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Xinhua

Security to remain daunting challenge for Afghan gov't in 2012

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01/03/2012

KABUL - While the war-weary Afghans have been praying for the restoration of viable peace in their war-wrecked country and wish 2012 a year of peace and reconciliation, the horizon of the year likewise the yesteryear seems bleak as it was heralded with security incidents.



An Afghan man, who got wounded in a suicide attack is seen on a bed at a hospital in Talaqan, Takhar province, Dec. 25, 2011. A suicide bomber blew himself up Sunday during a funeral in northern Afghanistan, killing 10 people, including a member of the national

parliament, a government spokesman said. (AP Photo/Zalmay Ashna)

On Sunday, the first day of the year 2012, when people across the globe including the Afghans wished for peace, an explosive- laden car designed for subversive activities was discovered and defused in Helmand province 555 km south of Afghan capital Kabul.

Notorious for growing poppy and known as the hotbed of the Taliban, Helmand has been the scene of increasing militancy over the past couple of years.

The discovery of the explosive-laden car coincided with the handover of security to Afghan forces from NATO-led troops in Nawa district of Helmand Province.

According to officials, anti-government militants were attempting to disrupt the security handover process in Nawa district but security forces foiled the conspiracy and arrested four insurgents.

The process of security handover from some 130,000-strong NATO- led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) with over 90, 000 of them Americans, to the Afghan government begun in July 2011 and is scheduled to complete by 2014.

Also on Sunday, an explosion, believed to be a controlled one, rocked Zharai district of Taliban former stronghold Kandahar province.

Security incidents have also been registered in Afghanistan on Monday.

Three civilians lost their lives as a car struck a roadside bomb planted by suspected insurgents in Logar province 60 km south of Kabul on Monday.

Several insurgents, according to an ISAF statement, have been arrested in Kandahar, Nangarhar and Logar provinces on Monday.

In addition to keeping on pressure on militants by Afghan and NATO-led forces, taming the Taliban and bringing them to the negotiation table would remain a big challenge for the Afghan government and its international allies in 2012.

Taliban militants fighting the Afghan government and the NATO- led troops have often conditioned any talks with the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan, a condition unacceptable for both Kabul and Washington.

Media reports suggest that the Taliban would open an liaison office in Gulf state of Qatar. But the adamant Taliban outfit has yet to confirm the opening of the office in Qatar or any other state.

"Taliban outfit does not have the ability to confront the security forces. Nevertheless, the

militants would continue to carry out suicide attacks and roadside bombings in 2012," an Afghan analyst and the former diplomat Ahmad Saydi observed.

He also was of the view that bringing Taliban to the negotiation table and convincing them to give up fighting is a difficult task.

The Afghan Defense Ministry also believes that the Taliban- linked militancy would continue this year but in isolated cases.

"Although 2012 would be better compared with the last year in terms of security, the terrorist activities would continue," Defense Ministry spokesman Zahir Azimi told newsmen Monday.

The Afghan government wants the Taliban to accept the national constitution which guarantees education to both men and women, freedom of press and general elections; while the Taliban denies gender equality and polling.

With this perspective, it seems difficult for the Afghans to overcome insurgency and embrace lasting peace in their country this year.