

Uzbekistan, EU Opening New Page in Relations Amidst Surging Trade

TASHKENT - The trade turnover between Uzbekistan and the EU countries in the first nine months of 2018 increased by 17 percent and amounted to \$2.23 billion, Uzbek Foreign Ministry said referring to the meeting on Nov. 23 in Brussels between Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov and EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, European Commission Vice President Federica Mogherini.

The parties exchanged views on the agenda of the Central Asia-EU inter-

regional meeting that opened in Brussels, discussed priorities for expanding cooperation between Uzbekistan and the EU, and also noted that the summit scheduled for 2019 will open a new page in the history of bilateral relations. Mogherini noted that the ongoing large-scale reforms to liberalize the economy in Uzbekistan open up great prospects for a wider presence of European business and investment in the country's market and the growth of mutual trade.

The counterparts also discussed the

implementation of the provisions of the Tashkent Declaration, adopted on March 27, 2018 at the international conference on Afghanistan, in which the EU delegation headed by Mogherini participated.

Following the talks, Mogherini handed over to Kamilov the draft Agreement on Expanded Partnership and Cooperation between Uzbekistan and the EU, which is to replace the Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between Uzbekistan and the EU in effect from July 1, 1999. (Trend)

New Zealand Confirms Mandatory Phaseout of Single-Use Plastic Bags

WELLINGTON - A New Zealand environmental official confirmed on Saturday the mandatory phase out of single-use plastic shopping bags in New Zealand that will come into effect around the middle of next year.

This announcement by Associate Environmental Minister Eugenie Sage followed a five-week public consultation process, where 92 percent of submitters supported the proposed mandatory phase out.

"The clear majority of people who responded to the consultation supported a nationwide phase out of single-use plastic bags, and many called on the government to act quickly to make this change," Sage said in a statement.

The government has carefully considered the full range of views put forward, and it is now time to take action as a step towards addressing plastic pollution, Sage said, adding this will apply to all retailers. (Xinhua)

(1) Kabul Ulema...

wounded in a suicide attack during a gathering about Miladun Nabi or the birthday of Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) in a hotel in Kabul. (KP)

(2) MPs Reject 1396...

transport have spent less than 70 percent of their budgets, he informed.

The ministries of energy and water, information and culture, education and mines and petroleum are headed by acting ministers and the Wolesi Jirga cannot summon acting officials.

Mohseni said the Afghanistan Land Authority, the Capital Region Independent Development Authority, Milli TV and Radio, the Kabul Municipality, Office of Administrative Affairs of the President, Civil Aviation Authority, Supreme Court, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AI-HRC), Da Afghanistan Breshna Sherkat (DABS), High Office of Oversight and Corruption, Environment Protection Authority, Central Audit Authority, Kuchis Coordination Department, Urban Water Supply, Academy of Sciences, Wolesi Jirga, Physical Training Department, Norm and Standard Authority, and Central Statistics Organization have also spent less than 70 percent of their budgets.

He said the finance and budgetary commission in a joint meeting with permanent commissions of the lower house had set budget spending target for officials 70 percent but some commissions suggested the target to be 60 percent.

Mohseni asked the Wolesi Jirga speaker to put the controversial issue for a vote before the lawmakers.

"Twenty-four budgetary units have spent more than 70 percent of their development budget and 29 budgetary units including ministries, spent less than 70 percent of their development budgets," he added.

He said the Wolesi Jirga would summon officials and 19 other officials would be referred to the President to remove them and introduce them to judiciary organs for their violations.

"The Wolesi Jirga would also suggest removal of deputies, procurement heads and construction heads of ministries who have spent less than 70 percent of their budgets besides the removal of ministers," he said.

Mohseni said some budgetary units had also violated the law according to the expenditure report and they should be introduced to judiciary organs, a suggestion he said had been approved by the lower house.

The Wolesi Jirga speaker at the end put the expenditure report for vote, but 112 out of 115 lawmakers present in the house voted against the report.

The Wolesi Jirga had also rejected expenditure reports of 1394

and 1395 fiscal years.

The lower house had summoned 16 ministers for spending less than 70 percent of their budget in 1394 fiscal year and disqualified seven ministers including Salahuddin Rabbani, foreign affairs minister.

