

Talks Still in 'Stage of Preparations': Syrian Negotiator

GENEVA - The head of the Syrian government delegation on Tuesday declined to agree with the United Nations (UN) representative that the new round of Geneva peace talks has been "officially" started, saying that they are still at a "stage of preparations". Bashar al-Jaafari, the Permanent Representative of the Syrian Arab Republic to UN and the head of the government team, told reporters that they are still waiting for the list of a clear agenda and names of participants. Earlier on Monday evening, following a two-hour meeting with the Syrian main op-



position High Negotiations Committee (HNC), the UN Special Envoy for

Syria Staffan de Mistura told the press that intra-Syrian talks aiming to

bring a lasting peace for the country at war since 2011 had officially started.

"As far as we are concerned, their arrival to the Palais des Nations and ini-

tiating the discussions with us is the official beginning of the Geneva talks," the diplomat stated. However, after meeting with de Mistura Tuesday morning, the Syrian government's chief negotiator told reporters that they still don't know who the opposition delegation is and whom they will negotiate with. The new round of Syrian peace talks was first announced as kicking off on January 29 in Geneva's Palais des Nations with the arrival of the Syrian government delegation, despite its opposition counterpart not being present in the Swiss city. (Xinhua)

Nigerian Leader to Call for Global Unity Against Terrorism

ABUJA - Nigerian leader Muhammadu Buhari, who is due in France on Tuesday, will call for a concerted global effort against terrorism at a special session of the European Union on Wednesday. A presidency statement said Buhari, who is leading a delegation of Nigerian officials to the high-level meeting in France, will deliver an address at a special session of the EU parliament consisting of members of the executive and legislative arms of the regional bloc. His

speech will focus on terrorism and violent extremism, as well as the need for greater support from the European Union and advanced nations for their rapid resolution, the statement said. Buhari, after addressing the special session at the EU summit, will join other world leaders at the Supporting Syria and The Region Conference scheduled to open in the British capital, London, on Thursday. He will use the opportunity of his presence at the ... (More on P4)... (22)

Japan Confirms Deployment of Anti-Missile Systems Amid DPRK Launch Fears

TOKYO - The Japanese government confirmed Tuesday it has readied itself for a possible test-firing of a rocket or ballistic missile by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) by deploying both ground and sea-based antimissile interceptors. But while saying that diplomacy remains the first course of action, with the Japanese government stating it hopes the U.S. Security Council will be able to



suitably respond to the DPRK's fourth test of a nuclear device on Jan. 6, the defense ministry said it remains on high alert.

Japan's Defense Minister Gen Nakatani told a press briefing Tuesday that his ministry is fully poised for any rocket or

missile tests by the DPRK, stating that Patriot Advanced Capability-3, or PAC-3, surface-to-air ... (More on P4)... (23)

U.S.-Led Coalition Warns Bloody, Long Battle to Free Iraq's Mosul from IS

BAGHDAD - The battle to liberate northern Iraqi city of Mosul from the Islamic State (IS) group will be "difficult, bloody and long," the U.S.-led coalition fighting IS in Iraq said on Tuesday. Coalition spokesman U.S. Army Col. Steve Warren told a press briefing here that Mosul is the center of IS power and "we estimate between 5,000 and 8,000 fighters from IS in Mosul and some parts of Nineveh province." Warren said that he believes the IS fighters will fiercely fight back

and "there will be difficult battle, bloody battle and will be long one." Warren pledged to free Mosul from IS militants, but he asked the people in militant-seized city to wait for longer time until the Iraqi troops will be ready carry out their major offensive, saying "it is difficult to say how long we need to free Mosul, but I would like to tell the people in Mosul you will be freed just hold on it will take time." He also said that there is no plan to bring more troops in Iraq only if the Iraqi gov-



ernment asked for more troops, stressing that currently there are around 5,600 of the coalition troops; 3,600 U.S. troops and some 2,000 more from other international coal-

ition countries, on the Iraqi soil, all of them were brought at the invitation of the Iraqi government to provide training support and advice to the ... (More on P4)... (24)

