Khalilzad to Facilitate Kabul-Taliban Peace

**Veteran diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad has the ability to execute his mission of facilitating reconciliation between the Afghan government and the Taliban, says the US secretary of state.**

KABUL - In a memo to staff, Mike Pompeo said he was confident Khalilzad’s ability to achieve the goal. Khalilzad has been appointed as US special representative for Afghan reconciliation.

On Friday, according to US media reports, Khalilzad would lead US efforts to support, facilitate and participate in a power process between the government in Kabul and the Taliban. The memo quoted as saying: "There is one better suited for this duty than an expert diplomat like ambassador Khalilzad, who was born and raised in Afghanistan, and has previously served as the US ambassador to Afghanistan, Iraq, and the United Nations."

**IEC Close to Finalizing Biometric System for Election Day**

The Ministry of Communication and IT (MCTI) invites all eligible and qualified companies to take part in bidding process of Hardware Requirement for NIXA project with contract No: MCTI/97/ICB/G-04. Interested companies can reach the bidding documents from formal website of MCTI (www.mcti.gov.af) or visit the Procurement directorate office at 14th floor of MCTI building. The deadline for submission of offer will be on Wednesday Oct 24, 2018 and the bid opening meeting will take place at tendering address on Oct 24, 2018.

Bid insurance of project is USD 4000. Late and electronic offers would not be accepted.

**Drought-Hit Residents Seek Humanitarian Aid**

NELLI - A number of residents in central Daikundi province are concerned at the drought-like situation and lack of drinking water, saying they have no option but to leave their homes if the problems are not addressed. Daikundi is among the provinces facing a serious drought. The residents of Minnor, Keti, Nawamen, Kajan and other districts are in a desperate situation. The drought has also led to lessen in terms of agricultural produce and livestock. In Minnor, 120 families from Dali Nadak, Wairal, Dahou Qil, Watania and other villages have been forced into leaving their homes and residing on the bank of Helmand River. Mohammad Jam Jalawi, one of the displaced persons from Minnor, told Pashto: Afghan News the residents had been in a pitiable situation.

"The weather has become cold and the displaced people need winter clothing and fuel," he said. Abdul Qadir Haideri, the Miramor district chief, also said 70 percent of people of the district were badly hit by the drought. An initial survey shows 30 percent of people have left their homes. He added that 250 children under 15 have moved to and 30 pregnant women were among the displaced. **More on P4**

**MPs Seek End to Heading Ministries in Acting Capacity**

KABUL - The Wolesi Jirga on Saturday slammed the government for long refusing to replace acting ministers, insisting the upper house for a trust vote. Currently, several ministries including the foreign affairs, petroleum information and cultural departments have been led by acting ministers. The Red Crescent Society (RCS) is also being headed by an acting head.

Some acting ministers have been in office for the last two years and others for the past five months against the law that only allows the maximum of two months in office for officials working in an acting capacity.

Wolesi Jirga member from southern Kandahar province Mohammad Naim Laii Hamoonzai told today's session that the acts of some acting ministers were illegal because they were in office beyond the legal period. He said the government should introduce an option to nominate the lower house for a vote of confidence to replace acting officials. **More on P8**

**IEC to Finalize Biometric System for Election Day**

The IEC initially decided to announce the final results of the upcoming parliamentary elections in October and presidential elections in April next year. However, it also referred the killing of 13 journalists on the job this year - the highest number in the world - and 23 aid workers who lost their lives, the 27 who were badly injured and 74 affected. "Afghanistan is undergoing a terrible drought, the worst in many, many years and now over 5 million people are in need of emergency relief," said Larmon, noting that in the past week alone, more than 600,000 children were fed.

**Iran Offers Alternative Route for Boosting India-Afghan Trade**

ISLAMABAD - Iran can be a viable alternative trading route for India to send its goods to Afghanistan as Pakistan is not ready for restoration of India-Afghanistan trade route using its land.

At present, Pakistan allows Afghan trucks carrying goods meant for India, but India is not allowed to send its goods via Pakistan. Pakistan says before allowing India to use the land route for trading with Afghanistan, technical and strategic issues connected to transit trade should be resolved first.

Afghanistan insists that India must be part of the transit trade agreement that Pakistan signed with Iran. "The Taliban are running the government. They make the decisions," Muhiuddin Mehdi, a lawmaker from northern Kunduz province, said.

"In April 2016 Iran, Afghanistan and India finished a transit trade agreement in the same way as Pakistan and India agreed to establish a land route for India to send its goods to Afghanistan from Pakistan," said Pakistan's foreign minister.

India insists that Pakistan must allow Indian goods to be transported to Afghanistan. Trade between India and Afghanistan is quite small and Afghanistan is not a significant market for India.