

Pakistan, Turkey to Form Joint Health Task Force: Khan

ANKARA - Pakistan and Turkey have agreed to cooperate in the field of health by setting up a task force, the country's premier said on Friday.

Imran Khan's remarks came in a meeting with Turkish Health Minister Fahrettin Koca and ministry officials accompanying in the capital Ankara.

During the meet, Khan and Koca discussed ways of cooperation on health tourism, city hospitals, medication and production of medical devices as well as technology transfer.

Khan said a task force will be set up for authorities from both countries to work in cooperation on Turkey's



transformation model in health that it currently implements, hospitals built in public-private partnership and medication and medical devices.

Koca hailed the country's transformation model in health, saying it enables all the people to have access to health services. (Agencies)

(1) Kabul Calls for...

up efforts for self-reliance, reads the statement.

The statement continues: "Our relations with the world are outlined on the basis of common interest and the international forces in Afghanistan are present in Afghanistan, not only for Afghanistan, but for the sake of security of the world and friendly countries too.

"At this critical stage of history, where the world is full of confusion and changing, the majority of world countries have new assessments in every sphere."

On the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan: "After the occupation of Afghanistan by the former Soviet Union, the Afghan people started their sacred Jihad for the sake of their liberty and freedom. There was a consensus in the world about the Jihad of the people of Afghanistan against the invasion of the country by the Soviet Union, and the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted a resolution condemning the aggression by the former Soviet Union.

"Also, foreign ministers from 34 Islamic countries issued a joint statement in which they blamed the former Soviet Union and demanded the conditional withdrawal of the Red Army from Afghanistan. After the invasion of former Soviet Union, all US presidents did not condemn the aggression, but remained supporters of the sacred Jihad of the Afghan people. The Afghans did not carry out suicide attacks during the Jihad and they did not pose any threat to any country," the statement concluded. The statement comes amid reports on a possible withdrawal of American troops from Afghanistan.

On these reports, US President Donald Trump, at a cabinet meeting on Wednesday, insisted on regional countries' role in Afghanistan and said Russia and Pakistan should be fighting in Afghanistan, not the United States.

"So you take a look at other countries - Pakistan is there. They should be fighting. But Russia should be fighting. The reason Russia was in Afghanistan was because terrorists were going into Russia. They were right to be there. The problem is it was a tough fight," Trump said.

Trump seemed to misstate the former Soviet Union's involvement in Afghanistan by saying: "Russia used to be the Soviet Union. Afghanistan made it Russia because they went bankrupt fighting in Afghanistan. The reason Russia was in Afghanistan was because terrorists were going into Russia. They were right to be there."

Trump brought up India's aid during a rambling press appearance at the cabinet meeting as he defended his push for the United States to invest less overseas.

While stating that he got along with PM Modi, the US President said Modi was "constantly telling me he built a library in Afghanistan".

"You know what that is? That's like five hours of what we spend,"

he said.

"And we're supposed to say, 'Oh, thank you for the library.' I don't know who's using it in Afghanistan," Trump said.

It was unclear to which project Trump was referring, but India has committed \$3 billion in assistance to Afghanistan since US-led forces toppled the Taliban regime after the September 11, 2001, attacks.

Projects have included the reconstruction of an elite high school in Kabul and scholarships to India for 1,000 Afghan students each year.

The remarks during the 95-minute cabinet meeting at the White House gave new insight into Trump's vision of Afghanistan and his frustration with the stalemate in the war-torn country - as well as with the generals who have advised him to stay, including his just-departed defense secretary, James Mattis.

"What's he done for me? How has he done in Afghanistan?" Trump said on Mattis. "I'm not happy with what he (has) done in Afghanistan, and I shouldn't be happy." Trump added that he'd "essentially" fired Mattis, though the Marine general resigned in protest over Trump's announced withdrawal from Syria. (Tolo news)

(2) Pakistan...

Afghan-owned and Afghan-led process had emerged as a notable convergence and shared desire among all, particularly Afghanistan's neighbors, who had serious stakes in an amicable resolution of the four decades old conflict.

The Turkish Foreign Minister meanwhile said that Pakistan and Turkey, as close partners, would continue their efforts to promote synergies on important issues.

Qureshi appreciated Turkey's key role in strengthening regional cooperation on Afghanistan through the Heart of Asia or the Istanbul process, the statement said.

