

## Macron's Popularity Dips as French Fuel Tax Revolt Simmers

PARIS - Emmanuel Macron's popularity took a further hit in recent weeks, according to a poll on Sunday, as fuel tax protests rumbled across France in the latest sign of discontent with the president's economic reforms.

Only 25 percent of those questioned in an Ifop poll between Nov. 9 and 17 said they were satisfied with Macron, down from 29 percent in October, according to the survey of almost 2,000 people published in the Journal du Dimanche (JDD).

Macron, who came to power 18 months ago vowing to reshape the economy and overhaul institutions, has brushed off slumping ratings to push through a series of reforms, including a loosening of laws governing hiring and firing. His government introduced fuel tax hikes to encourage drivers to embrace less-polluting cars, touching a nerve with voters in rural areas in particular as the extra cost began to bite in October when global oil prices surged. (Reuters)

## Di Maio Says EU Election Will Shake Up Politics, Help Italy

ROME - European parliamentary elections in May will shake up the political landscape and help Italy in its budget battles with Brussels, Deputy Prime Minister Luigi Di Maio said on Sunday. The European Commission last month rejected Italy's 2019 budget, saying it flouted a commitment to lower the deficit and did not guarantee a reduction in the debt, the second highest in the euro zone as a proportion of GDP.

Italy's coalition, comprising the anti-establishment 5-Star-Movement and far-right League, has refused to change the main points of the budget, saying it will boost the economy via tax cuts, a lower retirement age and higher welfare spending.

Di Maio told Corriere della Sera daily he was confident that Rome and Brussels could avoid a collision, predicting that the Commission would take a different approach after May's elections which might boost anti-austerity parties. "...citizens will vote in the European elections and will cause a big shake up," said Di Maio, who is also leader of the



5-Star. "We are ready to discuss things around a table, but they cannot ask us to massacre Italians."

Di Maio reiterated that the government was willing to sell real estate assets, reduce waste and introduce safeguard clauses to ensure the deficit will not exceed the target of 2.4 percent of output in 2019. But he said: "The main reforms of the budget must remain in place".

The European Commission is expected to start disciplinary steps against Rome next Wednesday, a procedure which could eventually end in unprecedented fines for Italy.

The European elections are shaping up to be a battle between centrist, pro-EU parties and nationalist far-right formations that want to stop immigration. (Reuters)

## Central Americans Stalled at U.S.-Mexico Border, Mull Work Offers

MEXICALI, Mexico - Hundreds of migrants from a caravan of Central Americans were stalled at the U.S.-Mexico border on Saturday, where a handful said they welcomed recent Mexican offers of employment in the face of a hostile U.S. reception.

The Mexican government last week reiterated job offers to the migrants, saying that those who obtained legal status could occupy thousands of vacancies, most of them in the country's "maquiladoras," doing factory work.

Since arriving at the border last week, they have been denied entry through the gates linking Mexico to the United States.

Dozens of the mostly Hondurans waited in lines to bathe and washed clothes sullied from 2,600 miles of relentless travel. Several members of the caravan, which left the crime-wracked city of San Pedro Sula, Honduras, on Oct. 13, told Reuters they would be willing to stay put in Mexico rather than face rejection across the border. (Reuters)

### (1) Consultative Peace...

consultations were an important principle in religion and culture particularly in the national processes.

President Ghani has so far met with Jamiat-i-Islami leaders Salahuddin Rabbani, Atta Mohammad Noori, Ismail Khan, Younus Qanoni, and Hizb-i-Islami head Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and Jihadi and influential figures including Abdul Rab Rasoul Sayyaf, Mohammad Mohaqiq, Mohammad Akbari and many other figures as part of his consultative meetings.

The government has the plan to form a committee of peace comprised of representatives from all 34 provinces. The committee would have 200 members with a 12-member board which would provide consultations to the government and the HPC about peace.

According to another report, the president also met with representatives of All Afghanistan Hazara Council of Sunnis about the peace process.

In the meeting, Haji Ghulam Sakhi Parsayee and Dr. MaskinKawi talked on behalf of the council representatives with the president and they backed the peace process and national and economic programs of the government.

They said Sunni Hazara people would use their knowledge and influence for paving the ground for intra-Afghan peace dialogues.

