

France Bans Iran's Mahan Air for Flying Arms, Troops to Syria, Elsewhere

PARIS - France has banned flights in and out of the country by Iran's Mahan Air, accusing it of transporting military equipment and personnel to Syria and other Middle East war zones, diplomats said on Monday, after heavy U.S. pressure on Paris to act.

The decision to revoke Mahan's license to operate in France was

made after Germany banned the airline in January.

Paris had considered revoking its license more than two years ago under the presidency of Francois Hollande, but had backed down because it feared it could harm relations just after a nuclear deal between Iran and world powers was signed in 2015. (Reuters)

(1) US Deputy...

The US deputy ambassador Karen Decker also said that achievements of the past 18 years were the result of the sacrifices and cooperation of the people of Afghanistan against terrorism and their concerns this regard were considerable.

At the meeting, Sarwar Danish said in order to reach lasting peace, the Afghan government has the same stance as of international cooperators and stressed that the peace negotiations should be led and owned by the Afghan government and people.

Danish said continuation of democracy was vital for the people of Afghanistan and all Afghans were on the same page about the democratic system in their country. (Pajhwok)

(2) NATO, Allies...

Kay stressed sustainable peace required an inclusive intra-Afghan dialogue involving all parties and NATO allies and partners stood ready to support Afghan civil society. Any peace settlement must be built on the gains of the last 17 years.

"My top priority is to support a sustainable peace settlement in 2019 so that Afghans can build a brighter future," he said, adding continued interest in peace talks from both sides was positive in itself.

He hoped intra-Afghan talks, essential for lasting peace and political solution, would take place soon. Kay recalled the EU, the US and NATO were working for peace in Afghanistan. "Our goal is the same -- to see sustainable peace in Afghanistan," he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(3) Atmar Vows...

He asked the government to implement its promise made with the people of Balkg after the appointment of new police chief.

Atmar alleged the government was not interested in peace talks and was deliberately trying to derail the peace process. He warned that harming the peace process would lead to dangerous consequences. (Pajhwok)

(4) Bill Gates Urges...

"That's what we don't have predictability or control over," he said. "Sometimes they stop the campaigns from taking place. But the ideal is when they allow house-to-house (vaccine) delivery."

Gates pointed to India, which 12 years ago was responsible for 70 percent of all polio cases and this week marks five years since it last recorded a case.

Gates had previously described the challenge of wiping out polio in India, which has a population of 1.3 billion people and some areas of very poor sanitation, as "mind boggling". Success there, he said, shows polio can eventually be ended worldwide. (Reuters)

(5) New Zealand...

following the attack. She swiftly moved to denounce the incident as terrorism, toughen gun laws and express national solidarity with the victims and their families.

The vigil started with an Islamic prayer, followed by a reading of the names of the victims, which included students from the near-

by Cashmere High School.

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness only light can," Okirano Tilaia, one of the school's pupils, told the crowd. "Hatred cannot drive out hatred, only love can." Earlier in the day more than 1,000 people marched in a rally against racism in central Auckland, carrying "Migrant lives matters" and "Refugees welcome here," placards.

Muslims account for just over 1 percent of New Zealand's 4.8-million population, a 2013 census showed, most of whom were born overseas.

As New Zealand continued to mourn and ask questions about how such an attack could have happened in the peaceful Pacific nation, the victims' families spoke about their losses.

Shahadat Hossain, whose brother Mojammel Haque was killed in the attack, arrived in New Zealand on Saturday to bring his brother's body back to Bangladesh.

"I can't describe how I felt when I saw my brother's lifeless body," he told Reuters. "I was devastated."

Farid Ahmed, who was at the Al Noor mosque when the shooting took place, escaped but his wife, Husna, was killed. On Sunday, he went door-to-door, thanking his neighbors for their support.

"They came running... they were crying, they were in tears," he said of his neighbors when they found out that Husna had died.

"That was a wonderful support and expression of love, and I am feeling that I should also take the opportunity to say to them that I also love them." (Reuters)

(6) Ghani Ushers in...

Lack of professional teachers, adequate textbooks and buildings have been one of the main problems for education over the past years.

Ghani, meanwhile, said violence against teachers and students is not acceptable and that parents should feel secure while sending their children to schools.

