

UNGA President Maria Fernanda to Visit Pakistan Next Week

NEW YORK - United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) President Maria Fernanda Espinosa is expected to visit Pakistan from January 18 to 22 at the invitation of the Pakistani government.

Addressing a briefing at the UN headquarters in New York, UNGA president's spokesperson Monica Grayley said, "The president of the National Assembly will visit Pakistan from the 18th to the 22nd of January at the invitation of the government of Pakistan. This will be the first official visit to the Asia Pacific since Maria Fernanda Espinosa took office in September."

"The president is looking forward to strengthening the ties between Pakistan and the UN, promoting multilateralism and continuing her work with Pakistan on the priorities for the 73rd session of the GA," she added.

During her five-day visit, Espinosa will meet President Dr Arif Alvi,



Prime Minister Imran Khan, Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi as well as the representatives of the UN and of civil society.

"Travel costs are being covered by Pakistan and by the regular budget of the UNGA's Office," the spokesperson added. Tweeting about the visit,

Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the UN Maleeha Lodhi said, "Met with President of the UN General Assembly Maria Fernanda Espinosa today to finalise details of her visit next week to Pakistan. It will be the first visit by any PGA to Pakistan in eight years. (Agencies)

(1) Mohib Commends...

a narrow border and have cooperated on frontier security.

China is also a close ally of Pakistan, accused by Afghanistan and the US of providing safe havens for the Taliban and other groups opposing the government in Kabul.

Wang emphasised the mutual understanding and mutual support the countries have offered each other and China's backing of efforts to promote domestic peace and political reconciliation in Afghanistan. "At such an important moment, we know you have been entrusted by President Ashraf Ghani to pay this visit to enhance mutual understanding and coordination. We think this is timely and necessary," Wang said.

On Wednesday, the Afghan president's special peace envoy, Mohammad Omer Daudzai, expressed hope that the war that had cost the United States about \$1 trillion would end in 2019.

"We have declared 2019 as a year of peace for Afghanistan," Daudzai said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Washington's special peace envoy, Zalmay Khalilzad, is also on a tour of the region, visiting India, China, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

The Taliban have refused direct talks with Kabul despite pressure from Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and even Pakistan.

In response, Washington has suspended hundreds of millions of dollars in reimbursements to Pakistan. Islamabad says its influence over the Taliban is overstated. (Pajhwok)

(2) Afghans Should...

"Afghanistan will not go back to Taliban time. Because now we have millions of educated girls and boys, institutions and human rights. In this 10 years, we reached so many good things and we do not want to go back to those black days."

Amid reports that U.S. troops will pull out this year, Jan said the Afghan people have no other option but to resist terrorist groups whether international troops stay in the country or not.

The international forces in Afghanistan were reduced from 130,000 to 20,000, but no provinces or districts fell into the hands of Taliban, although the group has a strong presence throughout the country, Jan said.

"Taliban did not have political ideology, they were completely, purely a militant group," Jan said.

- Security challenge

"Finally, with the help of the Taliban, that time Al-Qaeda emerged, found place in Afghanistan and they designed to attack United

States.

"And suddenly, the West woke up that ignoring Afghanistan will not allow other parts of the world to be in peace," Jan said.

He said Afghan people expect Kabul and Ankara to work together to bring peace to the war-ravaged country.

"We hope that Turkey will use its influence on Pakistan to help the peace process in Afghanistan," Jan said.

Jan said Iran and Russia recently established a relationship with the Taliban and he called this development "unfortunate".

However, Jan said if this move brings Taliban to the table for peace talks, Kabul will welcome them.

Jan said Turkey is part of the NATO mission in Afghanistan training the Afghan police and army.

He said Turkey is a developed Islamic country located in a very strategic place.

Jan said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in his meeting with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan mentioned a tripartite meeting between Turkey-Pakistan-Afghanistan after the local elections in Turkey on March 31.

The ambassador said that Afghan President Ashraf Ghani wants practical results for every meeting.

"So it needs more work from Turkish and Pakistani side to convince Afghanistan that these meetings will be useful to solve the problems," he added. (AA)

(3) US Forces won't...

the revival of SAARC and we must reconvene. I don't have a deadline for it. But it should be held."

When reminded that Islamabad continued to use terrorism as an instrument of state policy, Karzai hoped for a change in the vision of the new Pakistani government.

He was of the view Prime Minister Imran Khan would play an important role in allowing transit, trade and political openness. That's the vision I hope he has..." (Pajhwok)

(4) India, US...

The 2+2 Dialogue between India and the United States was launched as a reflection of the shared commitment made by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Donald Trump to provide a positive, forward-looking vision for the India-US strategic partnership and to promote synergy in their diplomatic and security affairs, the statement said.

This comes as the US Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad met India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj and Foreign Secretary Vijay Gokhale in New Delhi on Friday where they discussed the Afghan

peace process and the situation in Afghanistan.

In this meeting, Indian officials emphasized that the peace and reconciliation process in the Afghanistan "must be Afghan-led, Afghan-owned and Afghan-controlled".

Indian media quoted Raveesh Kumar, India's External Affairs Ministry spokesman, as saying that Khalilzad briefed the Indian side on the efforts being made by Washington aimed at peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

(5) Capital Flight...

said Farid Hashimi, an investor. Officials say that investors are paying only AFs100 instead of paying at least AFs30,000 to obtain an investment license and buy one square meter of land in industrial parks for AFs50. (Tolo news)

(6) IEC Wants TEFA...