The president later thanked the council members for sharing their views and suggestions about the peace process and said a stable peace was one of the important demands of all Afghans and it was the government's responsibility to cooperate with the public for achieving it. (Pajhwok)

### (2) Khalilzad 'Cautiously...

Associated Press on Sunday.

The two individuals said Khairullah Khairkhwa, the former Taliban governor of Herat, and Mohammed Fazl, a former Taliban military chief, attended the marathon talks. The two individuals spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to discuss the sensitive negotiations, AP reported.

A third individual with knowledge of the discussions said the Taliban pressed for a postponement of next year's presidential elections and the establishment of an interim government under a neutral leadership. AP reported that Abdul Sattar Sirat, an ethnic Tajik and Islamic scholar, was suggested as a candidate to lead an interim administration.

AP reported that the individual, who also spoke on condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the talks, said Khalilzad wants to reach a settlement within six months, a timescale the Taliban said was too short.

Khalilzad has been touring the region in recent days, and reportedly met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani on Sunday. AP stated he is expected to press Ghani to cobble together his own negotiating team, which could prove difficult given the deep divisions within the government. (Tolo news)

### (3) Lawmakers Against...

conduct of timely presidential elections was the only way to end the current political crisis in the country.

Shah Etemadi, a lawmaker from Ghazni province, said reinforcement had been dispatched to the Malistan and Jaghori district but the situation had yet to return to normalcy.

"We want the government to order clearing operation in Malistan and Jaghori districts and purged the Taliban from the areas," he said.

Nafeesa Shah, another Ghazni lawmaker, said security forces dispatched to Ghazni had no plan to fight, adding that situation still remained tense.

"No aid has been provided to 16,000 displaced families and after the clearing operations enough force should be present in the area so that the insurgents should not make a comeback," she said.

She asked the government to be more careful and prevent the forces which had recently returned from Syria and Iraq from spreading instability.

Nader Khan Katawazai, another lawmaker, said earlier Pakistan sent terrorists, but now another group called Fatimyon had been entering Afghanistan to spread instability and terror.

"The destruction of Salma and Kajaki dams is the main purpose of Fatimyon militant group," he said.

The lawmaker alleged the involvement of Fatimyon in the incident that occurred in Kabul University.

Wolesi Jirga Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim said it was clear that the people of Afghanistan want peace and stressed peace cannot be achieved from a weak position.

He emphasized the presidential elections should be held on time and the government should take all measures for its successful conduct. (Pajhwok)

### (4) Military Casualties...

casualties for us," said Siawash.

"The wounded officers who sustain injuries in the trenches or while on duty should be transferred to hospital as soon as possible," said Amraddin, a wounded ANA officer.

This comes as Afghan security forces tackle Taliban insurgents on multiple fronts across the country.

Last week The Afghan Ministry of Interior (MoI) confirmed there has been a sharp rise in casualties among security forces in the past few weeks after Taliban insurgents expanded

their attacks on multiple fronts.

Taliban insurgents recently sought to expand their attacks in some strategic locations of Baghlan, Kunduz, Faryab, Uruzgan, Ghor and Farah provinces.

Highlights of civilian and military casualty toll over past few months

In September, Senators in the Meshrano Jirga (Upper House of Parliament) summoned Ministers of Defense and Interior and the deputy head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) to answer questions over the increase of insecurity in the country and the high casualty toll among security forces.

Afghan Defense Minister Gen. Tariq Shah Bahrami at the time acknowledged there was an increase in casualties among Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers and said in the past month 513 soldiers had been killed. Civilians also the target

Last month, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) released a special report and voiced serious concerns about the increasing use of IEDs against civilians.

In a statement issued with the report, UNAMA said anti-government elements must immediately end the indiscriminate and disproportionate use of all improvised explosive devices (IEDs) in areas frequented by civilians.

Between 1 January and 30 September 2018, UNAMA documented 3,634 civilian casualties (1,065 deaths and 2,569 injured) from suicide and non-suicide IED attacks.

These casualty figures include 247 women casualties (72 deaths and 175 injured) and 608 child casualties (155 deaths and 453 injured).

During the period covered by this report, suicide IED attacks killed and injured increasing numbers of women and children, mainly due to a rise in the deliberate targeting of civilian objects where women and children were present.

Between 1 January and 30 September 2018, civilian casualties from attacks with all types of IEDs increased by 21 percent compared with the same period in 2017, while the number of civilian casualties from suicide IED attacks increased by 46 percent.

