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## Karzai lends his weight to peace jirga

By Zubair Babakarkhel - 13/01/2008 - 19:19

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KABUL, Jan 13 (Pajhwok Afghan News): A peace caravan from eastern provinces, at a meeting with President Hamid Karzai here on Sunday, pleaded for negotiations with dissident groups in the interest of stability in the war-ravaged country.

Formed by governors, lawmakers and tribal elders from four eastern provinces in Jalalabad some three months back, the jirga won stout support from the Afghan president for its initiative aimed at ending the ongoing wave of violence.

Members of the jirga presented to the president the recommendations they finalised at the end of two-day talks at the Governors House in Nangarhar earlier in the day. Karzai welcomed the formation of the peace forum as a new message and glad tidings while assuring to lend his weight to the enterprise.

Its a very good step which I wholeheartedly endorse, he observed, acknowledging the need for peace in the country. The president asked his interlocutors to take the message that peace in Afghanistan meant peace in the world to the neighbouring countries. You lead the peace procession and we will follow you where you go.

Reading out the recommendations, Maulvi Sadiqullah said residents of the eastern zone had always worked for guarding national sovereignty. The jirga will also include members from other provinces to make the endeavour a success, according to one of the proposals floated to the Afghan leader.

Speaking on the occasion, Nangarhar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai observed: The jirga deserves full support not only from President Karzai but also from the entire global fraternity. He was optimistic the caravan would be able to achieve its objective.

At the meeting, all cabinet members including Energy and Water Minister Ismail Khan were present to hear complaints of tribal elders from the eastern zone. They identified a deficient power-supply system as a lingering problem that needed immediate attention of the government.

Former Nangarhar University teacher Muhammad Anwar Sultani launched a broadside against Ismail Khan, who was slammed as a non-professional and incompetent minister.

The Energy and Water Ministry is not the kind of portfolio that should be leased out to Ismail Khan, remarked Sultani, who demanded of Karzai to replace the minister with a competent man. He stressed the issue of brazen corruption at the ministry should be addressed on a war footing.

Translated & edited by S. Mudassir Ali Shah

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