

Aleppo Evacuation Suspended, Leaving Thousands Trapped

ALEPPO, Syria - The Syrian government suspended the evacuation of civilians and fighters from the last rebel-held parts of Aleppo on Friday, leaving thousands of people trapped and uncertain of their fate. Russia, which helped to broker the evacuation deal with Turkey, said its operation was now "complete" with all women and children moved from the city.

Ankara and a Syrian military source said the evacuation had been suspended but was not yet over.

"The evacuations are not over and many people still want to leave the area," said Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu.

Amid the confusion, a convoy of evacuees that had already left the east when the operation was suspended was forced to return and reenter rebel territory, an AFP correspondent said. (AFP)



Nigeria Welcomes Minister's Appointment as UN Deputy Secretary-General

ABUJA - Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari has endorsed the appointment of Amina Mohammed, a member of his cabinet, as the new Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations. Incoming UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres on Thursday announced the appointment of Mohammed as his deputy secretary-general and two other women for senior management positions. The announcement was made by UN Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric at a daily briefing on behalf

of Guterres, who will succeed Ban Ki-moon on Jan. 1.

In a statement reaching Xinhua on Friday, Buhari said he looked forward to sustained collaboration between the UN and Nigeria, adding he had no doubt Mohammed would make Nigeria proud at the global level.

Mohammed is currently Nigeria's Minister of Environment. Prior to this role, she served as Special Adviser to the outgoing UN chief on Post-2015 Development Planning. (Xinhua)

Russia-Japan Territory Dispute "Not to be Solved Soon": Putin

TOKYO - Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Friday that the island row between Russia and Japan can not be solved soon.

Putin, who is on a two-day visit to Japan, made the remarks at a joint press conference after his meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe.

Abe, for his part, said the path towards resolving issues that have prevented Japan and Russia from signing a postwar peace treaty is difficult.

Over 70 years after the end of World War II, Russia and Japan have not yet signed a peace treaty, formalizing the end of the war, mainly due to a territory row over four small islands in the Pacific which are called the Northern Territories in Japan and the Southern Kurils in Russia. Meanwhile, Japan and Russia agreed on Friday to start consultations on joint economic activities



on the four Pacific islands, held by Russia but claimed by Japan. The two sides agreed that joint activities would be conducted "under a special framework" and it would mark an important step towards ... (More on P4)... (19)

Iraqi Troops Enter Another IS-Held Neighborhood in Mosul

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi army says troops have entered another neighborhood held by the Islamic State group in the southeastern part of Mosul. The commander of a joint operations center that oversees the Mosul campaign, Lt. Gen. Abdul-Amir Yarellah, says that soldiers from the 9th Division took over the hospital building in the al-Salam neighborhood on Tuesday.

He did not provide more details but said the

troops "continue clearing" the neighborhood from IS militants.

Iraqi forces, backed the U.S.-led international coalition, launched a campaign in October to retake Mosul, the country's second largest city and IS's last major urban bastion in Iraq. Most gains have been made by special forces operating in the section of Mosul east of the Tigris River, while other forces are advancing on the city from other directions. (AP)

Slovak FM Suggests Early EU-U.S. Meeting after Trump's Election

BRATISLAVA - Slovak Foreign and European Affairs Minister Miroslav Lajcak on Friday suggested an EU summit, attended by both EU member states and the United States, as soon as possible to discuss the future bilateral relations openly.

"For the moment it's still about reading between the lines and speculation. In light of the quality of existing relations between the EU and the United States, however, it would be beneficial to

meet as soon as possible," said Lajcak.

But the minister said he didn't want to speculate on the future relations between the United States and central Europe after US President-elect Donald Trump assumes office in January 2017.

Lajcak, however, confirmed that he's already in touch with people from the next US administration.

Lajcak said the selection of Rex Tillerson by Trump as the next secretary of state and other



nominations showed that the next U.S. administration is likely to choose a pragmatic business approach to policies. "It can be assumed to a large degree of certainty already at this stage that future US foreign policies, ... (More on P4)... (20)

France Working on Draft U.N. Resolution for Aleppo: Diplomats



PARIS - France is drafting a U.N. Security Council resolution that aims to ensure international observers are deployed to process the evacuation of civilians from Aleppo and enable humanitarian aid to reach the Syrian city, diplomats said on Friday.

The evacuation of people from the last opposition-held areas of the city was suspended on Friday after pro-government militias demanded that the wounded should also be brought out of two Shi'ite villages being besieged by rebel fighters.

"We are working on a resolution," one French diplomat said. A second diplomat confirmed the move.

At France's request, the United Nations aid chief Stephen O'Brien is set to brief the Security Council on Friday on the operation to evacuate thousands of civilians and fighters from Aleppo.

The meeting was not initially aimed at putting a resolution to a vote and it was unclear immediately when and if the resolution would go forward. (Reuters)

Merkel Expects No Decisions on Greek Bailout at Talks with Tsipras

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel said she did not expect to take any decisions on Greece's bailout program during talks in Berlin on Friday with Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras.

Greece snubbed its international lenders and legislated plans on Thursday to give pensioners a one-off Christmas bonus despite misgivings from creditors in a standoff over the country's third bailout.

"We will definitely discuss the program related to Greece's economic and financial situation,"



Merkel, standing next to Tsipras, told reporters before their talks.

"However, I would say this is not the place for decisions to be taken. That is in good hands with the

three institutions and the Eurogroup, but the Greek prime minister's assessment of the situation will certainly play a role in our discussions," she added. (Reuters)

U.S. Grant Suspension to Philippines Not to have "Great Impact": Foreign Secretary

MANILA - The Philippine government does not see any "great impact" on its economy if the United States continues to defer its grant due to concerns on rule of law and civil liberties, a senior government official said on Friday.