However, Rabbani still works as acting foreign affairs minister after his disqualification. (Pajhwok)

(3) Iranian FM Stresses...

"We and other countries are trying to help Afghanistan and I hope the conference would achieve its objectives, given the viewpoints presenting in it," said Director General of the Iranian Foreign Ministry for West Asian Affairs Rasoul Eslami, representing Iran in Afghanistan Peace Conference in Moscow.

Second International Afghanistan Peace Conference attended by regional and global players as well as friendly countries of Kabul was held in Moscow on November 9.

Meeting of the "Moscow Format" on Afghanistan took place on November 9 in a closed format in Moscow in President Hotel. For the first time in an international meeting of this level was attended by the delegation of the political office of the Taliban in Doha.

Iran, Russia, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, India, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan attended the event. The US was also represented by an expert from its embassy in Moscow. (Agencies)

(4) Afghan Forces...

forces have been operating so far.

"We have moved away a number of remote and isolated check posts and have merged them into larger bases to consolidate the forces," he said.

This, though, has not proven very effective. Last week, rebels stormed into one such recently consolidated base in restive Farah province bordering Iran killing 30 security personnel.

The joint army and police base on the main Herat-Kandahar highway in the Bala Bulook district was stormed by rebels with the help of at least six infiltrators earlier this month, the Taliban said.

Former Afghan Air Force chief retired Gen. Atiqullah Amarkhail says consolidating the smaller and remote check posts is a handy idea, but the reason why Afghan forces are still sustaining injuries is due to lack of coordination and contingency plans.

"The enemy has been attacking check posts in three formations; one group attacks the target while two others wait at strategic locations to target the reinforcements. This can only be overcome if the security forces have good contingency plans and coordination among them," he said.

Delays in the transportation of wounded soldiers to health facilities has also been contributing to the death toll, the analyst noted.

Blame game

The Kabul government has been asserting that the scaled-up offensives by the Taliban are basically to enter peace negotiations from a position of strength.

Officials have been blaming neighbouring countries, particularly Iran and Pakistan, for promoting terrorism in Afghanistan to hinder development projects, a charge Islamabad and Tehran reject.

The parliament's defense and security affairs committee has summoned concerned ministers multiple times over the past few months to question them over their failures.

Nisar Ahmad, chairman of the committee, told Anadolu Agency rising casualties is a pressing issue. "Our security forces need to change their position from the defensive posture into offensive mode that would help minimize their casualties and counter the advances of the rebels," he said.

The strength of the Afghan National Army is over 195,000, according to official figures.

Every month 6,000 new recruits join the forces in a show of resilience in the face of terror threats, the Defense Ministry spokesman said.

Khalilzad has met twice with the Taliban representatives in Qatar in the hopes for the resumption of talks prior to the 2019 presidential elections.

Meanwhile, parallel to Washington's push for talks with the Taliban, Russia managed to stage Moscow Conference on Afghanistan last week though with low profile representation from parties to the conflict and a number of regional countries including Pakistan and Iran. (AA)

(5) War-weary Afghans...

with the Taliban.

"Afghanistan has a better chance of finding peace than it has for many years, with more coordination in international peace efforts and willingness to include all parties," local media Daily Outlook Afghanistan quoted UN humanitarian official Toby Lanzer as saying.

"It is shared responsibility of all countries in the region and countries which have contacts with the Taliban to bring them to the negotiating table," Gardizi said.

His comments came as the ongoing war and conflict have affected the lives of millions of Afghans.

Afghan civilians continue to bear the brunt of the armed conflicts, as more than 2,790 civilians were killed and over 5,250 others injured in conflict-related incidents in the first nine months of this year, according to figures released by the United Nations mission in the coun-

try. (Xinhua)

(6) Senior Presidential...

Some UN agencies have been shifted to UNOCA Compound in Kabul which has resulted in prevention of millions of Dollars in expenses as well as the scattered activities.

According to the Office of the Senior Presidential Adviser in UN Affairs, around 20 UN agencies are currently operating under one leadership under the 'One UN in Afghanistan' process and work on one program with a long term strategy and in accordance with the demands of the Afghan government and people.

