Multinational Meeting on Afghan Peace Process Begins in Moscow

The Moscow meeting on Afghan peace process kicks off on Friday with delegations from High Peace Council (HPC), the Taliban and 12 countries in attendance.

Afghan Peace Council Tells Talibans It Is Ready for Talks - RIA

MOSCOW - Members of Afghanistans High Peace Council, a body overseeing peace efforts, met Taliban officials at a conference in Moscow on Friday and repeated Presidents Ask Allah Ghani's offer of peace talks without preconditions.

For the first time, the meeting of regional officials on ways to end the war included a Taliban delegation, as moves towards achieving a political settlement pick up.

"We discussed the subject of direct talks with the Taliban and asked them to choose the place and the starting time," said Habib Tahat, High Peace Council spokesman, according to Russias RIA news agency.

The meeting, which underlines Russias desire to be involved in any settlement in Afghanistan, took place as U.S. Special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad prepared for a fresh round of talks with Taliban officials.

Sima Samar Wants to Retain AIHRC Commissioner Slot

KABUL - Earlier, the HPC delegation has left Kabul for Russia to participate in the peace summit. Sayed Rezamullah Tahat, the HPC spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News the four-member group of the HPC would participate in peace talks Russia is hosting in Moscow.

He said the HPC delegation has been leading by Haj Fazl Ahmed Sohaili accompanied by Halil Bibi, Abdul Kabher Osheen, and Masodi Attaullah Sahain.

Sayed Rezamullah Tahat added the HPC delegation would participate on behalf of the Afghan government and people in the summit.

The Taliban have also expanded attacks on Trinkot district, one of the most secure districts in Ghazni province. On Wednesday morning, launched group attacks from a few directions on Jaghori district, sources said.

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U.S. Peace Envoy to Visit Afghanistan, Qatar, Pakistan, UAE

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad called on the Afghan government and the Taliban to organize authoritative negotiating teams, and has been encouraged to see that both parties are taking steps in that direction.

The United States remains committed to a political settlement that results in an end to the war and to the terrorist threat posed to the United States and the world.

KABUL - The Afghanistan Grand National Alliance, a coalition of major political parties, on Thursday announced it would soon be introducing a presidential candidate.

The alliance's leadership council met in Kabul and announced if they lost the upcoming presidential election, they would create a prime ministerial post and the president and the prime minister would have three deputies each.

Massoud said the Constitution allowed two deputies to the president, but they would consider these deputies and as many deputies for the prime minister and for this.

The survey's findings were released at a conference titled "The peace process in Afghanistan" in Moscow gathering.

Zabihullah Mujahid said a high-ranking delegation from the Taliban's Qatar-based office would attend the meeting.

Omar Sadar, a researcher at Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies, said people's views about the peace process and assessment of decisions in this regard during the past 17 years were part of the study.

Sima Samar Wants to Retain AIHRC Commissioner Slot

KABUL - The joint working group of civil society coalition has introduced 11 people for membership of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC), including Sima Samar, the commission's incumbent head and another sitting commissioner.

According to a joint statement released by the joint Civil Society Working Group and AIHRC on Wednesday, they would consider the list of eligible individuals.

However, it did not explain whether current members of the AIHRC are in the list of eligible individuals or not.

But a copy of the list obtained by Pajhwok Afghan News included names of three deputy ministers, two deputy ministers and reformed members of the AIHRC.

KABUL - The Ministry of Defense (MoD) on Thursday said reinforcement troops have been sent to Jaghori district in Ghazni province and Baghlan's Dasht-e-Ghar District to repel Taliban attacks in the two regions.

Over 16 Taliban fighters were eliminated in Dasht-e-Ghar in Baghlan, said MoD officials.

"We cleared four villages from the Taliban in Baghlan's Dasht-e-Ghar District as a result of our military operations by the security forces and now we are advancing towards other villages," said MoD spokesman Ghulam Ahmad Jawad.

This comes amid rumors, on social media, that the Taliban have taken over Kherghani district of Ghazni province.

The defense ministry has sent a battalion of Afghan commandos and special forces to Baghlan to tackle the Taliban offensive.

Reports from the war zone in Baghlan indicate that dozens of families have fled their homes to save their lives.

"We took back our equipment from the Taliban and are undertaking operations in other villages in Dasht-e-Ghar District," said Baghlan police chief Faramuzdin Saei.

"We call on our government to provide security on a permanent basis," said a resident in Baghlan.

The Taliban have also expanded attacks on Torkham city, the center of Urghun province, sources said.

The Ministry of Interior (MoI) however was not ready to comment on the Trinkot reports.

This comes after Taliban, for the first time on Wednesday morning, launched group attacks from a few directions on Jaghori district of Ghazni province.

Clashes are still ongoing in Jaghori, officials said.

Following the attack, Ghastris MPs in the Wolesi Jirga (the Lower House of Parliament) accused government, especially security departments, of being lax.

Afghan Peace Programs in 17 Years: A Failure - Survey

KABUL - A new survey report released on Thursday said leadership of the peace process was not with the Afghans and that a majority of Afghans' people lacked awareness about the reconciliation process.

The survey's findings were released at a conference titled "The peace process in Afghanistan" in Kabul.

The survey by the Afghan Institute for Strategic Studies was completed in 10 months during which 200 people were interviewed in any of the country's 34 provinces as well as Taliban militants.

Omar Sadar, a researcher at Afghanistan Institute for Strategic Studies, said people's views about the peace process and assessment of decisions in this regard during the past 17 years were part of the study.

Analysis and assessment Sadar said his assessment and analysis showed all peace related programs regarding Afghanistans during the past 17 years particularly before 2014 had been a failure.

He said during this (\textit{...More on P4,4})