

(1) UN Security ...

has about 14,000 uniformed personnel in the country.

The White House says Trump and Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbaev will discuss Afghanistan among other things when they meet at the White House on January 16. (Pajhwok)

(2) US Hopes

security assistance.

"We would hope that Pakistan would come to the table and that they would turn over those terrorists that we have asked be turned over. We've indicated very clearly that we believe that can happen," Goldstein said.

The United States, he said, has only suspended the aid; and the money has not been reallocated.

"So now it is the job of Pakistan to take seriously their commitment to us, and most importantly to the people of Pakistan who would most be hurt by this, by any terrorist activity, and come forward. So, our position hasn't changed. They have not yet come forward," Goldstein said.

The Pentagon said that Pakistan has the ability to address terrorist threat inside the country. "We believe that Pakistan has the ability to address this threat," the Pentagon Chief Spokesperson Dana White told reporters at a news conference.

"This is an opportunity for them to take decisive action, and we look forward to working with them to encourage them to do so," White said in response to a question on recent development on Us-Pak relations front. Responding to a question, she also said that India has contributed a great deal in terms of developmental aid in Afghanistan.

"We're excited about the opportunities for India to participate in the South Asia Strategy, and how we secure that region. They're an important player and in 2018 we look forward to doing more with them," White said. (Pajhwok)

(3) US to Send ...

Afghanistan under US President Donald Trump's new strategy, bringing the number of US forces in the country to at least 14,000.

Military officials quoted by the Wall Street Journal said the reason to bulk up the US military presence in Afghanistan is to intensify the war against terrorist groups particularly Daesh.

The new personnel who will be sent it to Afghanistan as soon as February will work as combat advisers to Afghan National Security Forces, US officials said as quoted in the report. "We have Marines in Afghanistan. We're talking in the central command region in that particular fight, hundreds, not thousands, but we have hundreds that are making an incredibly important difference on the outcome of that fight," said Lt. Gen. Maj. Gen. Brian D. Beaudreault, the deputy commandant for Plans, Policies, and Operations.

Meanwhile, Pentagon called on Pakistan to act against terrorist groups on its soil.

"We believe that Pakistan has the ability to address this threat. This is an opportunity for them to take decisive action, and we look forward to working with them to encourage them to do so," Pentagon Chief spokesman Dana White said at a news conference.

He said boosting India-United States relations is part of Washington's efforts to ensure stability in Afghanistan.

"We're excited about the opportunities for India to participate in the South Asia strategy, and how we secure that region. They're an important player and in 2018 we look forward to doing more with them. India has contributed a great deal in terms of developmental aid in Afghanistan," White said.

This comes after American media reported this week that the US Navy is planning to hire drone-maker General Atomics to fly its own unarmed MQ-9 Reapers in support of US Marines in Afghanistan.

The contractor-operated drones would provide a "surge" of intelligence, reconnaissance, and surveillance capabilities as the US military expands its activities in the Central Asian country, which the US Air Force is not able to provide at present, The Drive reported Thursday.

The proposed deal was announced by the Naval Air System Command (NAVAIR) on January 09.

The contract, which the Navy did not give an estimated value for, would cover up to a year of operations in Afghanistan running between the 2018 Fiscal Year, when began on Oct. 1, 2017, and the 2019 fiscal cycle. The announcement does not elaborate

anything about the number of Reapers in the mission. (Tolonews)

(4) Committee ...

"The selection committee after officially starting its job on 7 Jaddi (28 December) distributed 88 application forms to applicants of which 57 candidates submitted their documents to the secretariat of the selection committee for the post of the election commissioner," the press release quoted Rashid as saying.

According to Rashid, 27 candidates were immediately dropped from the list of 57 on the basis of article 12 and paragraph 16 of the election law. The documents of another 30 candidates were reassessed and of these, another 13 candidates were also dropped and 17 candidates were included for further assessment. Of these, nine candidates were found eligible for a written test and interview.

From the nine candidates, three of them were shortlisted due to their high marks which were Sayed Hafizullah Hashemi, Awal-ul-Rahman Rodwal and Abdul Qader Zazai Watamdost.