The U.S. State Department has said that the second compact from the U.S. Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) will involve bigger amount.

"But then again, this is what our economic experts say, we're not really bothered by it, we will not be sleepless over this decision," Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay said in an interview with reporters in Singapore. Yasay was with President Rod-

rigo Duterte in Singapore for a visit. He said if MCC's deferment of the second grant was merely a ploy for the Philippines to bow down to the U.S. demands, "we will not do so."

"If they don't want to help us, then we'll accept that. But we feel very strongly that as friends, this is not the tack that should be adopted," he stressed.

He said if the United States would want to help the Philippines, it would not set conditions.

The MCC has said that its Board deferred a vote on the re-selection of the Philippines for compact development, "subject to a further review ... (More on P4)... (21)

Tajikistan Set to Break out for Tourists



DUSHANBE - News from this week reveals a great promise that may finally come to pass for the people of one of the world's most interesting countries. Growing direct foreign investment and the potential of the so-called "New Silk Road" could transform the central Asian region. One of the most mountainous countries on Earth, Tajikistan was once a part of the Soviet Union. Today the country has remained in a sort of progressive limbo, even despite a steadily growing GDP (8% yoy). With about half of young workers out of work though, the country the United Nations depicts as a budding success story has yet to emerge. Russian and Chinese investors have put over \$2 billion into the country's mining and other industries, but experts now say the real Bonanza for Tajikistan will arrive with agribusiness, tourism and from the textiles sector. Tajikistan, which shares some Persian traditions and a southern border with Afghanistan, used to be a major producer of fruits, vegetables, silk and cotton. Now Tajikistan's efforts to attract foreign investors have made the country one of the world's top reforming nations. Among the most promising new touristic industries, eco-tourism could make Tajikistan a kind of pilgrimage. (Agencies)

Nieghbor News

Foreign Support for Militants Must End: Iran to UK

TEHRAN - After being summoned to the UK Foreign Office over the Syria crisis, Iran's ambassador to London says the plight of Syrians would only end if all foreign parties channeling arms and money to militants ceased to do so.

Hamid Baedinejad made the comments after a Thursday meeting with UK Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson who also summoned Russian Ambassador Alexander Vladimirovich Yakovenko to relay "profound con-

cern" over Aleppo. Baedinejad said he told the British side that the Syria crisis is nothing new and dates back to over years ago, when armed groups, using foreign support, began an illegal conflict against the Syrian people.

"Such irresponsible policies have resulted in the carnage and displacement of countless innocent Syrians," said the envoy, calling for an immediate end to foreign support for terrorist groups. (Presstv)

China to Take Substantial Steps in Mixed-Ownership Reform

BEIJING - China will take substantial steps in mixed-ownership reform in electricity, oil, natural gas, railways, civil aviation, telecommunications and military industries, said a statement issued Friday after the Central Economic Work Conference.

The three-day conference, which was concluded Friday, saw leaders and officials sketch out economic policies and priorities for the next year.

Mixed-ownership reform, conducted through diversifying the shareholding structure of state-owned enterprises (SOEs), is an ice breaker for overall SOE reform, said the statement.

The conference called for strengthening reform of SOEs and state-owned assets and speeding up the creation of a flexible and efficient market-oriented operation mechanism.

Pilot reforms for state-owned asset investment companies, designed to make the "state" a stakeholder instead of an SOE manager, will raise management and operational efficiency, said the document.

Guidelines on SOE reform were issued in September last year, promising mixed-ownership pilots, opening up more industries to private capital, and a modern enterprise system.

Results of the reform are emerging. Combined SOE profits returned to growth in October after dropping since the beginning of the year, the Ministry of Finance said. In the first ten months, SOEs made a combined profit of 1.92 trillion yuan (276 billion U.S. dollars). China has about 150,000 SOEs, holding more than 100 trillion yuan in assets and employing over 30 million people. (Xinhua)

Pakistani Army Chief Confirms Death Sentence to 13 Hardcore Terrorists

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's army chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Friday confirmed death sentences to 13 hardcore terrorists after they were found guilty of carrying out terrorist acts, the military said.

All the convicts were tried by military courts, an army statement said. "Chief of Army Staff confirmed death sentences awarded to another 13 hardcore terrorists, who were involved in heinous offenses related to terrorism, including killing and slaughtering of innocent civilians, officials of law enforcement agencies and armed forces of Pakistan," the statement said. These terrorists also include those who planned and ex-

ecuted attacks on Bacha Khan University in the northwestern Charsada district in January, on a mosque in army area in Rawalpindi city in December 2009 and the truck bomb attack on Marriot Hotel Islamabad in 2008, it said.

They were also behind the attack on the office of an international NGO in the northern city of Mansehra and educational institution in Buner, a city in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province. "On the whole, they were involved in killing 325 persons and in causing injuries to 366 others," it said.

The statement said firearms and explosives were also recovered from their possession. (Xinhua)

Border with Tajikistan Vulnerable to Drug Trafficking: Kyrgyzstan

DUSHANBE - The border with Tajikistan is the most vulnerable area to illicit drug trafficking, said Deputy Chairman of the State Border Service of Kyrgyzstan during today's meeting on summarizing UNODC anti-drug activities in Kyrgyzstan. Almaz Maksutov noted that the most vulnerable section is the territory of Sughd region of Tajik-

istan. "This section is hardly controlled due to the mountain trails. The largest amount of drugs are smuggled through the border in specially equipped caches in vehicles," he said. It is impossible to scan all of these vehicles due to the lack of the relevant equipment, according to him. (AKIPRESS)