Pakistan for Swift Return of Afghan Refugees

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan has urged the global fraternity to help accelerate the process of voluntary repatriation of Afghans to their homeland. Speaking to a UNHCR delegation in Islamabad on Thursday, Minister of State and Frontier Region Sheikh Afzal Ahmad Khan pasado a policy on the voluntary repatriation and management of Afghan refugees. 

“Pakistan considers voluntary repatriation as the most preferable viable solution for Afghan refugees and is adhering to the principles of voluntarism and graduation,” he said.

Over the past four decades, he added, Pakistan had hosted Afghan refugees well and this hospitality has been unprecedented in human history. However, Afzal voiced concerns at the slow pace of repatriation, saying only 1,250 registered refugees had voluntarily returned home in 2018. He said the Afghan situation also remained in evidence in the current year, when 672,000 returned to Afghanistan from March 1 to May 28.

The UN delegation was informed of the validity of Proof of Registration (PoR) cards for Afghan refugees and the biometric agreement would expire on June 30. In consultation with stakeholders, the Ministry of SAHER will submit a summary to the federal cabinet for extending the validity of PoR cards to May 15.

Afzal said most of Afghanistan’s second or third generation refugees had remained in Pakistan, adding the Ministry of SAFRON will submit a report to the federal government to maintain Pakistan’s full support from the UN agency in accelerating the repatriation process for Afghan refugees (Pajhwok)

India Delivers Pair of Mi-24 Helicopters to Afghan Forces

KABUL - The Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Vinay Kumar handing over the first pair of Mi-24 attack helicopters to the Acting Defence Minister Afghanistan Abdullah Khalid in Kabul. India had presented First Mi-24 attack helicopters to Afghanistan in December 2015, the Indian Embassy in Kabul said in a statement.

India was expected to supply four Mi-24 attack helicopters to Afghanistan by July, with the deliveries falling almost a year behind schedule. People familiar with developments said in March, as quoted by Hindustan Times in March 2018, Afghanistan, Belarus and India had inked a deal for 24 Mi-24 helicopters. Belarussia was to upgrade the helicopters, which were to be paid for by India, the former Afghan envoy, Shaida Baluch, had said in March.

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18 Taliban Killed, 5 Wounded in Helmand Offensive

LASHKARGAH - Eighteen Taliban militants have been killed and five others wounded during security operations in southern Helmand province, an official said on Thursday.

Maj. Abdul Qadir Habibzai, spokesman for the 211th Corps, told Pajhwok Afghan News Afghan forces launched operations in Gashin, Sangin and Lashkar Gah districts in late Wednesday.

He said during the nighttime operations 18 militants were killed and five others wounded.

Habibzai, a resident of the Mandalay district of Nad Ali district, said a clash happened between Afghan security forces in the area late on Wednesday night but he did not have exact casualty figures. The Taliban have not commented. (Pajhwok)

Nangarhar Court Sends 10 Men up to 25 Years in Jail

KABUL - Eight policemen were killed and 11 others injured during the Taliban attack in southern Helmand province, an official said on Friday.

Nasir Rahimi, spokesman for the Ministry of Interior (MoI), said 15 militants attacked forces in the Tangai locality of Lashkar Gah, the provincial capital.

Rahimi added security forces and foreign forces conducted airstrike in the area in which some insurgents were killed.

“Reports regarding the killing of policemen in foreign forces areas during the Taliban attack were being verified by a joint investigative team and the outcome would be shared,” he said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said they attacked checkpoints of police forces and killed eight policemen by firing a blast on a convoy in which two policemen were wounded.

Mujahid said two policemen were injured in attack in the Taliban territory. He said later on foreign forces conducted airstrike in the area in which 3 policemen, including four commanders were killed.

Local officials in Lashkar Gah said a trilateral pact to supply the refurbished Mi-24 helicopters was not provided but did not provide the details. (Pajhwok)