

(1) Obama Warns...

these 13 years, Obama said US troops had devastated the core Al Qaeda leadership, delivering justice to Osama bin Laden, disrupting terrorist plots and saving countless American lives.

"We are safer, and our nation is more secure, because of their service. At the same time, our courageous military and diplomatic personnel in Afghanistan along with our NATO allies and coalition partners have helped the Afghan people reclaim their communities, take the lead for their own security, hold historic elections and complete the first democratic transfer of power in their country's history," he said.

Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel said from January 1, US would work with allies and partners as part of NATO's Resolute Support Mission to continue training, advising, and assisting Afghan security forces.

"And we will continue our counterterrorism mission against the remnants of Al Qaeda to ensure that Afghanistan is never again used to stage attacks against our homeland," he said.

The United States remained strongly committed to a sovereign, secure, stable, and unified Afghanistan, Hagel said.

He added that as the US responsibly drawdown its military presence, it will continue to partner together with Afghan forces to combat terrorism and create a better future for the Afghan people. (Pajhwok)

(2) Russia Won't...

the events unfold," he said. Moscow has no plan to redeploy its border troops along the Afghan-Tajik borders, he said, adding that Russia could assist Dushanbe in military-technical terms.

Noting that Russia has strived to deepen cooperation with its allies along Afghanistan's perimeter, the diplomat said that Moscow and Kabul have been working on an agreement on military-technical cooperation.

Kabulov warned that following the end of the ISAF's mission, armed groups of extremists, including the Islamic State, could spill into such Central Asian countries as Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan in early 2015.

He estimated that those groups comprise up to 7,500 people, with most of them being natives of those Central Asian countries.

The Taliban could also increase its threats to Kabul in 2015, he said.

Kabulov said despite the Afghanistan-originated security threats, including drug trafficking, could grow, the CSTO has no mandate to deal with Afghanistan's internal problems.

"The CSTO could only provide security to its members, protect its outer borders," Kabulov said, adding that Russia's 201 military base in Tajikistan will play a big role in Central Asian military security.

Insisting that his estimations were "not pessimistic but realistically based on the reliable information," the diplomat said the timing for the ISAF withdrawal was "extremely inconvenient" because the country has not formed a cabinet while local political elites were divided over the recent presidential elections' results.

He also accused the Western coalition of making a "major mistake" that nothing substantial has been done to bolster Afghanistan's economy over the past 13 years.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), he said, will have to pay attention to the situation in Afghanistan, which has an observer's status in the organization.

Since the SCO has no military structure, its role could be assisting the Afghan government economically, he said. (Xinhua)

(3) MoI Welcomes...

and assist Afghan forces by the end of this month, when Afghan forces will be responsible for security nationwide.

The MoI on Sunday dubbed assuming full security responsibility by Afghan forces as one of their great achievements so far.

MoI spokesman Siddique Siddiqui told reporters in Kabul: "We have long been waiting for this day when NATO combat mission will end and the entire responsibility transitions to Afghan forces."

He said the Afghan forces would be responsible for security of the entire country from the start of the new year, something seen as one of their great achievements during the past 13 years.

The residual nearly 13000 foreign troops to train and assist Afghan forces post-2014 will include 10800 American troops.

When the numbers reached the peak, 140,000 troops from 51 countries were stationed in Afghanistan, but their numbers started reducing two years back when the security transition process began. The 13-year war saw 3500 foreign troops falling in Afghanistan.

Siddiqui said the Afghan forces had the ability to defend the country and the insurgents had lost the courage to face them.

About the ongoing conflict in the Dangam district of eastern Kunar province, the official said the insurgents had been defeated there and security forces were busy conducting search operations.

"We were facing international terrorism that has been defeated. Terrorists cannot enter a direct engagement with Afghan forces," Siddiqui said.

Last week, the Ministry of Defence said the operations in Dangam had problems earlier, now the offensive was being carried out as planned.

Hundreds of insurgents two weeks ago launched attacks on the troubled town against residents spearheading an uprising against them.

Local officials in Kunar said ground offensive by Afghan forces and airstrikes by foreign troops last week had resulted in the killing of more than 100 rebels, including 17 Pakistani fighters. Another 100 insurgents have been injured, they said.

Security officials claim they had suffered less casualties in the Dangam district and the Taliban have rejected their casualty figures.

Hundreds of residents, including women and children, who had been under Taliban's siege, have been freed and moved to other areas after mediation of tribal elders. The displaced families have been assisted with essential food and non-food items. (Pajhwok)

(4) Wolesi Jirga...

parliamentary delegation would meet today with CEO Abdullah Abdullah.

