

## JICA's Strategy to Help Modernizing Uzbekistan's Energy Sector Operator

TASHKENT - Construction of modern power-generating combined-cycle gas turbines is one of the main elements of the strategy of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) in the energy sector of Uzbekistan, the agency told Trend on Dec. 7. According to a JICA representative, the agency's strategy is based on an integrated approach, where various assistance tools, such as loans, technical assistance, gratu-

itous assistance, training and staff development, complement and enhance efficiency and effectiveness. "For example, we have plans to build modern combined-cycle gas turbines (CCGT), introduce advanced methods within credit projects, create and equip a training center to prepare CCGT operators, conduct advanced training courses in Japan at modern energy facilities," the JICA rep said. (Trend)

### (1) Russian, US...

in the framework of international efforts to facilitate the launch of a direct dialogue between the opposing Afghan parties," the statement said.

Both Moscow and Washington are pushing to reach negotiated peace in Afghanistan.

Zalmay Khalilzad is making his second tour in the last two months. In November, he visited several Arab countries where he met with Taliban representatives. Before arrival to Moscow he had a series of meetings in Kabul. (AA)

### (2) Peace in...

environmental protection and preservation standards.

"It is with this spirit that we are engaged in various connectivity projects in the region including the Chabahar Port project and direct India-Afghanistan Air-Freight Corridor, which have been successfully operationalised."

India would continue to build on the gains made, the diplomat promised. "We will continue to work with all those who share this spirit of helping Afghanistan without conditions."

She continued: "While all of us advocate that there is no military solution to the issue, yet the Taliban -- aided by their supporters -- continue to pursue military operations perpetrating violence and destruction, like the recent attack in Kabul and several other parts of Afghanistan."

These offensives were planned and launched by those who were harbored in safe havens in the neighborhood, she alleged, claiming these sanctuaries had, for years, provided safety for the dark agendas of ideologically and operationally-fused terror networks like the Taliban, Haqqanis, Daesh, Al-Qaeda and its proscribed affiliates such as the Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed.

Despite mounting challenges of security, peace and development, the envoy noted, there had also been considerable progress over the last 17 years - especially in promoting education and health-care, protecting the rights of women, children and the marginalised; securing lives; improving governance and reforms; generating livelihood and in moving Afghanistan towards self-reliance, she said.

The enthusiastic participation of the people of Afghanistan in the parliamentary elections last month despite terrorist violence, reflected their faith in democratic governance and rejection of forces that fomented terror and violence, she observed.

Next year's presidential elections would strengthen democratic institutions further, she hoped, saying the gains demonstrated the indomitable courage and determination of Afghans.

"We only hope that the courage of Afghans can be matched by that of international community in doing what needs to be done on its part to bring peace to this war-torn-country." (Pajhwok)

### (3) Khan Pleads...

China rather than the one "where Pakistan is treated like a hired gun".

Speaking to The Washington Post, he said: "I would never want to have a relationship where Paki-

stan is treated like a hired gun -- given money to fight someone else's war. It not only cost us human lives, devastation of our tribal areas, but it also cost us our dignity."

Khan also scorned dismissed US' allegations that there were safe havens for terrorists in Pakistan, saying the security forces had briefed him on the matter and told him that they had asked Washington "time and time again" to point out where the sanctuaries were.

Peace in Afghanistan was in Pakistan's interests, te premier said, promising that Islamabad would "try its best to put pressure on the Afghan Taliban" in order to bring them to the negotiating table. (Pajhwok)

### (4) U.S. Should Use...

revive direct talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. Following the issue, some Afghan parliament members said the Afghan people are backing the efforts of the international community particularly, the United States in the Afghan peace process, adding that the talks should lead into the end of the Afghan war.

They stressed the U.S. should prevent inferences of the countries - seeking interest in the ongoing conflict in Afghanistan.

"Peace has various aspects. Daesh and Taliban cannot make peace. How can we make peace with a Taliban member who is a Pakistani national? Ignoring the policy of Pakistan towards Afghanistan will not be a simple issue," said MP Zakaria Zakaria.

"The parties who want to have a peace plan, all should support a single plan. Scattered plans for peace talks will not have outcomes," said MP Aryan Yun.