On the other hand, the IEC said it was concluding Wolesi Jirga election results and had prepared some reforms which would be implemented next solar year 1398. (Pajhwok)

(7) Iran Extradites 242...

mostly drug-related and illegal entrance into Iran.

These convicts are going to serve the remaining period of their sentences in Afghanistan, he said.

He added that extradition of such a big number of prisoners tends to be unprecedented.

This is taking place under the shadow of Iran's active diplomacy and the country's judicial and legal practices, the Iranian judicial official had said earlier. (IRNA)

(8) Balkh Candidates...

He said people braved threats and exercised their right to vote on Oct 20-21, but due to incompetency and mismanagement of the election commission, the national process faced impediments.

He asked the election commission to respect people's votes and remove from the system ballots which had been fraudulently used. Another candidate, Gul Mohammad, who was among failing candidates in the initial list, said people wanted to send their real representatives to the lower house of parliament by going to the elections.

He said the people of Balkh endured hardships and went to polling stations to elect their preferred representatives, but they were deceived and the elections were rigged.

He warned if their demands were ignored, the people of Balkh would emerge on the streets in huge numbers and would not allow those involved in corruption and bloodshed to enter the parliament with

Tehran Calls on Paris to 'Stop Repeating Irresponsible Claims' on Iran's Missile Program



TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi has criticized the French Foreign Ministry's provocative comments about Iran's ballistic missile program, urging Paris to avoid repeating such "irresponsible and incorrect" claims regarding the Islamic Republic's defensive programs.

"It is expected from France to stop

echoing incorrect claims made by those who are against the JCPOA," the senior diplomat further said, referring to Iran's nuclear deal with world power in 2015, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, and in a clear reference to the United States that unilaterally withdrew from the landmark accord last year. (Press TV)

bogus mandate.

"Some people are trying to enter the parliament through illegal means, but the people of Balkh would not allow anyone to play with their destiny."

He said the IEC was not only responsible to separate fraudulent and real votes but to introduce those involved in fraud to the judicial organs.

He said people lost their trust in the Wolesi Jirga polls, they would not participate in the July presidential election. He said people's trust could only be revived if corrupt election officials were punished.

Another failing candidate Sorya Bawar Omari said the next parliament should be based on clean votes of the masses.

She said the IEC and the IECC had no coordination and this was the reason people did not trust their affairs.

She said she did not want her name to be included in the list of winning candidates but her main demand was justice for those deserving it.

IEC chief for Balkh province, Iz-zatullah Arman, told Pajhwok that after the IECC chief's visit to Balkh 20 days back, they had been asked to review votes of more than 600 ballot boxes.

He said they forwarded the demand to the central IEC office which recommended the vote recount only a day earlier.

Arman said the vote recount process of the suspicious 600 ballot boxes would be started two days later. (Pajhwok)

(9) Khalid Implicated...

had enjoyed the protection of former President Hamid Karzai; in 2009 a US official described Khalid as a "bag man" for the role he played buying votes for Karzai's 2009 re-election effort.

The Afghan government has proved unwilling to criminally investigate Khalid, but Afghanistan's donors can act, the watchdog said. The US and Canada have authority under their respective Magnitsky laws to impose sanctions on any foreign official against whom there is credible evidence of responsibility for serious human rights abuses. (Pajhwok)

(10) Afghan Security...

military pressure on the Taliban is that the Afghan security forces are on the offensive. The Afghan security forces are off the checkpoints and taking the fight to the Taliban," said Butler.

Quoting from New York Times, meanwhile, the US army reported that in 2018 foreign forces conducted more than 5,600 airstrikes against Taliban and other insurgent groups.

Butler also said US Forces - Afghanistan endorses the airstrikes by Afghan forces, which according to him put Taliban under heavy pressure.

Ministry of Defense meanwhile said foreign airstrikes are needed in the current situation and the airstrikes play a key role in decreasing Taliban's movements.

"Lots of insurgents have been killed in airstrikes, specially a number of their key commanders," Ghafoor Ahmad Jawed, spokesman for the defense ministry said.

"Afghanistan security forces in cooperation with the Afghan Air Force launched more offensives against the enemies of the Afghan people in 2018 compared to the past years and in that year many Taliban commanders were killed," Nusrat Rahimi, deputy spokesman of interior ministry said.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) however has said that increase of airstrikes increases the fatalities of civilians.

"The airstrikes should be conducted in complete cooperation with the Afghan forces," Mirza Mohammad Yarmand, a former military officer said.

"Bombing without proper planning and accurate intelligence, I think is catastrophic," Erfanullah Erfan, an MP said.

Reports indicate that in recent months civilians faced casualties from Afghan Air Force and foreign forces' airstrikes in Nangarhar, Logar, Kandahar, Helmand and some other parts of the country. (Tolo news)

(11) Fuel Prices Down...

and the same amount of black African tea for 350af\$—higher than wholesale rates.

The prices of gold also increased. Haji Fawad Ahmad Salehzada, a jeweler in Timor Shahee area of Kabul, said that the price of one gram of Arabian gold increased from 2,450af\$ to 2,500af\$ and the same quantity of Russian variety from 1,950af\$ to 2,000af\$.

According to Haji Mir Hussain Sadaqat Money Exchange Service in Sara-I-Shahzada, one US dollar accounted for 75.45af\$ and 1,000 Pakistani rupees 536af\$ against last week's 75.60af\$ and 538af\$. (Pajhwok)

(12) Taliban Suffers...

Urozgan and Zabul are among the insecure provinces of Afghanistan where Taliban Insurgents are active in a number of their districts.

The Taliban insurgent group has not made a comment about the report yet. (ATN)