He said the quality of education has not been taken into consideration and that there is a need for focusing on this matter.

The Education Minister said one million new students will be enrolled in schools this year.

According to him, 3.7 million children are still deprived of going to schools.

Balkhi called on President Ghani to increase the salary of school-teachers.

In response to this, Ghani said the problem of providing land to teachers has been solved to some extent, and that the matter of increasing teachers' payments will be taken into consideration.

Ghani called on teachers to conduct a national campaign against corruption is needed in the country.

Figures by the Ministry of Education from last year show that 50 percent of schools in Afghanistan are without buildings, 3.5 million children are deprived of education and at least 1,000 schools have remained closed across the country. (Tolo news)

(7) Kabul Gathering...

He asked the government to be

ISLAMABAD - The 79th National Day of Pakistan was celebrated with traditional zeal and patriotic spirit by Pakistanis living in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

To join the Pakistani community celebrating their National Day, Burj Khalifa, the tallest and most famous skyscraper in the world, was also lit up in the colours of Pakistani flag on

the night of March 23, said a press release received here Monday.

A huge number of Pakistanis were present there to rejoice the event.

In this connection, Pakistan Embassy in UAE hosted a reception that was attended by a large number of ambassadors and their representatives, officials of the UAE government, media and members of Pakistan community.

Sheikh Nahyan bin Mubarak Al Nahyan, Cabinet Member and Minister of Tolerance was the chief guest on the occasion. In his address, Ambassador of Pakistan Moazzam Ahmad Khan, recalled the historic struggle of the Muslims of the subcontinent to achieve a separate homeland to lead their lives with dignity, honor and freedom. (Monitoring Desk)

careful while conducting raids and take care not to kill civilians for the sake of one Taliban fighter.

Political affairs expert Nazar Mohammad Mutmain said the number of civilians being killed had surged.

He said the US claimed it was trying to end the ongoing war and would withdraw its forces if peace was established, but some Afghans were still interested in the war and in the presence of foreign troops in Afghanistan.

Without going into details, he said some individuals inside the government were against peace while 90 percent of the people of Afghanistan wanted peace.

About the upcoming meeting between Afghan politicians and the Taliban, Motmain said the opportunity should not be wasted and urged the government and the people of Afghanistan to get maximum advantage of the opportunity.

Faiz Mohammad Zalan, another political activist, termed the unity government as an irresponsible one and said over half a million people migrated from Afghanistan during the National Unity Government.

He also referred to some individuals within the government who he said were trying to sabotage the peace process.

He said the continuation of civilian casualties in airstrikes and night raids strengthened the Taliban and swelled their ranks.

Khairullah Shinwari, a civil society activist referring to the killing of former Wolosi Jirga member in Kandahar province, said why individuals who wanted peace, withdrawal of foreign forces, ban on airstrikes and night raids were being killed.

"We are surprised why the government is against peace and favour the continuation of war," he questioned. (Pajhwok)

(8) Mueller Finds...

That could deflate the hopes of Democrats in Congress and on the 2020 campaign trail that incriminating findings from Mueller would hobble the president's agenda and re-election bid.

But while Mueller was categorical in ruling out criminal collusion, he was more circumspect on presidential obstruction of justice. Despite Trump's claim of total exoneration, Mueller did not draw a conclusion one way or the other on whether he sought to stifle the Russia investigation through his actions including the firing of former FBI director James Comey. (AP)

(9) Kosovo PM...

two-year war and clearing the way for its independence in 2008. As many as 4,000 NATO peacekeepers are still deployed.

Mikic was not immediately available for comment.

Haradinaj dismissed the deputy minister with immediate effect.

"In Kosovo government there will be no place for individuals, despite their ethnicity, to denigrate our common euro-Atlantic values," Haradinaj said in a statement. (Reuters)

(10) Charges of Cheating...

government in 2014, would stay in power, although that outcome was not certain.

"There are irregularities in this election that we're not comfortable with. These affect the nation's credibility and people's trust," said Sudarat Keyuraphan, candidate for prime minister of the Pheu Thai Party.

"We've voiced our concerns before for vote-buying, abuse of power, and cheating. All three have manifested. We will fight back through legal means," she told a news conference. (Reuters)

(11) Pope Visits Italy's...

her she would give birth to Jesus. Monday is a religious holiday, the Feast of the Annunciation, marking this event.

The Holy House of Loreto or the Flying House of Loreto, as it is known, was miraculously saved by angels so it would not be destroyed after Christian crusaders were expelled from Palestine in the 13th century, according to the tradition.

A more earthly explanation, also offered on the shrine's website as an alternative, is that a wealthy family of merchants who ruled over what is now part of Greece and Albania and whose surname was Angeli (angels), had the stones brought over by ship. (Reuters)

(12) India's Opposition...

Gopal Krishna Agarwal. "Without homework, it's just a political statement."

Any family earning less than 12,000 rupees a month would receive 6,000 rupees every month in its bank account, said Praveen Chakravarty, the head of Congress's data analytics department. The party would look to roll out the program nationwide within two years, and target paying the amount into the account of the family's senior woman member, he added.

Chakravarty declined to say if the scheme would fold in existing subsidies, but said state and federal government have sufficient resources to fund it without widening the fiscal deficit.

The Congress announcement may have come too late, some analysts said.

"Voters are now well aware that in the run-up to elections, there would be lot of things and schemes announced," said Rahul Verma, a fellow at think-tank Centre for Policy Research in New Delhi. "I don't think this will do anything for the Congress." (Reuters)

(13) Relief, And...

were hospitalised, and only one suffered serious injuries.

- 'Could have been worse' -

"The risk to the passengers and the vessel was high," Dag Sverre Liseth, director of the marine department at the Accident Investigations Board Norway, told AFP.

"It could have been worse, but thankfully, it all ended well."

The agency has launched an investigation into the incident, which could have quickly turned to tragedy.

With only one of its four engines working, the ship drifted dangerously close to rocky reefs notori-

ous for shipwrecks.

At the last moment the crew managed to drop anchor on Saturday about two kilometres (1.2 miles) from shore, stabilising the situation.

With three of four engines restarted on Sunday, the vessel set sail under its own power for Molde, 500 kilometres northwest of Oslo -- about 26 hours after issuing the mayday call. (AFP)

(14) Death Toll Rises...

could possibly be among the victims whose identifications had yet been verified.

The explosion happened at about 2:48 p.m. Thursday following a fire that broke out in a plant owned by Jiangsu Tianjiayi Chemical Co. Ltd., in a chemical industrial park in Xiangshui County in Yancheng. (Xinhua)

(15) Saudi-Led...

cooperation in regard to the memorandum with the United Nations, especially that it serves a "noble cause."

The Saudi-led war in Yemen against Houthis in support of the Yemeni exiled government will complete its fourth year on Tuesday as it started on March 26, 2015. (Xinhua)

(16) Boeing to Brief...

wrong that they will find a fix for it," he said.

The 737 MAX is Boeing's best-selling plane, with orders worth more than \$500 billion at list prices.

However, shares in Boeing have fallen 14 percent since the crash on March 10, wiping around \$34 billion off the valuation of the company. (Reuters)

(17) World Bank Approves...

The micro, small and medium-sized enterprises sector represents nearly 50 percent of the country's gross domestic product. In 2017, around 78 percent of the working force worked in small companies while 27 percent were employed in the agricultural sector. (Xinhua)

(18) Pakistan, A Powerful...

He said Pakistan was passing through a different phase under an honest and credible leadership. The president cited the sayings of Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah regarding the responsibilities of the Armed Forces saying that they would carry forward the high values of their sages whenever the country needed them for its defence and safeguard the national security and dignity.

President Alvi said Pakistan's Armed Forces always came up to the public expectations and felicitated the Armed Forces, the contingents of paramilitary troops and civil administration for successfully holding the Pakistan Day parade what he said was a brilliant demonstration of professional competence and defence capabilities.

He particularly thanked the friendly countries including Saudi Arabia, Azerbaijan, Sri Lanka, Brunei, Bahrain, Turkey and China for participating the annual event.

He said different floats had depicted the national culture in varying styles.

Earlier, the president also distributed prizes among the organizers of the parade. (Monitoring Desk)