Amir Khan Yar, Second Deputy Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga (the Lower House of parliament), meanwhile, said that the U.S. should use every possible means to ensure lasting peace in Afghanistan.

"Everyone wants peace. the United States and the International community should increase their efforts for reaching peace. They should prioritize peace in Afghanistan because Afghan people want peace more than anything else," he said.

The MPs stressed that the continuation of war has frustrated the people and that if the U.S. does not make use of the opportunity being provided for ensuring stability in Afghanistan, Washington's 17 years of efforts will be failed in the country. (ATN)

### (5) UN Urges Continued...

security forces have inflicted heavy losses on the Taliban and other transnational terrorist networks.

Recent developments in the context of the Afghan peace process provide hope, he stressed, pointing to talks with the Taliban, a three day ceasefire and an Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) conference in July which denounced war and left "no grounds of religious justification for the war" as positive steps forward. He said the draft "exemplifies the international community's commitment to improve the situation on the ground" and highlights the direct link between regional economic cooperation and peace.

## China to Increase Its Imports from Pakistan

BEIJING - China is confident that its imports from Pakistan will show a reasonable increase in the coming year, following the outcome of Prime Minister Imran Khan's recent visit to Beijing. The PM's visit was highly productive for enhancing mutual exchanges in the business sector. It was agreed that the two sides will find out new avenues of bilateral cooperation in the economic sector

that helps to overcome the existing trade deficit in their bilateral trade, officials said here on Saturday. It is hoped that in the year 2019 there will be more and more interaction between the business communities of the two countries to get increased Pakistan's trade to China. It was a most encouraging factor that Pakistan and China have agreed to trade in their local currencies in an effort to reduce

dependence on the US dollar for increasing their business activities. The currency swap arrangement (CSA) between the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) and People's Bank of China (PBOC) had already been extended for a period of 3 years in respective local currencies. It will be most facilitating for the Pakistani traders to sell their products in the Chinese market. (Pakistan Today)

The representative of Germany, who introduced the draft, said the preeminent concern in Afghanistan is the fragile security situation. The only path towards a sustainable resolution to the crisis is an Afghan led and Afghan owned peace process. He said the draft calls on all parties to the conflict to recognize their responsibility to enter direct peace talks without preconditions.

Explaining his country's position, the representative of the Russian Federation called for a recorded vote as the draft "failed to account for current realities and reflect the collective approaches of the international community to find a settlement in Afghanistan". The draft ignored Moscow's concerns and as such he could not vote in favour of the text. Stressing that the situation in Afghanistan is deteriorating due to the activities of certain States, he regretted that the draft ignored the regional threat posed by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL/Da'esh).

Throughout the debate speakers lauded recent parliamentary elections as a step towards the consolidation of democracy but warned of escalating violence across the country.

"Insurgent attacks and coalition air strikes have resulted in civilian casualties," said Pakistan's representative, calling for a negotiated political settlement to the conflict. "The global community has remained steadfast in its support for the Afghan people," she said, adding that Pakistan has suffered from the situation in Afghanistan. The presence of foreign forces, which gave an impetus to extremist recruiting, is one of the underlying causes of instability in the country, said Iran's representative. "That's why we have never believed that such forces have contributed to Afghanistan's peace and stability," he said, stressing that Iran's support for draft resolution must not be misinterpreted as according any support for the continued presence of foreign forces in that country.

A delegate from the European Union said there have been internal reforms in many areas, but they need to be translated into visible progress, contributing to a solid democratic and peaceful society. Such a society must respect human rights as well as the rule of law and be conducive for economic development.

The representative of Belgium called on the Government to hold orderly, inclusive and credible presidential elections in 2019 to build on the successes of parliamentary polls. To pursue inclusiveness within Afghan society, he said Belgium contributed €2 million to the Afghanistan country office of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women).

The common theme that emerged throughout the debate was the assertion that peace initiatives will only succeed if they are Afghan-led, with delegations calling on the Taliban to participate in unconditional talks.