"Both sides expressed satisfaction on the trajectory of bilateral relations, symbolized by unprecedented traditional warmth and affection, at the people's level," the statement added.

The Pakistani Foreign Minister visited Kabul two times last year in December to discuss bilateral cooperation, relations between the two countries and the peace process in Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

(3) Incoming Top...

also was present at Thursday's meeting.

Trump's criticism

The news came a day after U.S. President Donald Trump criticized U.S. military efforts in Afghanistan, slamming military leadership.

"I gave our generals all the money they wanted. They didn't do such a great job in Afghanistan," Trump said Wednesday.

Taking a swipe at former Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis, Trump told reporters Mattis' performance in Afghanistan was "not too good."

"I'm not happy about what he's done in Afghanistan, and I shouldn't be happy," Trump said.

Mattis resigned from his office Dec. 20, handing a resignation letter to the president that said Trump had the "right to have a secretary of defense whose views are better aligned" with his.

The letter pointed out Mattis' differences with Trump on the value of alliances and partnerships - Mattis said the United States could not protect its interests without "maintaining strong alliances and showing respect to those allies" - and their contrasting approaches to "authoritarian" nations like China and Russia.

Mattis agreed to stay at his post through February to "allow sufficient time for a successor to be nominated and confirmed," but Trump decided to replace him earlier, tapping Deputy Secretary of Defense Pat Shanahan to take the post as of Jan. 1.

"As you know, President [Barack] Obama fired him [Mattis], and essentially so did I," Trump said Wednesday.

The word "fired" sharply contrasted with the words Trump used to announce Mattis' resignation on Dec. 20, when Trump said Mattis was "retiring, with distinction" after making "tremendous progress." (VoA)

(4) China Lauds...

Enhancing political, economic and security relations, countering terrorism and organized crimes, and border and regional cooperation were among the goals of Shamkhani's visit to Afghanistan. (IRAN)

(5) Atmar Chooses...

However, a day earlier there were rumors on social media that Muhaqqiq would contest the presidential election as Gulbadin Hekmayar's first vice presidential candidate.

But today (Thursday), Muhaqqiq's party Wihdat Islami office rejected the rumors in a statement, which added no decision had been made in this regard.

The statement said Muhaqqiq would join an electoral ticket of his choice within few days. The statement did not say if Muhaqqiq has joined Atmar's camp.

Latif Padram was the first presidential candidate who submitted his nomination papers with the election commission on Thursday. (Pajhwok)

(6) Latif Pedram...

but later it was delayed after problems raised in using a biometric system and finalizing results of Afghan parliamentary elections. (ATN)

(7) Trump 'Evaluating'...

folks on the ground the ability to take the fight, be at the tip of the spear, supporting the Afghan National Army in the battle against the Taliban, ISIS (Daesh), Khorasan, Al Qaeda, re-emerging in Afghanistan," the US Vice President said as quoted by Fox News.

This comes amid reports about a possible withdrawal of at least 7,000 out of 14,000 US troops from Afghanistan. (Tolo news)

US Wants Iranians to 'Have Better Lives' with Sanctions: Pompeo

TEHRAN - US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo says Washington's tough sanctions against the Islamic Republic are aimed at giving the Iranian people a chance to have better lives.

"The sanctions on Iran have this ultimate goal: creating an outcome where the Iranian people can have better lives than they have today," Pompeo told Newsmax TV on Thursday.

The administration of US President Donald Trump announced on November 5 the reimposition of the "toughest" sanctions ever against Iran's banking and energy sectors with the aim of cutting off its oil sales and crucial exports. The bans

had been lifted under the 2015 nuclear deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

While the US claims the bans do not target civilians and ordinary people, they are actually hampering the import of food and medicine to the country, endangering the lives of millions of patients in Iran.

Pompeo earlier told BBC Persian that Iranian officials must listen to Washington "if they want their people to eat."

He also said since the re-introduction of the sanctions, there was no sign yet that Iranian officials would return to the negotiating table. (Press TV)

(8) Kabul Residents...

of the season.

Nasrullah, the resident of third Macrorryan, said due to increasing pollution in the city the residents were desperately waiting for a snowfall.

He was extremely happy over the snowing and added this has provided the creature a new life as pollution has badly affected the life of human, plants and animals.

Farhad, the resident of Kart-i-Naw locality, said: "I am really happy with the snowfall, the Kabul air was badly polluted which made many people sick."

