

**(1) US Urges ...**

the Saudi embassy in Tehran and a consulate in second city Mashhad.

Saudi authorities said they had asked their Iranian officials to ensure security at the embassy, but Tehran failed to protect it. (AFP)

**(2) 135 Journalists...**

The press watch dog called UN to enforce stronger investigation and accountability mechanisms to fight against impunity. (Xinhua)

**(3) Afghan CEO...**

Iran, Afghanistan, and India also plan to sign an agreement on establishing an international transit route, named Chabahar transit corridor.

Earlier in September, it was reported that the agreement is scheduled to be signed by presidents or ministers of the three countries. (TNA)

**(4) CSTO Reportedly ...**

contingent deployed abroad. A total of some 7,000 Russian troops are now stationed at two military facilities collectively known as the 201st military base - in Dushanbe and QurghonTeppa, some 100 kilometers from Dushanbe.

The base includes Mi-8 and Mi-24 helicopters that are based at the Ayni military airfield near Dushanbe. Under an agreement signed in October 2012, Russian troops are allowed to remain stationed in Tajikistan until 2042.

Russian officials have announced plans to increase the number of troops stationed in Tajikistan to 9,000 over the next five years and provide more military equipment through 2020. (Asia-Plus)

**(5) Taliban Gaining...**

currently looking at." The remarks by Morell comes as the Taliban-led insurgency has been rampant during the recent months as efforts have been put in place for a peaceful settlement of the ongoing violence in the country.

Meanwhile, Pentagon released its report regarding the security situation in Afghanistan in mid December last year, stating that the overall security has deteriorated dramatically during the second half of 2015 as the country continues to face threats from both the Afghan insurgency and extremist networks, including the Taliban, the Haqqani Network, and to a lesser extent al Qaeda.

"The overall security situation in Afghanistan deteriorated with an increase in effective insurgent attacks and higher ANDSF and Taliban casualties," the report said.

It also added heborder regions of Afghanistan and Pakistan continue to remain a sanctuary for terrorist organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Haqqani Network and Al Qaeda. (KP)

**(6) All Consulate ...**

the Afghan Special Forces have joined and now engaged with terrorists along with ITBP.

Unknown number of militants attacked from a building close to the consulate which quickly prompted Afghan forces to cordon off the area.

The attack came close on the heels of the terrorists attack at the Pathankot air base. (ANI)

**(7) New Council...**

from where it will conduct its political activities. The council has said it will also recommend a number of proposals to the government on the issue of peace talks.

According to council members, they will also hold talks with the Taliban soon, but an exact date and venue for the talks was not announced.

"Our peace council has mapped out a detailed plan for peace. They have also explained the reasons that undermined the peace pro-

cess over the past 14 years," council spokesman Sayed Es-haqGillani said.

The council also urged government to announce a date for the parliamentary and district council elections.

"The president has always discussed issues of national importance with various social segments including Jihadi leaders. The president is willing [to do so] on other issues as well as the peace process," deputy presidential spokesman Sayed Zafar Hashemi said.

The much-awaited peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government collapsed in July last year following the death of the group's longtime leader Mullah Omar and a string of attacks on Afghan cities. This also led to a breakdown in relations between Kabul and Islamabad.

"The council is determined to act in harmony over the upcoming elections, because past experiences show that one-sided actions do not work," Gillani said.

"The Jihadi council which is inaugurated today consists of people who brought the National Unity Government to power and are part of the same government. I think such a council does not have any public reputation anymore. If they claim Jihad, today al-Qaeda, Daesh and Taliban also chant the slogan of Jihad, these things are not interesting to people anymore," political analyst Ahmad Saedi said. (Tolo News)

**(8) Hizb-E-Islami...**

transparent. Talks should be based on ground realities and without any intervention."

When asked when Hikmatyar would make a public appearance, Baheer chose to avoid a direct reply. "Hikmatyar will play an active part in politics if the situation becomes suitable," he said. "Hikmatyar is ready and determined to join politics."

Hikmatyar has not been publically seen following the collapse of Taliban government in 2001. He has been releasing video and audio statements and conveying his messages to media through Baheer.

HIA has also carried out some deadly attacks in Afghanistan including some in capital Kabul. (KP)

**(9) Stoned Ghor ...**

allegedly by Taliban militants after she reportedly ran off with a man. (Tolonews)

**(10) Standoff Ends**

not only will Afghanistan suffer but regional countries and the world will be affected by it," Shahid added.

Earlier Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said that the constitution of Afghanistan will be the focus of the talks and also Pakistan has asked for time to prove its honesty in peace talks. (Tolo News)

**(11) Mother, Tw...**

the hot spot of militant groups in the eastern part of the country. So far, these groups operate mostly in the province's far flung areas but they try to reach out to the provincial capital. (KP)

**(12) New UN ...**

asylum, the funding gap between humanitarian needs and resources, and growing xenophobia is very dangerous," Grandi said in a statement.