Refugee, Migrant Sea Arrivals in EU Top 67,000 in January

GENEVA - The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported Tuesday that 67,193 refugees and migrants reached Europe by sea in January this year while 368 lost their lives attempting to do so. This represents a marked increase from January 2015 figures when 5,000 arrivals and 82 fatalities were registered. IOM statistics show that 62,193 of last month's total arrivals were reported in Greece with the re-

maining 5,000 migrant and refugee maritime arrivals taking place in Italy. Surveys carried out by the Greek authorities indicate that 91 percent of registered sea arrivals in the Southern European country hailed from Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq. The Eastern Mediterranean route separating Turkey and Greece was by far the deadliest passage for refugees and migrants vying to reach European ... (More on P4)... (25)

Security Council to Meet on Syria, UN Charter, Peacekeeping

UNITED NATIONS - The Security Council will hold meetings on Syria and open debates on the UN Charter and peace building, Venezuela's ambassador to the UN said Monday. Rafael Ramirez, whose country holds the rotating presidency of the Security Council for February, said two meetings on Syria will be held in the latter part of February, which are to discuss Syria's humanitarian situation and the chemical weapon probe there. The council will also hold two open debates, one on post-conflict peace building and the other on the UN Charter. The latter one will be presided "by the highest level of our country," Ramirez said. The envoy also said that some members of the council are working on a resolution pertaining to nuclear non-proliferation and nuclear testing by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in early January. On Burundi, Ramirez ... (More on P4)... (26)

Yemeni Government Forces Advance on Rebel-Held Capital

SANAA - Yemen's government forces pushed their way into the mountains northeast the rebel-held capital on Tuesday, recapturing major military posts that overlook roads to Sanaa, tribal sources said. "The government forces loyal to President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi backed by Saudi-led coalition airstrikes took control of Fardhat-Nihm military camp early Tuesday morning, which is the largest military post overlooking the main road to Sanaa, as well as other three mountains surrounding the area after four-day fighting against Houthi fighters," one tribal source said.



Dozens from both warring sides were killed as the heavy battles and airstrikes forced residents to flee their homes and seek shelters in remote villages, the source added. The sites locate in Nihm district, about 50 km northeast of the capital

Sanaa. The impoverished Arab country was plunged into violence in September 2014 when the Shiite Houthi group invaded the country's capital Sanaa, driving President Hadi into exile. The conflict soon turned into ... (More on P4)... (27)

European Council Chief Unveils Proposals to Keep Britain in EU

BRUSSELS - European Council President Donald Tusk here on Tuesday unveiled his proposals to retain Britain's membership in the European Union. According to a letter by Tusk to the members of the European Council, the proposal included the four areas of economic governance, competitiveness, sovereignty, and social benefits and free movement. "We need to fully respect the current treaties, in particular the principles of freedom of movement and non-discrimination. Therefore, the proposed solution to address the UK's concerns builds on the clarification of the interpretation of current rules, including a draft commission declaration on a number of issues relating to better fighting abuse ... (More on P4)... (28)

EU Reform Proposals show 'Real Progress': British PM

LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron said on Tuesday that the draft EU reform proposals released by European Council president Donald Tusk have showed real progress in all four areas where UK needs change but there's more work to do. Cameron made the remarks on twitter soon after EU reform proposals had been released. He later said in an interview with the BBC that the draft text delivers "substantial change" in the UK's relationship with the EU. He said there are "important things" still to be worked on, with "more detail to be nailed down" over the coming days. He also acknowledged there is a negotiation with the rest of Europe in the offering but ... (More on P4)... (31)

Merkel Tells Putin to 'Use Influence' to Rein in Ukraine Rebels

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Tuesday urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to use his influence to rein in pro-Kremlin rebels in eastern Ukraine, a day after she warned a year-old peace deal was not being fully implemented. During a phone call, Mer-

kel "made it clear to President Putin that in order to obtain further progress towards a comprehensive political solution", the ceasefire between Ukrainian government forces and the rebels had to be respected and observers monitoring the truce given ... (More on P4)... (29)