The delegation, comprising members of the administration board, 18 house commissions and leaders of parliamentary groups, met in the afternoon with Abdullah, but outcome of their talks is yet to be shared with media persons.

Iran said the assembly had sent a letter to President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, requesting him to meet the parliamentary delegation, but there had been no response as yet.

He brushed aside speculations that the president had refused to meet the delegation. "I reject these rumours. God willing, we will meet the president until Thursday."

Irfan said if the sittings did not yield any positive outcome, the Wolesi Jirga would make another decision at the general session on Saturday. However, he did not explain what decision the house would likely to take, but insisted the government should introduce the cabinet

as soon as possible to end the issue of acting officials.

Over the past three months, ministers, governors and departmental heads have been performing duty in acting capacity.

Meanwhile, second deputy speaker Rafiullah Gul Afghan criticised the delay in cabinet formation. He said the delay was a result of differences between the president and the CEO, threatening key sectors.

He believed the president and the CEO could not form the cabinet in months to come. "People had great trust in the two leaders, but their talks remained talks and did nothing in practical."

Gul Afghan warned if the cabinet formation was further delayed, the masses, already fed up with numerous problems, would embark on a series of protests. (Pajhwok)

(5) Amendments...

house after some members proposed changes to the law's article three and six. The MPs insisted words "Afghan" and "tribe" should be mentioned in the ID cards.

Wolesi Jirga deputy secretary Irfanullah Irfan told Pajhwok Afghan News the interior security commission had been tasked with introducing amendments to the law in line with the house's decision.

However, he said the commission was yet to inform the house administration board about the proposed amendments.

But a member of the panel, Shakiba Hashmi, said the draft amendments had been prepared and would be presented before the assembly for a decision on Wednesday.

"Our commission has decided that only the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan should be written in the ID cards and there is no need to mention words Afghan and tribes," she said.

She said only the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan should be written in ID cards because other information about their holders was saved in the supporting database. (Pajhwok)

(6) 80 Militants ...

a roadside bomb organized by Taliban militants in Nimroz province struck a police van on Monday killing two police constables and injuring two others, provincial police chief Qasim Jangalbagh said.

"A mine planted by insurgents struck a police vehicle on the road linking provincial capital Zaranj to Khashrod district Monday afternoon leaving two police personnel dead and two others injured," Jangalbagh told reporters. (Xinhua)

(7) 200 Taliban ...

Jawzjan is among the relatively volatile provinces in northern Afghanistan where anti-government armed militant groups are actively operating in a number of its remote districts and often carry out insurgency activities. (KP)

(8) Australia's 40....

According to Wall Street Journal, Afghan forces will be left alone to battle the resilient Taliban. The smaller force that will be left behind by the ISAF will focus more on counterterrorism and training Afghan soldiers and police. U.S. President Barack Obama had praised the change as the longest war in American history is finally coming to a "responsible conclusion."

Mr Obama said in a speech that some 18,000 foreign troops will remain in Afghanistan, of which 10,600 are Americans. They will stay under the terms of two security treaties that the Afghan government had signed with the U.S. and NATO. The mission was dubbed as "Resolute Support."

During the formal ceremony at the ISAF headquarters in Kabul, coalition commander U.S. Army Gen. John Campbell had removed the ISAF

flag and hoisted the Resolute Support banner. The base remained on high alert in case of a Taliban attack.

Hanif Atmar, national security adviser of Afghan President Ashraf Ghani, said that the country's military forces are ready to assume the responsibility of protecting the people. However, Atmar said Afghanistan acknowledges that it will still need support from the coalition.

ISAF was formed after the U.S. invaded Afghanistan, following the 9/11 terrorist attack. The coalition was initially created to provide security in Kabul but has evolved into a joint task force of 50 nations to fight the Taliban. The force originally had as much as 130,000 troops between 2010 and 2011 but the numbers have shrunk in recent years as Afghan police took responsibility in maintaining security. (Monitoring Desk)

(9) Japan Donates ...

ambassador of Japan to Afghanistan noted: "On behalf of the government and people of Japan, I would like to congratulate the successful handover of Lab and X-Ray equipments to IGICH. This GAGP projects are targeting directly community levels to address urgent needs of the vulnerable people."

This GAGP projects covers the construction of, schools, clinics, vocational training centers, agricultural, irrigation, demining and infrastructure projects with the special attention to rural and remote areas, it noted. (Pajhwok)

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"The corpses of insurgents are lying on the ground," Syedkhili said. He added the insurgents have taken up positions at civilian homes.

