

Turkey, Germany Agree on Initiative to End Russia-Backed Attacks on Syria's Aleppo

ANKARA - Turkey and Germany agreed to launch a diplomatic initiative for ending Russian backed military operations in Aleppo of Syria, the Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on Monday. Turkey and Germany would launch diplomatic initiative together for compliance of every side to 2254 resolution of United Nations Security Council, in a bid to "end Russian and other force's attacks," on Aleppo, the Turkish prime minister said in a joint press conference with his visiting German counterpart Angela Merkel. "Inhumane attacks on Aleppo should end," said Davutoglu, accusing "Russia and other forces of supporting Syrian regime of being in-



sincere." "Russia has caused civilian deaths. There is a tragedy in Aleppo," he added. There are some 30,000 Syrians waiting near Turkish border fleeing the Russian-backed air strikes, according to Davutoglu. Merkel, for her part, said "thousands of people are exposed to Russian bombardment." She recalled that Russia earlier agreed on UN Security Council's resolution of 2452, saying all parties pledged to end any attacks against civilians. Turkey and Germany also agreed on an action plan which aims to support Syrian refugees fleeing civil war in their homeland, also prevent illegal crossings of them in Turkish-European border. (Xinhua)

Obama Asking Congress for Emergency Funding to Combat Zika

WASHINGTON - President Barack Obama is asking Congress for more than \$1.8 billion in emergency funding to help fight the Zika virus. In an announcement Monday, the White House said the money would be used to expand mosquito control programs, speed development of a vaccine, develop diagnostic tests and improve support for low-income pregnant women. Zika virus disease is mainly spread by mosquitoes. Most people who catch it experience mild or no symptoms. But

mounting evidence from Brazil suggests that infection in pregnant women is linked to abnormally small heads in their babies — a birth defect called microcephaly. "What we now know is that there appears to be some significant risk for pregnant women and women who are thinking about having a baby," Obama said in an interview aired Monday on "CBS This Morning." The White House said that as spring and summer approach, the U.S. ... (More on P4)... (20)

Syrian Gov't Reaches Truce in Rebel-Held Town in Daraa Province

DAMASCUS - The Syrian government and rebels at the town of Ibt in the countryside of Syria's southern Daraa province have concluded a truce agreement, a monitor group said on Monday. Both parties agreed that those who are detained from the town by the government will be released, and in return the armed men there will halt all hostilities against the government and will hoist the official Syrian flag on government institutions in the town, which is located on the old road between

the capital Damascus and Daraa. The armed men in Ibt will be tasked with guarding the town, but pledged to never point a gun against the government forces, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The Syrian army, in return, will halt their bombardment against the town and will allow in aid convoys, according to the report. According to the Observatory, which relies on a network of activists on the ground, the Syrian authorities warned the re-



bels that the Syrian forces will militarily storm the town if they did not abide by the truce. A similar agreement is also expected to be finalized in the adjacent town of Dael, according to the

Observatory. The towns are located south of the recently-captured city of Sheikh Miskeen, a main hub and rebel stronghold in the northern countryside of Daraa. (Xinhua)

Russia Starts Snap Drills in Southern Military District

MOSCOW - Russia has started snap drills to inspect the combat readiness of troops located in the country's Southern Military District, Defense Ministry said Monday. "In accordance with the decision of the commander-in-chief (Russian President Vladimir Putin), today at 5 a.m. (0200 GMT) the troops of the Southern Military District, units of the airborne troops and military transport aviation have been placed on full combat alert," Defense Minister

Sergei Shoigu said. "It is necessary to test the capacity of troops and their command bodies to solve a whole range of tasks, including the fight against terrorist threats and elimination of consequences of natural and man-made disasters," Shoigu said in an online statement. The drills would also assess the maneuverability of large units during troop buildup, check the readiness of aviation and air defense forces to repel enemy air attacks and protect im-



portant military and government facilities. The Southern Military District is one of the four operational strategic commands of the Russian

Armed Forces. It includes troops based in North Caucasus and in Crimea, as well as the Black Sea Fleet and Caspian Flotilla. ... (More on P4)... (21)

Abbas Urges U.S. to Help Stop Deterioration in Palestinian Territories

RAMALLAH - Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas urged Washington on Monday to help stop violent situation from further deterioration in the Palestinian territories. Abbas met with U.S. Consul Donald Blome and discussed the security situation on the ground, including settlement, incursions of West Bank areas under Palestinian control, as well as the holding of the bodies of the Palestinians, said the official

Palestinian news agency Wafa. Israel withholds bodies of 10 Palestinians from east Jerusalem, said Palestinian activists. The activists who are seeking to pressure the Israeli government to release the bodies said in a press statement that the Israeli authorities would release the withheld bodies under the condition of burying them outside of Jerusalem, besides imposition of a 5000 shekels fine (about 1300 U.S. dollars) ... (More on P4)... (22)

Russia Arrests Seven Suspected IS Terrorists

MOSCOW - Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) said Monday that it has detained seven people suspected of involving in Islamic State (IS) terrorist group and plotting terrorist attacks in Russia's major cities. The group of suspects, detained on Sunday in the central Russian city of Yekaterinburg, included citizens of Russia and Central Asian countries, said a FSB statement. They were led by an IS member from Turkey. The intelligence agency said that a laboratory was found at their residence, along with components for improvised explosive devices and extremist literature. The suspects intended to carry out terrorist attacks in Moscow and St. Petersburg, as well as in the Sverdlovsk region of the Ural Mountains, the FSB said. It also confirmed that the suspected terrorists planned to flee to Syria after their plotted attacks, and join IS ranks in the war-torn country. An investigation ... (More on P4)... (23)

Air Strikes Force ISIS to Halve Fighters' Pay: Glaser

LONDON - The Islamic State (IS) militant group has been forced to cut its fighters' pay by up to 50 percent because U.S.-led air strikes have had a substantial impact on the money it makes from oil, a senior U.S. official said on Monday. Daniel Glaser, assistant secretary for terrorist financing at the U.S. Treasury Department, said the strikes had hit the group's ability to extract, refine and transport oil from territory it controlled in Iraq and Syria. "When you look at difficulties that we know that they are having with respect to the transport, with respect to the extraction, I think it's fair to say



they are no longer able to make money the way they used to be able to," Glaser told a London conference. "(IS) has cut salaries to its fighters in (its de facto capital) Raqqa by up to 50 percent," he added. The strikes had also targeted cash storage sites which had "literally incinerated millions of dollars". IS has declared a self-styled caliphate across areas of terri-

tory it controls in Iraq and Syria, imposing its own harsh interpretation of Islamic law. Glaser said the US had estimated it made some \$500 million a year from oil, along with hundreds of millions more from taxation and extortion to go with the hundreds of millions it had seized from banks when it captured Iraqi towns and cities. (Reuters)

Massive Shake-Up of Britain's Prison Service Unveiled by Cameron

LONDON - Prime Minister David Cameron announced Monday one of the biggest ever reforms of Britain's prison system. In what is the first major speech by a premier on the country's penal system for more than 20 years, Cameron has set out his vision for a 'truly 21st century' prison system. Describing the failure of Britain's prison system today as scandalous, he called for reform to be one of the 'great progressive causes' of British politics. With the right agenda, Cameron said, Britain can be world leaders in change in prison reforms. Cameron wants to see six new 'reform prisons' created this year, with full autonomy over how they operate and spend their budgets. The prison education system, which costs almost 190 million U.S. dollars to run, will also be completely transformed with ... (More on P4)... (24)

Hungary's Orban Blames West for Migrant Crisis

ANKARA - The Latest on the influx of migrants into Europe (all times local): Hungary's prime minister says Western European leaders who consider migration a positive issue are to blame for the "very serious terror risks" and for deteriorating everyday security on the continent. