

Iran Says EU 'Hostage' of US, Warns of 'Consequences'

TEHRAN - Iran has criticized the European Union for failing to set up a payment mechanism meant to circumvent US sanctions, warning that the bloc should account for the "consequences" of the delay.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran holds Europe definitely responsible for failing to implement the financial mechanism called the SPV," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said late Saturday.

The SPV or the special purpose vehicle is a virtual clearing house which the Europeans have been working on for months to process Iran-related transactions independent of the US



but the mechanism has yet to see the light of the day. So far, the Europeans have failed twice to fulfill their promises to get the system up and

running in order to persuade Iran to remain in a landmark 2015 nuclear deal known as the JCPOA after the US abandoned it. (Press TV)

Low Quality Medicines Still Sold in Kandahar: Residents

KANDAHAR CITY - The residents of southern Kandahar province say low quality medicines imported by local druggists, especially from Pakistan, have more side effects than advantage. Keeping medicines in unsuitable temperature, storing them in inappropriate places and buying from companies with low credentials are some of the issues which need to be addressed, say the residents.

Taj Mohammad, a resident of 11th Police District of Kandahar City, told Pajhwok Afghan News that unfortunately despite the passage of many years low quality drugs continued to be brought to Kandahar province.

He said the bulk of low quality medicines were smuggled to Afghanistan and the officials concerned had failed to prevent them.

Mahbobul Haq, another resident, complained he purchased medicines at a local shop but they had no impact on his health. He said substandard and low quality medicines were brought from Pakistan.

Physicians and health workers in Kandahar said low quality and expired drugs could not help recover patients. Dr. Mohammad Nabi acknowledged some companies manufactured and dispatched low quality medicines to the country. (Pajhwok)

UAE, Pakistan Agree to Work for Lasting Peace in Afghanistan

ISLAMABAD - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Pakistan on Sunday agreed to continue support for Afghan owned and led peace talks, according to media reports.

The Afghan peace and reconciliation was part of discussion between the Abdu Dhabi Crown Prince Sheikh Muhammad bin Zayed Al Nahyan and Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan during their delegation level meeting in Islamabad. On the invitation Pakistan's Prime Minister, His Highness Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, paid a state visit to Pakistan on 06 January 2019.

The Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces was accompanied by a high level delegation comprising cabinet members and senior officials.

Pakistan's prime minister briefed the Crown Prince about the efforts Pakistan was making to support and facilitate the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led reconciliation process.

He also appreciated the role UAE was playing by hosting reconciliation talks in Abu Dhabi. The two leaders agreed to work closely for the lasting peace and stability of Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

PM May Says If Brexit Deal Is Rejected, UK Will be in Uncharted Territory

LONDON - Prime Minister Theresa May said on Sunday that Britain would be in uncharted territory if her Brexit deal is rejected by parliament later this month, despite little sign that she has won over skeptical lawmakers.

Britain is due to leave the EU on March 29 but May's inability so far to get her deal for a managed exit through parliament has alarmed business leaders and investors who fear the country is heading for a damaging no-deal Brexit.

May said the vote in parliament



would be around Jan. 15, as expected, contrary to reports she could delay it.

May has already delayed the vote

once, in December, when it became clear she would lose unless extra reassurances from the EU were agreed. (Reuters)

(1) US Withdrawal...

being, it is not a decision yet," said the advisor, a former Afghan ambassador to the US.

"The numbers that are being spoken of are numbers that were increased in 2017," to more than 14,000 from 8,600. "So it's not going to have a significant impact if they are going to be taken back." Since 2014, Mohib said, his country had been preparing for self-reliance in the area of security by 2024. "I must say 2024 will be an ideal situation when we will have all the time we need in terms of preparations..."

In response to the query if the Afghan government would like India to open a channel with Taliban, he replied "What I am saying is that there are efforts already underway to facilitate an intra-Afghan dialogue.

"We would like to see all our regional partners consolidate and focus on those efforts, rather than starting their own," explained the NSA. All peace talks have to be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led, he insisted. (Pajhwok)

(2) Political Parties'...

a process still ongoing Election observers of political parties addressed a joint press conference in Kabul about the IECC's invalidation of all Kabul votes.

Saif Rahman Jabarkhel, who represented the Gulbadin Hekmatyar-led Hezb-i-Islami of Afghanistan (HIA), told the press conference that above 100 political parties observers had been part of monitoring the audit of votes cast in Kabul and they had found 'huge fraud' in the process. "We observed that dozens of electoral books in which votes were registered had been lost and eight biometric machines had disappeared, result papers were tampered with and sons of lawmakers and their representatives sold and bought votes in complicity of commission officials." He said the observers had identified 94 employees of the election

commission who worked in favor of some candidates but they were freed by the IEC against guarantees.

He said during their observation they found that the election commission had approved non-biometric votes from some already 'opened' ballot boxes and even confirmed 500 non-biometric votes for a single candidate.

Bas Gul, a preventative of the Afghanistan Devolvement Party, confirmed Jabarkhel's claims, and said their findings showed the electoral bodies had sold votes and edited result papers for some candidates.

She said political parties' observers were agreed with the IECC's decision to invalidate all Kabul votes.

A number of other political parties representatives expressed similar views and stressed over invalidation of all Kabul votes.

