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Pajhwok

MPs oppose switch to a federal system

By Abasin Zaheer

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KABUL - Some Wolesi Jirga members, calling the Berlin meeting a plot to divide Afghanistan, on Wednesday said a federal system was not in the country's interest.

Two days ago, ex-vice president Ahmad Zia Masoud, Junbish-i-Millie party chief Abdul Rashid Dostum and Hezb-i-Wahdat leader Mohammad Mohaqiq met some US lawmakers in Berlin, the capital of Germany.

The Afghan politicians were urged to initiate efforts at converting the presidential form of government into a federal system. The US congressmen asked them to use their influence in this regard.

But a State Department official said on Wednesday Congressman Dana Rohrabacher and other US lawmakers who met the Afghan leaders in Germany did not represent the Obama administration.



He said the Berlin session that conferred on a federal system of government in Afghanistan was a privately arranged meeting, which drew angry reaction from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul.

A member of the lower house of Parliament, representing Kabul province, called the participation of Afghan leaders in the Berlin talks a betrayal of the people. Sher Wali Wardak said a federal system was not in the country's interest.

"Afghans have been divided by their enemies in the name of religion, tribes and language. Under such circumstance, a federal system will be poisonous," the lawmaker remarked. He warned if the system was established, the country would be divided into northern and southern zones.

Wardak believed if politicians and parties wanted to change the current system, they should consult the government. He said a new form of government would destroy what had been achieved over the past decade.

Another legislator, Mohammad Yousaf Sabir, said the meeting was unlawful because the Interior Ministry had not been taken into confidence. "Under the prevailing circumstance, a federal set-up would mean dividing the nation."

He said a federal system needed a strong central authority to control provinces, but in Afghanistan, the central government was not that strong. "People who are afraid of peace talks with the Taliban are looking for such a regime," he claimed.

The Berlin meeting participants say peace talks with the rebels will succeed only when all parties to the conflict are involved in the process. They insist the endeavour would remain incomplete until Afghans opposing the reintegration drive have their say in the deal.

Reports say peace talks between the US and Taliban are underway and the insurgents will soon have a political office in Qatar.

A lawmaker from central Daikundi province, Asadullah Sadati, said participation in the Berlin session was a personal matter for the politicians.

He believed a federal system based on a national consensus would be beneficial. He said the proposed regime was effective in many countries in the region.