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Peace talks with Hekmatyar-led HIA in final stage

5/3/2106

Peace talks between the Afghan government and the Gubadin Hekmatyar-led Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan (HIA) are about to enter the final stages and the sides are expected to reach an agreement in less than two weeks, the High Peace Council (HPC) said on Tuesday.

First a two-member HIA delegation arrived in Kabul about one and a half months ago and initiated peace talks with the Afghan government and then a few days ago another three-member HIA delegation led by HIA offices head Qazi Mohammad Hakim Hakim reached the Afghan capital.

Advisor to HPC on foreign affairs Mohammad Ismail Qasimyar told Pajhwok Afghan News on Tuesday that the peace talks with the HIA delegation had gone successful.

He said the peace talks were about to reach a conclusion because the HIA had initiated the talks with honesty and goodwill. "Considerable points in the talks are settled and the little bit differences have extensively neared a settlement."

Qasimyar said it was expected that President Ashraf Ghani and HIA leader Gulbadin Hekmatyar sign a peace accord between the Afghan government and the HIA in one or one and a half week.

He said information about the text of the peace agreement would be unveiled once the document was readied for signing and both the sides were agreed to it.

Recent reports said talks between the two sides were ongoing on removing Hekmatyar and other HIA members from the UN blacklist, releasing HIA prisoners and paving the ground for the return of Afghan refugees.

Qasimyar did not share information about any contentious points but said the sides were not far from reaching an accord.

Nearly two weeks back, Afghan peace negotiators said the government was committed to releasing HIA political prisoners but through a commission in order HIA prisoners could be identified.

Qasimyar said the Afghan government had contacted the United Nations to call for removing the name of Hekmatyar and other HIA leaders from the UN Security Council blacklist.

He said the United States had also put Hekmatyar and other HIA members on its blacklist but it was the High Peace Council's official request to the international community to show goodwill in this regard.

“When peace is reaching with the HIA, it becomes meaningless to keep names on blacklist,” Qasimyar said, adding they were expecting a positive response from the UN about the removal of names of HIA men from its blacklist.

He said the international community had recognised the peace talks as Afghan-led and Afghan-owned and the international community should respect Afghanistan's decisions in this regard.

Contact could not be established with the HIA delegation, but the delegation had previously claimed considerable progress in the peace talks with the government.