Haji Sultan, the resident of Khairkhana locality said the snowfall was the blessing of Almighty Allah and everyone should thank Allah for the blessing. Meanwhile, some poor families in Kabul have been struggling to heat up their rooms as snowfall brought down the temperature further. Abdul Hameed, the resident of Helmand, who migrated to capital Kabul said: "We may die if we don't get assistance during winter."

Ghulam Rasoul, another displaced person, who lives in a tent with his five-member family, said: "You definitely get sick living in the tent in cold weather." (Pajhwok)

(9) Taliban Force...

ensure the safety and security of the Taliban.

He said 20 to 30 families had been forced to leave their homes and alleged the government for exaggerating the numbers. (Pajhwok)

(10) HPC Urges Shift...

the withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan," said former Taliban commander, Sayed Akbar Agha.

Ghani's envoy said there are uncertainties on how to reach a peace deal with the Taliban.

According to him, the first uncertainty is that it is not clear what the countries in the region, including neighboring nations, actually want in Afghanistan. He said some counties interfere in Afghanistan's affairs for their own interests and they harm the people.

Another uncertainty, according to Daudzai, is that it is not clear what Taliban actually wants. "Are they (Taliban) really wanting to establish an Islamic emirate or do they want to be part of the current system?" Daudzai said.

"How it is possible for a group to sit with the Taliban without someone from the government side, this is quite dangerous, this will escalate civil war in the country," said political analyst, Shah Mahmoud Miakhel. Meanwhile, Pakistan's foreign minister Shah Mahmoud Qureshi on Thursday left for Turkey as part of the peace effort.

"The role of Turkey towards stability in Afghanistan has been very positive, this country also realizes Pakistan's perspective, there is harmony in our views regarding Afghanistan," he said. (Tolo news)

(11) Taliban's Shadow...

In a separate operation, Ghazni Mohammad, a Taliban infiltrator in the Afghan Local Police forces, was detained before he could reach his

target.

The detainee wanted to kill an ALP commander in Chamtal district, the spy service said, adding the detainees had confessed their crimes.

The Taliban have not yet commented in this regard. (Pajhwok)

(12) India Rejects...

dams, schools and even parliament building," Ram Madhav, a BJP general secretary, said on Twitter.

"We are building lives, for which the Afghan people thank us, no matter what others do or don't."

Congress said India did not "need sermons from the U.S on Afghanistan".

The United States has 14,000 troops in Afghanistan, with reports it may be set to withdraw more than 5,000, a sign Trump's patience is thinning with America's longest war. Trump has already decided to pull all U.S. troops out of Syria.

Modi's office did not respond to an email seeking comment. Reuters could not reach the White House outside regular business hours in the United States. India is the biggest South Asian donor to Afghanistan, spending around \$2 billion on reconstruction and rehabilitation, according to the Indian embassy in Kabul. Over the past few years India has helped Afghanistan build roads, erect power transmission lines and construct a parliament building. Kabul has not yet responded to Trump's comments.

Afghanistan's national security advisor, Hamdullah Mohib, is meeting his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval and other officials in New Delhi on Friday.

"Trump mocked India, a key U.S. non-NATO partner that's done major development work in Afghanistan, for building a library there," Michael Kugelman, South Asia senior associate at the Washington-based Wilson Center think-tank, said on Twitter. "Sigh." (Reuters)

(13) Over 70 Militants...

Murghab district of Badghis province, seven rebels were killed, three others injured and five suspected arrested in Kapesa's Najrab district and in Helmand's Nad Ali district six rebels were killed, five others injured and a motorcycle seized.

In addition, four Haqani Network militants were killed and a motorcycle seized in the Sarobi district of Paktika province. In Farah's Push-troad district four rebels were killed and two others injured.

In Ghazni's Qarabagh district three militants were killed and four others injured, two more insurgents were killed and a vehicle destroyed in the Paktia's Zurmat district.

Two Daesh rebels were killed in the Pachir Agam district of Nangarhar, their hideouts were destroyed and weapons captured. (Pajhwok)

(14) Fire Erupts...

brigade team.

Security personnel have arrived in the site of fire and helped other shopkeepers to transfer their goods to a safe place.

Governor spokesman Attaullah Khogyani told Pajhwok Afghan News that the fire erupted as a result of short circuit and the fire brigade team was trying to control the fire. (Pajhwok)