In the meantime, the Office of the Senior Presidential Adviser in UN Affairs said restoration works in certain parts of Haram Sara Palace, changes in the palace in accordance with the president's perspective, turning the palace into a citizen-centric service institution, collection of remaining items from the Palace and confirmation of the historic value of the items with the support of UNESCO, National Museum, National Archives, Feroz Koh Institute, and Ministry of Information and Culture are among the other major activities of the Office of the Senior Presidential Adviser for UN Affairs.

Afghanistan also obtained the membership of 1945 Hague Convention for the first time, according to the Office of the Senior Presidential Adviser for UN Affairs. (KP)

(7) Roya Rahmani...

United States.

However, the offer was reportedly rejected by Naderi who announced her resignation as senior presidential adviser in Kabul. (KP)

(8) Turkey Condemns...

near a religious seminary in Kalaya in the Orakzai tribal district, northwestern Pakistan, on Friday. Separately, an armed attack on the Chinese Consulate in Pakistan's commercial capital of Karachi on Friday morning killed at least seven people.

"We condemn these heinous terrorist attacks and wish Allah's mercy upon those who lost their lives, a speedy recovery to the wounded, and convey our condolences to the friendly Government and the brotherly people of Pakistan," the ministry said.

Afghanistan attack

Turkey also condemned a terror attack in Afghanistan's Khost province which killed 10 soldiers and injured 15 others.

"We have received the news with great sorrow that a terror attack took place at a mosque in the Afghan National Army base in the Mandozai district of the Khost province today during Friday prayers, resulting in the loss of lives of many soldiers and leaving many others wounded," said another Foreign Ministry statement.

"We strongly condemn this terrorist attack. We wish Allah's mercy

upon who lost their lives and wish a speedy recovery to the wounded, and convey our condolences to the friendly Government and the brotherly people of Afghanistan," the statement added. (AA)

(9) Afghanistan...

With the city facing inclement weather, the players would be training indoors, Sanjay said.

The players appreciated the facilities at the centre, he added.

The CSS has a MoU with the Afghanistan Cricket Board and the players come here on a regular basis to train and for injury rehabilitation. Former West Indies cricketer Phil Simmons is the coach of the senior squad while Andy Moles is in charge of the Emerging Team. (Agencies)

(10) Two Killed in...

the district, adding that "the helicopter was transferring troops from the (provincial) center to the district." He said there had been no casualties but the helicopter caught fire.

No further details have been provided.

However, the Taliban tweeted that their fighters had shot down the helicopter. (Tolo news)

(11) Firewood, Diesel...

to high demand and cold weather.

Food Traders Union head in Kabul, Fazal Rahman, said that 49 kilograms of Pakistani sugar cost 1,740afs, 50 kilograms of Kazakhstani flour 1,340afs and 24-kg of Pakistani rice 2,020afs, a tin of 16 liters of Khurshid ghee 1,000afs, the same rates of last week's.

Noor Ahmad Khairkhwa, a tea seller in Kabul Mandavi, said a kilogram of Indonesian green tea cost 280afs and the same amount of African black tea 300afs -- same prices as last week's.

Ahmad Wali Panjsheri, who owns a grocery store in Dahn-i-Bagh area of Kabul, sold a 50-kg sack of Kazakhstani flour for 1,400afs, a 49-kg bag of sugar for 1,850afs, 24-kg of Pakistani rice 2,400afs a 16-litre tin of ghee for 1,140afs, one-kg of Indonesian green tea for 300afs and the same amount of black African tea for 350afs—higher than wholesale rates.

Gold prices also remain steady.

Haji Fawad Ahmad Salehzada, a jeweler in Timor Shahi area of Kabul, said the one gram of Arabian gold cost 2,400afs and the same quantity of Russian variety 1,950afs.

According to Haji Mir Husain Sadaqat, owner of Sadaqat Money Exchange Services in Kabul, one US dollar accounted for 76afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees 557afs against last week's 75.95afs and 564afs. (Pajhwok)

(12) 48 Militants Killed...

more during the recent years.

The Taliban militants are active in some districts of Kunduz and often conduct terrorist related activities against the government and security institutions. (KP)