The new Commissioner hopes that "solutions to crises of displacement will be pursued with renewed determination by addressing their root causes and investing adequate political and material resources," adding UNHCR stands ready to work with all those pursuing this goal. (Xinhua)

**(13) Pakistan ...**

ported IS Islamabad chief

Amir Mansoor, his deputy Abdullah Mansoori and the group's chief for Sindh province, Umer Kathio.

The minister says the raids also yielded IS literature and weapons.

He says the operation against alleged IS militants was launched after a raid last week in Daska district, also in Punjab province, when 13 other IS suspects were arrested. (AP)

**(14) Fans Flock ...**

lose as we lose with pride. We fought until the last 120th minute. India has only four games, because one team did not play, Pakistan. We had five games. India four games in 12 days, Afghanistan had five games in 11 days, and in the end in the final it was unbelievable. I can only pay a big compliment to everybody - to everybody on the staff - all the coaches and especially the players," Afghan team coach Peter Segurt said.

The welcoming crowd lined the streets between Hamid Karzai International Airport and the Afghanistan Football Federation grounds and drove cars in a convoy behind the bus carrying the team.

The crowd chanted "Zenda Baad Afghanistan" - which means long-live Afghanistan. According to fans, they said despite Sunday's loss, the Afghan team is still "the real winners".

"For me it doesn't make a difference whether we won or lost, for me Afghanistan is a champion, long-live our national team players," Kabul resident Faisal Ahmadi said.

"I was thinking about such a huge celebration, this warm welcome now will nourish our determination to work more and more and develop the national football," national team player Mustafa Hadid said.

"I am grateful to my people, the interest of people to football has amazed me," national team player Faisal Shayesteh said.

Afghan team performed well in the tournament and won its matches against Bhutan, Maldives, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.

The Afghan team scored 16 goals and conceded only one goal in the run up to the finals. However, the team received the prize for the best defense line and the best attacking team in the tournament.

Khaibar Amani of Afghanistan by scoring four goals in the tournament was declared as man of the tournament. The Afghan team will no longer play in the SAFF championships - the team will join a new football zone being created for central Asia where they will have to take on powerful teams such as Iran, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan. (Tolo News)

**(15) British Security...**

Islamic State," the man said in the video.

"But it seems that you, like your predecessors Blair and Brown, are just as arrogant and foolish," he said, adding: "In fact, David you are more of an imbecile."

"You will lose this war as you lost in Iraq and Afghanistan," he continued.

A boy aged about five or six, who also spoke with British accent, is also pictured in the video wearing military-style outfit. (Xinhua)

**(16) Philippines...**

nationals have a pleasant experience in our country," explained Mison.

In 2015, the BI began a new procedure on visa issuance, wherein the application no longer required the approval of the board of commissioners.

Previously, applications were withheld for at least one more week until the board meets as a body.

Under the current visa task force, visas are approved right away, without the need to wait for the schedule of the board meeting. (Xinhua)

**(17) Yemen...**

supported by the United States, are stretched thin as they battle the Shiite rebels known as Houthis.

Yemen's al-Qaida branch has long been seen by Washington as the most potent affiliate of the extremist network and has been linked to a number of attempted attacks on the U.S. The group, known as the Al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula, has captured much of Yemen's sprawling Hadramawt province and its capital, Mukalla, as well as the capital of southern Abyan province, Zinjibar and the town of Jaar. The group and Islamic State-linked militants have exploited the chaos of the country's civil war to stage significant land grabs and expand its footprint in southern Yemen.

According to U.N. figures, the war in Yemen has killed at least 5,884 people since March, when fighting escalated after the Saudi-led coalition began launching airstrikes targeting the rebels

The conflict pits the internationally recognized government, backed by a Saudi-led coalition against the Houthi rebels, allied with a former president. (AP)

**(18) Quake Strikes ...**

shockwaves were felt in the Himalayan nation of Nepal and as far away as the Myanmar city of Yangon, about 1,175 km (730 miles) to the south.

The quake struck while many people were asleep, and roofs and staircases of some buildings collapsed in Imphal, a city of about 270,000 people.

"It was like being tossed around in a frying pan," said Joy Thanglian, a 33-year-old employee of state energy firm Bharat Petroleum.

Police and hospitals in Imphal said the death toll had reached six with 100 people injured, 33 of them seriously. Officials in Bangladesh said as well as the five people who died of heart attacks as they fled buildings, about 90 people were injured. Rescue workers in Imphal used hand-held drilling machines to clear rubble from the ruins of a six-storey building under construction, the site of the heaviest damage in the city.

"I didn't feel the tremor, but when I woke up the entire ceiling had collapsed on me," said R.K. Ewansana, a 21-year-old student, who was on the first floor but survived as the rest of the building collapsed around him. (Reuters)

"This is a major step and it should be seen in light of the serious migration and refugee crisis that Europe is facing," Rasmussen told the press conference.