The representative of the United States said that an inclusive peace in Afghanistan will benefit all Afghan men and women, accelerate the country's economic growth

and ensure that its territory is no longer exploited by terrorists. He called on the Taliban to commit to a peaceful outcome and appoint an authoritative negotiating team. "Peace in Afghanistan is possible", he said, and the international community must seize this opportunity. (Pajhwok)

### (6) Saikal Underlines...

road map aims for a peace agreement that will uphold the constitutional rights of all citizens, especially women," he said, calling for regional support to the process.

Afghanistan's location in the heart of Asia has led to vested interests, aimed at meddling and interference, which benefit nobody, Mahmoud Saikal, Afghanistan permanent representative at the UN has said.

"Violence has brought untold suffering and devastation for our people," he asserted, pointing to a "new era of meddling" following the end of Soviet occupation. Despite its troubled past, Afghanistan has made progress in becoming self reliant and the current draft resolution on the situation in the country "exemplifies the international community's commitment to improve the situation on the ground".

He said Afghan security forces have inflicted heavy losses on the Taliban and other transnational terrorist networks.

"The Taliban have failed to capture any province or city and assert control anywhere in the country."

"We have focused on security sector, civil service and fiscal reform, improved governance and anti corruption," he noted, adding that such measures strengthen the rule of law. He said this year's draft resolution highlights the direct link between regional economic cooperation and peace. Afghanistan looked forward to working with international partners to advance cooperation in the fields of security and social and economic development. The year 2001 - when countries converged in Afghanistan to defeat international terrorism - signaled that cooperation and collaboration serve the interests of all.

"It is imperative to regenerate and solidify consensus for the goals at hand," he said, calling for closer coordination by all stakeholders to advance peace, security and prosperity in the country. (Pajhwok)

### (7) IMF to Give...

uncertainty during the electoral cycle compounded by a devastating drought are clouding the outlook.

"The authorities' macroeconomic policy mix maintaining fiscal and external stability with low inflation and a flexible exchange rate is appropriate going forward in view of the many challenges facing the country.

"Fiscal policy should focus on sustainability considering risks to revenues and grants and limited financing options. Fair and sustainable domestic revenue mobilization for development needs while protecting pro-poor and pro-growth spending remains a priority.

"Public financial and investment

management should benefit from the newly adopted supportive laws. Policy initiatives should consider good global practices in consultation with the IMF and the international partners.

"Continued financial sector reforms are critical for banking sector stability. Strengthened crisis preparedness, strict monitoring of weak private banks, and state-owned commercial banks' reform are priorities. The restoration of the central bank's balance sheet is on track and should continue, while the recovery of stolen Kabul Bank assets should be reigned.

"The anti-corruption agenda, including criminalizing corruption and adopting a law on asset declarations by public officials, has advanced, and needs rigorous enforcement to build confidence. "Strong program implementation demonstrated by completion of this fourth review remains vital to the success of the reforms fostering inclusive growth in a difficult political and security environment. Continued support of the donor community is critical for Afghanistan's successful transition to self-reliance. The IMF stands ready to continue to assist Afghanistan through policy advice and capacity development." (Pajhwok)

### (8) Tashkent Eyes...

called for materialisation of Pakistan-Afghanistan-Uzbekistan Trilateral Transit Trade Agreement to remove trade barriers and bring huge benefits to all parties. (Pajhwok)

### (9) Work Resumes...

should be completed 100 percent in accordance international norms," said Qazizada.

The dam has the capacity of reserving 45 million cubic meters of water, two megawatts of power and the capacity of irrigating 13,000 hectares of land.

The project worth \$117 million, Qazizada said.

"Because of the speed and development of the work to finish the work of this dam early, we work 15 hours in two times, which is 10 hours from the day and five hours from the night," said Alexander Franchuk representative of an Azerbaijani company, which works on the project.

Meanwhile, security officials in Herat said government forces have ensured the safety of the project by establishing many checkpoints in various parts around the area.

"We are doing our best. So far, we have not faced with any problems or security incident in the area," said Mohammad Arif, Commander Pashdan Protection Unit.

The construction of the dam was stopped three years ago due to some certain reasons which so far have not been clarified by the Ministry of Energy and Water. However, officials of the ministry recently said that insecurity was one of the main reasons for a pause in the construction work of the project.

Work on the project was in flux for four years before it was stopped in 2015. The Energy and Water Ministry's officials said that almost 30 percent of work on the project has been completed so far. (Tolo news)