Sayed Hafizullah Hashemi, IEC spokesman, rejected all allegations of the political parties' observers and said the commission had been trying to separate clean and fake votes in order to ensure transparency. (Pajhwok)

(3) Talks with Taliban...

is essential," he said.

"Secondly the trip is aimed at creating regional consensus on the Afghan peace and reconciliation process".

Daudzai would meet Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, Chief of Army Staff Gen. Qamar Bajwa and renowned politicians, religious leaders to discuss the Afghan peace process.

He said Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was currently on a foreign visit and if he arrived during the Afghan delegation's stay in Islamabad, the HPC delegation would also meet him.

Taheri said Pakistan could help the Afghan peace process in different ways including encouraging the Afghan Taliban to participate in peace talks with the Afghan government because many Taliban leaders lived there.

He said all decisions regarding peace would be taken in consultation with the people of Afghanistan and no deal would be struck behind the curtains.

Taheri said the HPC was playing the role of a facilitator between the Taliban and the Afghan government. He said the HPC was not a government interlocutor in peace talks as the government has its own team of negotiators. Referring to US Special Envoy for Afghan Reconciliation, he said Zalmay Khalilzad was only facilitating talks between the Afghan government and the Taliban. (Pajhwok)

(4) US Pullout...

even if they get a drawdown order.

"We are extremely grateful for this support. We also assure our allies that a 350,000-strong Afghan defense and security force will continue to be at the forefront of the global war on terror." On January 3, President Ashraf Ghani's said a possible US troop drawdown from Afghanistan would not have any impact because Afghan forces had been in charge of the country's security over the past four years. The Presidential Palace also lauded the bravery and commitment of the Afghan forces. (Pajhwok)

(5) 40 killed in...

mining in the province. The governor's office confirmed the incident but provided no information about casualties.

Another lawmaker from Badakhshan Mohammad Zekriya told The Washington Post that workers were in a river bed sifting for gold when rocks and debris tumbled down the mountainside. The mining activity did not prompt the landslide, he said.

Landslides are common in the rugged, mountainous north, typically caused by melting snow or heavy rain. (Pajhwok)

(6) Mashaal Seeks...

The Afghan envoy asked the consul generals to work towards ad-

ressing problems of Afghan refugees based in Pakistan in a right and timely manner.

According to UNHCR, around two million Afghan refugees are still living in Pakistan.

Mashaal also met with UNHCR representative for Pakistan Ruvendri Menikdiwela and both discussed problems of the Afghan refugees in that country.

Mashaal during the meeting told Menikdiwela that Afghan refugees living legally in Pakistan should be able to have bank accounts, driving license and run businesses and other similar facilities.

He also talked about education curriculum for Afghan refugee students in Pakistan and said Afghan children in the host country had the right to study in their native languages and the UNHCR should cooperate in this regard.

Few days back, Afghan refugees' representatives in Pakistan shared their problems with the new Afghan envoy in Islamabad. Mashaal assured them he would try to address their problems. (Pajhwok)

(7) Candidate Accuses...

including two armored vehicles for my victory," he claimed.

On the other hand, Tela Mohammad Niazi said he had secured more than 4,000 votes but the IEC count gave him only 491 in the initial result. He slammed the IEC office as a hub of corruption.

At a separate news briefing, the IEC head for Nangarhar called on protesting candidates to submit documentary proofs of fraud and rigging.

Abdul Bade Sayad earlier asked the poll runners to use legal ways instead of making nonsense claims to get their complaints registered and addressed. (Pajhwok)

(8) Afghanistan Rice...

imported products," said Nisar Ahmad, a local investor.

"It is better to use domestic rice production but the quality of imported rice is better therefore it is mostly used by the people," said

Maazallah, a Balkh resident.

The CSO statistics show that Afghanistan needs 574,000 tons of rice annually. (Tolo news)

(9) Heavy Snow

said heavy snowfall lashed the mentioned districts for two days and efforts were underway for reopening of the roads.

"Strategic stocks, food and warm clothes are available in most of these vulnerable districts in case a natural disaster happens", he said. Transport routes to most of Badakhshan districts are closed for traffic every winter due to heavy snowfall, restricting people's movement. Dozens of residents of Badakhshan had lost lives in avalanches and floods in winters in the past years. (Pajhwok)

(10) Herat Truck...

days back, Transport Minister Mohammad Hamid Tahmasi during his trip to Herat province acknowledged problems on the highway and urged the Ministry of Interior's cooperation in this regard.

Herat police officials refused to comment about the issue. However, the local administration says the issue would be resolved in coordination with security forces.

Mohayuddin Noori, Heart's acting governor, said problems on the Herat-Kandahar highway had been discussed in military meetings and efforts were underway for their solution.

Drivers on the highway in recent past complained that police used to open fire at their trucks if they refuse to pay money.

Pajhwok tried to seek the Ministry of Interior's comment about the issue from, but failed. (Pajhwok)

(11) India to Provide...

Partnership with Afghanistan and recent comments by President Trump on the then-Soviet invasion of Afghanistan were also discussed.

Mohib spoke about terrorist safe havens in neighbouring Pakistan and the need for striking at the roots of terrorism in the country. (Pajhwok)