According to the prime minister, Danish police will carry out random checks on ferries and trains arriving from Germany. "Not everyone from Germany will be checked. The police will not ask everyone to show their passports," Rasmussen said. (Xinhua)

**Hong Kong Leader 'Very Concerned' over Missing Booksellers**

HONG KONG - Hong Kong's leader said he was "very concerned" Monday over the disappearance of five booksellers known for publications critical of the Chinese government after a prominent lawmaker accused mainland security officers of kidnapping the men.

The booksellers all worked for the same Hong Kong-based publishing house and are feared to have been detained by Chinese authorities, adding to growing unease that freedoms in the semi-autonomous city are being eroded.

Under its mini-constitution, Hong Kong enjoys freedom of speech and Chinese law enforcers have no right to operate in the city.

"I and related government departments are very concerned. The government cares very

much about Hong Kong residents' rights and safety," Leung Chun-ying told reporters, saying it would be 'unacceptable' if mainland law enforcers were operating in Hong Kong.

"Only legal enforcement agencies in Hong Kong have the legal authority to enforce laws in Hong Kong," Leung said. "If mainland law enforcement personnel enforce the law in Hong Kong, it is unacceptable because it is against the Basic Law (the city's constitution)." Democratic legislator Albert Ho said Sunday he believed the men had been kidnapped by Chinese security officers. (AFP)

**(20) Iraq Official ...**

execution, demanding Iraq cut diplomatic ties with Saudi Arabia.

However Khafaji said he doesn't believe that the Hilla bombings were carried out by Shiites seeking revenge, instead blaming IS for seeking to exploit the current Sunni-Shiite tensions. Authorities are beefing up security around the two targeted mosques and other Sunni mosques in the city, he said.

After years of violent armed struggles between Sunnis and Shiites in Iraq, the government seems eager to defuse the situation and prevent Shiite militias from attacking Sunni communities or institutions. (AP)

**(21) ASEAN ...**

services, investments, capital and skilled labour, he said. HorNamhong, who is also a deputy prime minister, said that the ASEAN Community's challenges will include development gap, lack of human resources and skilled labour among new member states and lack of budget for ASEAN connectivity development such as physical connectivity, institutional connectivity and people-to-people connectivity.

Founded in 1967 in Thailand, the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) groups Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. (Xinhua)

**(22) Denmark ...**

lowing them to travel from Denmark to Sweden. The border controls will initially last for 10 days, according to Rasmussen, adding that the checks can be extended by 20 days at a time depending on the situation then.

The prime minister said the move was a response to the decision made in Sweden. "This is a major step and it should be seen in light of the serious migration and refugee crisis that Europe is facing," Rasmussen told the press conference.

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**UN Rights Expert on Palestinians Quits over Lack of Access**

BERLIN - A U.N. expert on the human rights of Palestinians has submitted his resignation, complaining that Israel didn't grant him access to the Palestinian territories.

The U.N. human rights office said Monday that Makarim Wibisono, the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories, will step down March 31.

Wibisono, who took the post in mid-2014, said he accepted it "with the understanding that Israel would grant me access, as an impartial and objective observer" but his efforts were "frustrated every step of the way." He added that repeated requests for access, both orally and in writing, were unsuccessful.

Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon noted Wibisono wasn't the first person to resign the post. He said the mandate given to the rapporteur is "distorted and biased." (AP)

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**Incoming Government to Prioritize Peace in Myanmar: SuuKy**

YANGON - Aung San SuuKy said Monday that building peace will be the first priority of her pro-democracy party's incoming administration when it replaces Myanmar's military-backed government soon.

SuuKy spoke at the headquarters of her National League for Democracy to mark the nation's Independence Day. She said the incoming government would seek to improve a ceasefire agreement the outgoing regime signed in October with eight ethnic minorities that have long fought for greater autonomy.

The ethnic rebellions remain a threat to the country's unity, since several larger ethnic guerrilla armies declined to sign the agreement. Fighting persists in some border areas. Though largely an agreement to keep talking, the agreement could pave the way for a more comprehensive political settlement in the future.

"The first responsibility of the next government is to build peace. We will organize an effective peace conference to improve the recent ceasefire agreement and we will urge widespread participation," she said in a speech lasting almost 15 minutes, her first major public address since the Nov. 8 election victory.

The NLD secured enough parliamentary seats in the last elections to oust a military-backed party that has been in power for five years. A clause in the 2008 military-directed constitution bars her from the presidency, but she has vowed to be the country's leader by proxy.

Despite the NLD's landslide victory, most analysts agree the party must have the support of the military establishment to be able to govern. By law, the military still has a quarter of the seats in Parliament, giving it veto power over all constitutional amendments. It also has a grip on all key security portfolios. (AP)

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