"President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, after hearing the report back of the selection committee, thanked the committee members for their hard work they paid to the national process and voiced appreciation for their truthfulness and transparency in order to complete the process in line with the laws of the country," the statement said.

"The leadership of the national unity government will soon interview the three candidates in line with their commitment to the Afghan nation and will issue the decision about the appointment of one member of the Independent Election Commission as soon as possible," the press release concluded - quoting Ghani.

The meeting was also attended by Ghani's second Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danish.

Danish also hailed the job of the selection committee and their commitment to the national process.

Qadir Zazai is an incumbent MP in parliament, Sayed Hashemi the incumbent secretary general of the Meshrano Jirga and Awal Rahman Rodwal was head of the IEC's Kabul office. (Tolonews)

(5) Saleh Accuses...

and such literature, we arm our next generation with the hateful sentiments," said Saleh.

Meanwhile, CEO Abdullah Abdullah has also confirmed that the current situation in the country is strained, but said soon the issues will be resolved.

"I know that there is a relatively tense political situation, I say relatively tense because everything is relatively now and I pray that it will not become more tense," said Abdullah.

The statements were made during the graduation ceremony of students at a private education institution.

"There are people who eat food under the name of ethnicity and use it," said university lecturer Massoud Tarishtwal.

According to statistics, 170,000 students are at private colleges in the country. (Tolonews)

(6) Ziae Spurns Claims ...

legitimacy to the last presidential election which had otherwise no legitimacy. Noor accused CEO Abdullah of 80 percent contributing to the making of conspiracies against him. (Pajhwok)

(7) Immediate Return ...

he suggested.

Committed to providing residential, education and healthcare facilities to the returnees, the envoy argued, Kabul would find it hard to meet the needs of the repatriated Afghans. Marastiyal noted the federal cabinet had asked the Ministry of States and Frontier Regions (Safron) during its last meeting to prepare modalities and strategy for the voluntary return of Afghan nationals.

Earlier, addressing a condolence reference in the memory of Pak-Afghan Peoples Forum founder Alamzeb Khan, the consul general said Kabul and Islamabad to make joint efforts to restore peace and boost the region's economy,

Confronted with common challenges, the neighbours needed to strengthen cooperation on dealing with threats to their stability. Greater people-to-people contacts would help resolve issues between the two countries, he believed.

Peace in Pakistan and Afghanistan was in the best interest of the entire region, he said, urging the neighbours to develop cordial relations, including trade and economic links. Members of civil society, political

workers, lawyers, journalists and people from different walk of life attended the condolence reference at the Peshawar Press Club.

Marastiyal commended the efforts of Alamzeb Khan for bringing the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan closer to each other. "Our mission is common. We want to give a peaceful and prosperous future to coming generations." (Pajhwok)

(8) UN Contacted...

polio virus spreads very quickly, and it is crucial for a series of at least three mass vaccination campaigns to take place to prevent the disease from reaching more children in the area.

Shahwalikot is one of the most insecure regions in the southern Kandahar province.

The health authorities, with support from UNICEF and WHO, on Wednesday completed the first of three polio vaccination campaigns in Shahwalikot, and in the neighboring districts of Miyanshin and Nesh, reaching 43,000 children.

"I am grateful to the authorities and community leaders who enabled 503 frontline workers to conduct the first campaign this week. I look forward to continued collaboration on this issue as we move forward, together," said Lanzer.

"To enable the vaccination campaign to take place, so yes we were in touch with members of the Taliban, people within Taliban responsible for the health sector," said Lanzer.

According to Lanzer, last year 17 cases of polio were recorded across Afghanistan.

"In the case of Afghanistan, there has been a lot of progress, thanks to the good work of Afghan authorities over the last few years and the number of cases of children who get polio has decreased from 50 two years ago to seventeen last year and hopefully this year we will manage to see even fewer cases," added Lanzer

Afghanistan remains one of three countries in the world that is still polio-endemic.

Eradicating the disease is one of the chief aims of the United Nations globally. Its agencies in Afghanistan will spare no effort to enable the authorities to tackle this challenge, once and for all, he said.

