at the same conference, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov also voiced Turkey's support for a stable, secure and prosperous Afghanistan, noting his country's $1-billion financial support since 2001.

Construction of the Afghan section of the 260-kilometer transmission line between Uzbekistan's Surkhan region and Pul-i-Khumri, the capital of Baghlan province, will start in June.

The Asian Development Bank has pledged $30 million for the project, which is expected to cost $150 million. Uzbekistan will chip in with $32 million, according to Enertrans.

Uzbek energy Chief Executive Uglukht Multanov said as saying the transmission line would help Tkashkent export up to 24 million kilowatt hours to Afghanistan daily.

President Ashraf Ghani's visit to Tashkent in December lent the project fresh impetus. A month later, his Uzbek counterpart endorsed a cut in the rate of power exports to Afghanistan (Pajhwok).

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