The use of suicide IEDs alone caused more civilian deaths and injuries than any other tactic, including ground engagements.

Between 1 January and 30 September 2018, UNAMA documented 1,402 civilian casualties (433 deaths and 969 injured) in Kabul city, with 99 percent of these caused by suicide and other IED attacks. So far in 2018, the mission has documented 34 IED incidents causing civilian casualties in Kabul province (23 suicide IED attacks and 11 non-suicide IED attacks).

However, the casualty toll among security forces is classified infor-

mation after a decision was taken in 2016 not to release exact figures. (Tolo news)

### (5) Afghan Politicians...

government should be established to ensure peace in Afghanistan, insisting that the coming presidential elections should be delayed in the country.

This comes as Khalilzad recently met with the Taliban delegation for the second time in Qatar. According to close figures to the Taliban, the exchange of Taliban prisoners and having a clear mechanism for peace talks were among the issues as the two sides discussed in their meeting. (ATN)

### (6) Working to...

e Taliban has been reached.

"We used the term stalemate a year ago and, relatively speaking, it has not changed much."

Dunford termed recent parliamentary elections in Afghanistan as "largely successful" and noted the importance of next year's presidential election. (Pajhwok)

### (7) 'Uzbekistan Desires...

medicinal plants and also import of pharmaceuticals to Uzbekistan. He said that Pakistan was a potential market for business and BMB was looking for partners in Pakistan for JVs and partnerships.

Speaking at the occasion, Malik Shahid Saleem, president RCCI, said that Central Asia was a big market and Pakistan should explore new trade avenues in the region. It is need of the hour to explore new trade avenues and business opportunities between Pakistan and Central Asia. He said that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative had created great business prospects in Pakistan and the Uzbek investors should explore Pakistan for joint ventures and investment.

The CPEC offers great regional connectivity and integration from South Asia, Central Asian countries and beyond, he added.

We consider Uzbekistan as a gateway for Pakistan to access Central Asian markets and both countries should focus on developing strong business linkages between private sectors to explore all untapped areas of business collaboration, he said. (Agencies)

### (8) Militants Driven...

Afghan security forces led all responsibilities in the fight against over 20 terrorist groups.

The terrorists do not hold any strategic point, they only try to create fear among the people with their barbaric acts, he added.

Separately, 50 Islamic State rebels were killed in a joint operation carried out in Khogyano, Naziyan, and Achin districts of Nangarhar province.

"Our security and defense forces

have become much more powerful compared to the past. We did not have air forces four years ago, and now we are on the way to triple the number of our air forces. The number of our commandos has been doubled," Jawid said.

He said Afghan defense and security forces would continue their widespread clearance and offensive operations.

He ruled out ethnic grouping among security forces and added youth from all ethnic groups had been serving in Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police and were in the frontline of fight against the international terrorism.

More than 28,000 Afghan police officers and soldiers have been killed since 2015, President Ashraf Ghani had told international media earlier. (Pajhwok)

### (9) Taliban Shadow...

Khogyani added they reconciled after security forces operations in the Nazyan district were almost sieged. Earlier, nine Daesh foreign rebels joined the reconciliation process who were also shown to the media.

Bang Gul, who joined Daesh many years ago, said they were told that Afghan government and their allies were all infidels and Jihad against them was must.

Daesh have not yet spoken about the arrest of its fighters. (Pajhwok)

### (10) 'Nuristan Women...

these issue if proper strategies has been formulated.

Work on proper plans was underway and these plans had been shared with the ministry but insecurity was the main challenged which halted progress on women development.

She expressed worries if insecurity continued no improvement could be brought in women lives.

In Nuristan, women faced many issues besides social violence. (Pajhwok)

### (11) Rashid Khan...

retention of Mujeeb Ur Rehman along with seven other players, 11 players have been released while player has been traded.

According to reports, Rashid Khan has been retained for 9 crores Indian rupees while Mohammad Nabi has been retained for one crore Indian rupees.

Similarly, the Kings XI Punjab has retained Mujeeb Ur Rehman against 4 crores Indian rupees.

The 2019 season of the Indian Premier League would kick off from 29th of March next year. (KP)

### (12) District Chief...

Taliban claimed responsibility for the blast. Zabihullah Mujahid, the group's spokesman, claimed that district chief, intelligence director and several bodyguards were killed in the bombing. (Pajhwok)