In conclusion he said: "UNICEF plans on providing Afghanistan with 100 million doses of polio vaccine in 2018, and together with WHO which supports disease surveillance and the vaccination campaigns themselves, the UN is working closely with the Afghan authorities to rid the country of this terrible disease for good."

Meanwhile, Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has said the practice of preventing children from being inoculated against polio in insecure regions of Afghanistan is concerning.

Afghanistan, Pakistan and Nigeria are among the three nations in the world where polio has not been eradicated completely. (Tolonews)

(9) Peace Forms Key..

delegation from the United Nations Security Council is expected to visit Afghanistan in the coming days.

US President Donald Trump's administration is trying to get United Nations' help, after reversing course on campaign promises to end the \$700 billion conflict, US newspaper The Hill reported.

On Thursday, a conference evaluating the prospects of peace in Afghanistan was convened under the title of "Voices for peace in Afghanistan" with the participation of high level government officials and delegations from the EU member nations.

The conference will assess the gains and the setbacks that were made in the peace process over the past few years, said Mayadon.

"Peace in Afghanistan stands permanently among priorities of the new EU strategy for Afghanistan and it was adopted on 16 of October by the 28 member states' foreign ministers in support of Afghan-led, Afghan-owned (process)," said Mayadon.

Meanwhile, deputy head of the High Peace Council (HPC) Habiba Sarabi has said that the process known as Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program (APRP) has been a failed program.

She said that the HPC is now trying to focus on boosting the capacity of its members and enhance awareness among the people about the peace.

"From the past, we have learned that reintegration is not a successful program, so the reintegration is now out of our new strategy; we are not working on a reintegration program," she said adding that they are mostly focusing on the other approaches. (Tolonews)

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(10) Daesh Kill 18...

committee, attributed 51 percent of the cases of violence against journalists last year to militant groups and 34 percent to government officials.

He said most of last year's cases happened in capital Kabul and northern regions.

Weyar said last year's cases included 61 injuries, 32 insult, mistreatment, 23 beating, 15 threatening, 12 detention and six expelling from reporting area.

AJSC officials say the committee's performance improved in 2017 compared to 2016 but stress the need for implementation of the committee's decisions on preventing threats against journalists. (Pajhwok)

(11) Afghanistan Frees..

had been delayed for months after the human rights organisations criticised the Afghan government for releasing the prisoners, who had been involved in insurgency incidents that killed thousands of people in the last few years.

Hizb-e-Islami claims that there are 3,000 of its members being held in Afghan prisons.

According to Article 11 of the peace agreement, it stated: "After assessment of their documents, all prisoners of Hizb-e-Islami who are accused of political and security crimes and are exempted from 'the right of people'" (a legal term which is used for those who don't carry any complaint from members of the public in a court).

It was the third batch of Hizb-e-Islami prisoners to be released by the government. The first batch of prisoners was released last year in May, which included 55 people. Around 13 more were released later in the same year. (ANI)

and raising awareness among the international community on the dangers of war in Afghanistan," said Gulsum Zahra, chairperson of the young ambassadors organization.

"We attended this race today to create new hope for the people. We still have hope for a better Afghanistan," said Setara Zamani, who attended the event.

The four-member team, two girls and two men, will cycle through Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany and then on to France.

"My aim is to highlight my role in improving Afghanistan. This is the motivation of my participation in this event," said Khatera, one of the four cyclists.

"The youths have moved to pedal for a peaceful Afghanistan," said Fatima, another cyclist.

Organizers of the event said the four cyclists are covering the costs of their own journey, paying the expense of their journey. (Tolonews)

(13) Finland Funded ...

hygiene management that benefited almost 55,000 students in 102 schools," the statement said on Thursday.

It said that improvements in water and sanitation facilities in schools have a positive impact on attendance, quality of learning and well-being of students, especially girls.

"The new funding will further reinforce this area of work, and support deprived communities to reach open defecation-free status, to access and use safely managed drinking water, and to disseminate information on the importance of hygiene practices," the statement said.

"We are happy to continue supporting the UNICEF water, sanitation and hygiene programme that provides concrete results for women and children in line with National Priorities," Ambassador of Finland in Afghanistan, Hannu Ripatti, said in the statement.