According to security officials, the Dangam operation is carried out slowly and carefully in order to prevent civilian casualties.

"About 60 residents of Dangam are also supporting the security forces in this fighting," Syedkhili noted.

The Dangam fighting began two weeks ago 14 More after hundreds of Taliban militants, most of them Pakistani nationals, attacked the district with setting homes on fire. So far, more than thousand families have reportedly evacuated their homes. (Tolonews)

along with two other suspects were detained from the 17th police district of Kabul city. (KP)

groups in the districts and demanded action to purge the area of anti-state elements, he added.

Mohammad Isa, a resident of Darzab, said Dostum arrived to the district via Qosh-Tapa and was warmly welcomed by locals.

"Taliban harass us and extort money and food by force. We want the government to launch operations against them," he added.

Col. Abdul Manan Raufi, a senior police official, said two insurgents were killed in a blast last night when they were planting roadside bomb in the district.

He clarified the blast occurred in a remote village and did not have any connection to first VP's visit.

Meanwhile, Jawzjan police chief Faqir Mohammad Jawzjani said a 80-members rebel group joined the government initiated peace process in the presence of Dostum.

The group was led by Maulvi Niamatullah and the move would help boost security of the province, he hoped. (Pajhwok)

complained they have not received any salary for the past two months and their seats are also unknown.

They declared that based on the law, the term of the chairman of senate and the

administrative board has ended and the new replacements should take place after voting between new senators.

"After the new senators are elected, the new administrative board of the Senate should be elected in the polling inside the House," senator from Baghlan Mohammad Faisal Sami said.

Rejecting that the delay of senators' inauguration had any link to the election commission, the officials urged that the inauguration of fresh senators is responsibility of the government.

Based on the Constitution, each province has two seats in the Senate while the rest of them are selected by the President. But now only one senator from each province is elected because the district council elections were not held and the President needs to select 34 more senators. (Tolonews)

(14) Farah to ...

Tehran one month back. Calling the project of enormous importance, Governor Muhammad Umar Sherzad said that the electricity would be supplied to province from Iran through Sistan Balochistan.

The electricity cables, he said would cover 35 kilometres area of Iran and 135 kilometres of Afghanistan, he added. Iran, he said would bear \$10 million cost while Afghanistan would pay the rest \$36 million expenses of the project.

Two engineers from Afghanistan's Ministry of Power and Electricity had concluded the survey on Sunday. But Director Electricity Abdul Nasir Nizami said that work on design of the project would take two months after completion of the survey.

He said it was agreed upon that Farah City would get the electricity after 18 months. Efforts, he said were on to establish a grid station for the electricity in Shorabad locality.

"It is not confirm how much kilowatt electricity will be supplied by Iran but Tehran has pledged to provide enough electricity to fulfill the demand of Farah City," he added.

Initially the City of Farah would be supplied with the power but other districts of the province would get the power gradually, he remarked. He said the price per unit of the electricity would be much lower and the project would help bolster local economy and multiply business activities.

Meanwhile, officials in western Ghor province, said people in Feroz Koh town to remain without electricity for one month.

A diesel generator that was providing electricity for 2,200 families, needed fixing, officials added. (Pajhwok)

atmosphere of failure and disappointment without having achieved anything substantial or tangible," Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said in an statement emailed on Monday.

About 13,000 foreign troops, mostly Americans, will remain in the country under a new, two-year mission named "Resolute Support" that will continue the coalition's training of Afghan security forces to fight the insurgents, who have killed record numbers of Afghans this year.

While the U.S. and its allies say the Afghan army and police have been able to prevent the Taliban from taking significant territory, violence has shot up as the insurgents seek to gain ground.

For Afghanistan's new president, Ashraf Ghani, keeping government control of territory and preventing security from further deteriorating is a top priority.

Vowing to restore their former hard-line Islamist regime, Taliban spokesman Mujahid vowed that "the demoralised American-built forces will constantly be dealt defeats just like their masters".

The Taliban have launched increasingly deadly attacks

there and in return, security forces intimidated locals. He said residents long endured the situation and finally ran out of patience.

Mohammad urged the government to provide villagers spearheading the uprisings with weapons and bullets and establish schools and health clinics for them.

Yet another villager, Mohammad Jan, said insurgents had expelled many residents from their homes after accusing them of cooperation with the government. The rebels would severely beat such people or kill them, he recalled.