ISIS Pushed Back in Iraq, Syria, but a Threat in Libya: Kerry

ROME - An international coalition is pushing back Islamic State militants in their Syrian and Iraqi strongholds but the group is threatening Libya and could seize the nation's oil wealth, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said on Tuesday. Officials from 23 countries are in Rome to review the fight against Islamic State militants, who have created a self-proclaimed Caliphate across swathes of Syria

and Iraq, and are spreading into other countries, notably Libya. Islamic State forces have attacked Libya's oil infrastructure and established a foothold in the city of Sirte, exploiting a power vacuum in the North African country where two rival governments have been battling for supremacy. "In Libya, we are on the brink of getting a government of national unity, ... (More on P4)... (30)

Nieghbor News

Protesting PIA Employees will be Fired, Warns PM Nawaz

KARACHI - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday said protesting employees of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) will be fired from service and can be sent to jail for a year, DawnNews reported. Talking to reporters during his visit to a coal power plant in Sahiwal, the premier went on to say that airline employees working during the strike will be given special rewards for their service. Nawaz accused PIA workers of politicising the privatisation issue by resorting

to strikes, adding that such acts were costing PIA Rs100 million per day. In a move to stall the strike, Nawaz had already enforced the Essential Services (Maintenance) Act 1952 for six months, barring protesting members of the PIA from participating in any union activity. "Any person found guilty of an offence under this Act shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to one year and shall also be liable to a fine," the legislation reads. (Agencies)

Iran President to Address Nation on Domestic, Intl. Issues

TEHRAN - Iran's President Hassan Rouhani plans to address the Iranian nation in a live televised interview later Tuesday. The Iranian president is scheduled to speak about domestic issues, including forthcoming elections for the 10th term of Majlis (parliament) and the 5th term of the Assembly of Experts as well as the latest economic developments after the implementation of a nuclear agreement, dubbed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), by Iran and the P5+1 world powers. Rouhani is also scheduled to speak about international issues and the achievements of his recent visit to Italy and France. (PressTV)

Security Council - the United States, France, Britain, China and Russia - plus Germany started to implement the JCPOA on January 16. After JCPOA went into effect, all nuclear-related sanctions imposed on Iran by the European Union, the Security Council and the US were lifted. Iran in return has put some limitations on its nuclear activities. The nuclear agreement was signed on July 14, 2015 following two and a half years of intensive talks. Rouhani is also scheduled to speak about international issues and the achievements of his recent visit to Italy and France. (PressTV)

Chinese Legislature Urged to Uphold CPC's Leadership

BEIJING - Top Chinese legislator Zhang Dejiang has urged lawmakers to adhere to the "centralized leadership" of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and fulfill duties according to the committee's decisions. Legislators must think and act in line with the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping as the General Secretary and operate according to the committee's deployment, ensuring the party's leadership over the country and society via state authorities, Zhang, chairman of the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, said Tuesday at a meeting.

of the NPC Standing Committee, which is scheduled to be delivered at the annual session of the top legislature in March. Suggestions from the NPC deputies to the report and the top legislature's work included greater legislation efforts regarding civil laws, health and medical services and national security.

Lawmakers suggested the top legislature improve its publicity work and strengthen its guidance over the work of lower-level legislatures. They also advised greater participation by the country's legislators in lawmaking and supervision procedures and better research to ensure efficient supervision and solutions. (Xinhua)

Strength of Russian Tajikistan Fully Repays its Debts to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan: Tajik Official Base in Tajikistan Expected to be Reduced

DUSHANBE - Tajikistan has fully repaid its nearly US\$8 million debt to Uzbekistan and a US\$12.2 million debt to Kazakhstan, Jamshed Karimzoda, First Deputy Minister of Finance of Tajikistan, told Asia-Plus on Tuesday. Meanwhile, Tajikistan's external debt now amounts to more than 2.182 billion U.S. dollars and the ratio between Tajikistan's external debt and its gross domestic product (GDP) rose 5.3 percent in a year to December 31, 2015, reaching 27.8 percent, Karimzoda

said. According to him, the national budget last year allocated nearly 145 million U.S. dollars for the external debt service, including more than 113.1 million U.S. dollars for principal debt payments and 31.4 million U.S. dollars for interest debt payments. The external debt includes the government's direct debt, the debt of the National Bank of Tajikistan, borrowings guaranteed by the government and debts without government ... (More on P4)... (32)