The UNICEF Representative in Afghanistan, Adele Khodr has acknowledged Finland's partnership and generous contribution and highlighted the importance of clean water, sanitation and hygiene practices on health outcomes.

"Through encouraging handwashing with soap in schools, and the use of clean water and sanitary environments, we can help to prevent diarrhoea and the subsequent onset or worsening of stunting and malnutrition. Washing hands with soap can reduce diarrhoea by up to 42 per cent and is one of the most cost effective ways to prevent cases," said Khodr. (Tolonews)

(14) Illegal Armed ...

try to stop him," said Mohammad Fayaz, a resident of Balkh.

"I took my phone out of my pocket to call when two persons riding a motorbike grabbed the phone to steal, but they failed," said Mohammad Omar, a resident of Balkh.

Meanwhile, Balkh Police Chief Gen. Sayed Kamal Sadat he has assigned all police chiefs in Mazar-e-Sharif City to take actions against armed men in the city.

"We have given the police chiefs of Mazar-e-Sharif police districts a one month deadline. They will lose their jobs if they did not stop robberies and did not maintain security properly," said Sadat.

The Security Officer of Balkh Police Headquarters, Gen. Abdul Raziq Qaderi, said the presence of illegal armed men is a big challenge for safety of the city. He added that most of these men are belonged to political parties and MPs.

"Information shows that the number of illegal armed men are twice than the security forces in Mazar-e-Sharif City and they are here for many years," Qaderi said. "These men are belonged to different parties, lawmakers, former jihadi leaders, national investors and the people who carry many weapons by one weapon license and this is a big challenge." (Tolonews)

(15) 16 Held in ...

Pul-i-Charkhi check-point and wanted to transfer the materials to Kabul City.

Haqyar said initial investigation showed the explosives and detonators were Pakistani made and dispatched from the neighbouring country.

Separately police arrested an alleged carjacker with a vehicle from the Daspichare check-point. He added the detained individuals would be handed over to concerned authorities after investigation.

Meanwhile, Police Spokesman Basir Mujahid said that a 12-member group involved in the kidnapping of a businessman had been arrested and the case was being investigated. (Pajhwok)

(16) 5 Policemen ...

while the Taliban also suffered casualties but the exact number of the dead and injured rebels could not be ascertained.

Haji Alam Gul, the resident of locality, said the clash began at around 11:00pm and continued until morning.

Heavy weapons exchanged in the firefight. Two rockets hit civilian homes in the area but there was no report of casualties, he said.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said information about Dasht-i-Archi clash would be shared with the media later.

Dasht-i-Archi district is situated 45 kilometres to the northeast of Kunduz City, the provincial capital and considered one of the insecure with strong presence of the Taliban. (Pajhwok)

(17) 8 Rebels Killed..

killed and a machine gun in their possession was destroyed in airstrike in the Haidar Ghar area, he added.

Separately, four more Taliban were killed and two suspected rebels arrested in Afghan Special Forces Operation in the Musa Kala district of Helmand province, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said in a statement.

Militants stock of arms was also destroyed during the night raid, the statement said. (Pajhwok)

(18) 25 Rebels ...

The provincial police headquarters said in a statement that the NATO airstrikes killed 25 insurgents in Kocha-Qala, Bazar-Qala and Topkhan-Qala localities of the Dawlat Abad district.

The dead rebels included three key commanders Ihsanullah aka Tofan, Haider and Raz Mohammad Khanjar known as Qahrman.

Dawlat Abad district police chief Col. Niamatullah Tofan said the airstrikes also destroyed around 25 motorbikes.

He said the militants were pounded after they attacked a security forces' supply convey en-route to the provincial capital, Maimana, from Tawlat Abad district. However, a Taliban source only confirmed the wounding of Commander Haidari along with another fighter in the airstrikes. On the other hand, a group of five Taliban militants joined the reconciliation process in Khwaja Sabz Posh district of the province on Thursday noon. Abdullah Masumi, the district administrative chief, said the men who handed over their weapons included Mullah Hakeem, Rahmatullah, Izzatullah, Zainullah and Mohammad Yusuf under the leadership of Mullah Yusuf Haqyar. (Pajhwok)