

French DIY Retailer to Open Branch in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - French DIY retailer Leroy Merlin wants to open a branch in Uzbekistan, Trend reports via Uzbek media. The company announced it plans during the Uzbek-French forum, where the parties discussed prospects for cooperation in several areas, including energy, logistics, engineering and production

of building materials, cosmetics, electronics and more. Nicolas Ducret, deputy general director of CCI France Russie, noted that the investment climate in Uzbekistan is improving, with the result that French companies began to see the country as a potential place for business. One of them is the large DIY re-

tailer Leroy Merlin. Representatives of the company already were in Uzbekistan last year. Violaine de Villemeur, the French ambassador to Uzbekistan, said it was planned to hold a week of the French economy in Uzbekistan with an exhibition of companies at the end of March. (Trend)

Turkey Tells U.S. Not to Leave Power Vacuum in Syria Withdrawal - Report

ISTANBUL - Turkey's defense minister told Pentagon officials there must not be a vacuum of power during the withdrawal of U.S. forces from Syria, state-owned Anadolu news agency reported on Saturday. A senior U.S. administration official said on Friday Washington would leave about 400 U.S. troops split between two Syrian regions, a reversal

by President Donald Trump that could pave the way for U.S. allies to keep troops in Syria. "We reminded our partners that there should be no vacuum of power in any way during the withdrawal," Defense Minister Hulusi Akar told Anadolu, describing his talks in the United States with acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan. (Reuters)

North Korea's Kim: I Don't Want My Children to Bear Burden of Nuclear Arms

HANOI - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un told the U.S. secretary of state he did not want his children to live with the burden of nuclear weapons, a former CIA officer involved in high-level diplomacy over the North's weapons was quoted as saying on Saturday. Kim made the rare personal comments to Mike Pompeo during a

visit to the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, in April last year to lay the groundwork for the historic first summit between the North's leader and U.S. President Donald Trump in June in Singapore, former CIA official Andrew Kim said, South Korea's Yonhap news agency and the Wall Street Journal reported. (Reuters)

US Killing Iranian Patients with Sanctions, CNN Confirms

TEHRAN - Ali only had two hours to save his baby's life. He careened through traffic and sped along highways to an east Tehran government pharmacy. When he saw some 800 people queued outside the facility, he dropped to his knees. Like him, they were waiting to obtain state-funded medications.

"I cried and screamed, begging people to let me get through," Ali -- whom we have not fully identified for security reasons -- recalls. Eventually, he skipped the line and returned with the medicine in time for his one-year-old daughter, Dory, to recover. The incident happened just as Iran's landmark nuclear deal

with six world powers led by the US was being signed in 2015. It was a moment when Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had promised Iranians an easier life, free of medicinal and food shortages, and where desperate scenes such as Ali's outside the pharmacy would become a thing of the past. (Press TV)

(1) Afghans to Elect...

of the country and deserved peace and stability.

Youth representatives Mohammad Ibrahim Ebrat and Shagufa Noorzai hailed President Ghani's decisive stance against powerful individuals, reforms, peace, transit trade, economic policies and water management strategies and appreciated his achievements in these areas.

The youth gifted a shawl to the First Lady and suggested that the president should name a state medal after Malika Surya and confer it on women who served the country extraordinarily.

They also asked the President to pay attention to the development of almond farming in Zabul, wheat in Kandahar and water in Helmand and agriculture in Uruzgan province.

The president welcomed the youth of the Loy Kandahar and dubbed them as the country's valuable asset.

The president promised investment in water management and increasing the price of water flowing to neighbouring countries. He said a Turkish company would soon start work on the Kajaki Dam to increase water storage level.

He said resources had been made available for the Dahla Dam in Kandahar and studies of other dams were underway. In near future around 600 hectares of land would be brought under irrigation, through which the country would become self-sufficient in wheat production.

Ghani said the country's economy never grew with foreign aid, but through national programmes and utilization of own resources.

"I agreed the world for peace in the country, but can the Taliban convince Pakistan, drug smugglers and terrorists to accept peace and stability in the country," he said.

He stressed that the people of Afghanistan would elect their president, not Moscow, Tehran or Islamabad. (Pajhwok)

(2) Afghanistan...

"necessary measures to address the matter at hand in an effective manner".

This is Afghanistan's second letter to the United Nations in a week. The first time was about a planned meeting between Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan and Taliban's representatives in Islamabad. In the letter, the Afghan government said the meeting "undermines" the

Afghan peace process and "violates Afghanistan's national sovereignty". Taliban called off the meet saying they are unable to travel due to UN and US travel restrictions on them.

"The nature of these violations mainly includes persistent shelling of Afghan territory, particularly in districts and villages of Kunar and Nangarhar provinces; violation of Afghan air space by Pakistani military aircrafts, as well as construction of military posts, barbed wire fence and barriers inside Afghanistan's territory, most recently in Spin Boldak district of Kandahar," Nazifullah Salarzai, Deputy Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to United Nation, said in a letter to the UNSC on February 22.

Afghanistan said the cross-Durand Line violations date back to 2012 but have increased in frequency since 2017.

According to the letter, during 2012 to 2017 period, 28,849 artillery shells were fired into Afghanistan by Pakistan resulting in the death of at least 82 people and injuring 187 others.

Since 1st January 2018, the number of violations by Pakistan in Afghanistan stands at 161 which include firing 6,025 artillery shells into Afghan territory.

The Afghan government also exposed the policy of the new Pakistan government led by Imran Khan to UNSC.

"What we have seen is nothing but actions that translate to the continued violation of the action plan," Salarzai said in the letter, recalling the September 2018 visit of Pakistan's Foreign Minister Shah Mahmud Qureshi to Kabul during which Islamabad reiterated its commitment to implement the Afghanistan Pakistan action plan.

Afghanistan Pakistan Action Plan for Peace and Solidarity (APAPPS) was agreed by former Pakistan government under former Prime Minister of Pakistan, Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, and the Afghan government for peace between the two countries.

It also included a commitment to avoid territorial and aerial violations. (Tolo news)

(3) Taliban Optimistic...

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid spurned news reports that Mullah Baradar would not join the meeting due to internal differences.

Baradar had authorised a team of Taliban negotiators to hold negotiations talks with US envoys, Mujahid said. (Pajhwok)

(4) US Backs...

Taliban to agree with that team on a roadmap for peace.

Khalilzad tweeted: "We also agreed that any final agreement must guarantee that the Afghan soil is never used by international terrorists against any country. Also discussed a potential regional framework to coordinate efforts for peace and deter spoilers."

The biggest challenge is to start an all-inclusive dialogue that means the Taliban on the one side and the government, political leaders, civil society and women on the other side, according to Khalilzad.

While stressing an agreement needed between the Taliban and the government, he said: "We are looking for a formula to set across the table with each other. This is the biggest challenge now."

About the US presence in Afghanistan, Khalilzad insisted it was aimed at helping the country to stand on its feet and supporting it in the fight against terrorists.

He went on to explain: "We don't want permanently to be based in Afghanistan. With regard to the post-peace government, we would like to have a positive legacy left behind and a good relation with future Afghanistan."

The special envoy extolled Turkey's support for the peace process in Afghanistan, saying both the US and Afghans were grateful to Ankara.

"Turkey has done a lot in Afghanistan. We are grateful for Turkey's support," he told the state-run news agency "The Afghans have a special attachment to Turkey," he added. "They are also grateful for Turkey's role." (Pajhwok)

(5) Danesh Warns...

Afghan government will remain fruitless," Danish added.

Danish's remarks expressed after the US and Taliban have met for four times in absence of government over the Afghan peace and the fifth round is scheduled for February 25 in Qatar. Also, early in February, a number of Afghan politicians met Taliban representatives in Moscow in absence of government of Afghanistan.

Danish also warned the Afghan politicians and said if they do not stay united in the peace process, the armed groups in support of other countries will misuse the chance.

Danish said Taliban is a group that "in cooperation with other international terrorist groups

have killed thousands of Afghans" and that the Afghan government is fighting against the group for defending the values of the country.

"Taliban is not only a Mujahid group but is a group that wants war and they in cooperation with international terrorists have killed thousands of Afghan people and our fight against them has been for defending the values," Danish added.

Danish said the Afghan government is ready to talk with the Taliban adding that the group should first stop fighting and accept ceasefire without any precondition and then propose their demands in logical talks.

Danish went on to say that preserving of the current system, the Constitution, press freedom, freedom of expression, women's rights, human rights and other civil achievements will be government's red line in the peace talks.

He mentioned that a delay in the upcoming presidential elections and establishing of an interim government are against the interest of Afghans and that they will not help in ensuring a sustainable peace in the country. (Tolo news)

(6) Afghan Women...

She alleged the Foreign Ministry officials had provided wrong information to the Presidential Palace about the women's participation in the Doha talks.

"The women wanted to attend the talks in Doha and raise their voice for their rights, but some problems blocked their way."

Foreign Ministry official responsible for international conferences, Asela Wardak, who is also member of the High Peace Council, said the Presidential Palace had directed the authorities concerned to facilitate the issuance of visa to women for participation in the Doha meeting.

"The women themselves were late in their apply for visa. The problem lies with the women because Thursday and Friday are off days in Kabul and Saturday and Sunday are off days in Qatar, but still efforts are underway to get visas for the women." (Pajhwok)

(7) Kabul-Kandahar...

passengers, vegetables and fresh fruits. Our protest is still ongoing," he said, adding protest would continue until a clear and satisfactory response from the government, he added.

Rumours have been circulating on social media that President

Ashraf Ghani had decided to convert a number of districts into provinces. However, the government has not comment in the regard so far. (Pajhwok)

(8) First Afghan...

connected with India by using Chabahar Port," he said.

He said President Ghani will travel to Nimroz province on Sunday to inaugurate the first export cargo of Afghanistan to be sent to India through Chabahar Port.

Chabahar Port is a key trade port, providing Afghanistan with direct sea access.

In May 2016, India, Iran and Afghanistan signed an agreement on the establishment of a Transit and Transport Corridor among the three countries using Chabahar Port as the regional hub for sea transportation.

In February last year, Iran said it had agreed to lease operational control of Chabahar to India for 18 months and in June, India's Union Minister Nitin Gadkari said India is trying to make Chabahar fully operational by 2019. (Tolo news)

(9) Jawzjan Children...

live in an environment of satisfaction if peace was restored. She urged militants to join peace process.

Bahara, 8-year-old, wished a prosperous and peaceful Afghanistan. "I request you to renounce conflict and ensure peace so that everyone can live happily."

Maryam Yousafi, head of the institute, said the event was aimed to promote peace and end war in the country. "We launched the programme for children to send messages to the people to work for peace," she added. (Pajhwok)

(10) Floods Play...

Walizao area was also hit by the flash floods.

Jan Mohammad, another resident, said the flooding destroyed their homes and hundreds of acres of farmland. He asked the government and donor organizations to assist the uprooted families.

A number of other residents held similar views and urged the government to assist them as soon as possible.

Acting Governor Mujahidullah Safari told Pajhwok that the affected families had been asked to submit their application letters to the governor's house for assistance as soon as possible. After completion of their survey, the families would be assisted, Safari added. (Pajhwok)