He said residents had no option but to pick up guns and protect their areas from insurgents.

He said the people had taken the decision in government support and now the government should assist them.

Maiwand police chief said the residents had themselves decided to stand by the government and had promised not to allow insurgents to enter their areas.

He said the current strength of the uprising members stood at 150, including youths and elderly men.

He said after residents informed security forces about their decision, the forces conducted a three-day operation and cleared the area of armed militants.

The police official promised the uprising members would be supplied weapons and they would also be given training.

Maiwand is now the second district after Panjwai of Kandahar, where residents have waged uprising against insurgents.

Militants operate in some parts of Maiwand 70 km from Kandahar City along the Kandahar-Herat highway. (Pajhwok)

(16) 59 Insurgents...

hours in Kunar, Laghman, Parwan, Kunduz, Sar-e-Pul, Jowzjan, Balkh, Kandahar, Uruzgan, Maidan Wardak and Khost provinces.

Afghan National Police (ANP) was also assisted by Afghan National Army (ANA) and National Directorate of Security (NDS) personnel in these operations, the statement says.

According to the statement security forces also seized different types of weapons and ammunitions and defused 55 IEDs in Kandahar, Ghazni, Uruzgan and Jowzjan provinces.

Improvised Explosive Device or IED is considered one of the biggest threats not only to government forces but also to the civilians.

Yesterday in eastern Laghman province an IED explosion inside a house killed two people. (KP)

(17) Taliban Declare...

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this year. Nearly 3,200 Afghan civilians were killed in the conflict between the militant group and the army in 2014, and more than 4,600 Afghan army and police died in Taliban attacks.

Since 2001, nearly 3,500 foreign soldiers have been killed in the war, including around 2,200 Americans. (Reuters)

(18) University ...

said construction projects had been stopped in much of the country due to a lack of budget. Therefore, he requested people to financially help them reconstruct roads and sidewalks on the campus.

He also asked President Ashraf Ghani and other high official to support the campaign from their own wealth and spend government funds for other universities.

The acting chancellor said they had to complete the construction works in two months because they would celebrate the university's golden jubilee two months later, when professors and lecturers from regional universities would arrive. (Pajhwok)

US stocks Edge Higher Amid Hopes for China Growth

NEW YORK — U.S. stocks are inching mostly higher in noon trading Monday as Wall Street winds down the year in this holiday-shortened week. Asian shares rose after Chinese regulators announced changes designed to stimulate the world's second-largest economy. Several European indexes fell as Greece headed for early elections that could endanger its bailout program.

KEEPING SCORE: The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose four points, or 0.2 percent, to 2,093 as of 12:14 p.m. Eastern. The Dow Jones industrial average was flat at 18,050 and the Nasdaq composite rose five points, or less than 0.1 percent, to 4,812.

GREEK JITTERS: News that Greece will hold early general elections next month stoked concerns over the country's financial future. An opposition party that is against the terms of the country's bailout program is leading in the polls, and investors worry it will seek changes if it wins the election. The Athens exchange was down 4 percent, having fallen as much as 11 percent earlier.

EUROPE: Other European markets were mixed. France's CAC-40 edged up 0.5 percent, Germany's DAX rose 0.1 percent and the U.K.'s FTSE 100 rose 0.4 percent. Spain's IBEX 35 fell 0.8 percent and Italy's benchmark index fell 1.1 percent.

U.S. BACKDROP: Despite troubles abroad, the U.S. economy has provided support for U.S. stocks as 2014 comes to a close. Employers are on track to hire nearly 3 million workers this year, the most since the dot-com boom year of 1999. The unemployment rate has dropped to 5.8 percent, down about a percentage point since the start of the year. And the U.S. economy grew at an annualized rate of 5 percent in the July-September quarter, the fastest in 11 years. The S&P 500 has hit record highs more than 50 times so far this year. The index has tripled from the 12-year lows it reached at the depths of the financial crisis in 2009.

THE QUOTE: John Manley, chief equity strategist at Wells Fargo Fund Management, said he expect the stocks are being pushed higher in part from what he calls "sleepy heads," investors who tend to put off plowing money into IRAs until the closing days of each year.

RUBLE TROUBLES: Russia's currency was also in focus. The ruble fell 8 percent on Monday after a rally last week. Russian monetary officials have made stabilizing the currency a priority amid slumping oil revenues and unease about the country's economic outlook. Mizuho Bank warned in a report that this "may not be the end of the troubles" for the Russian economy. (AP)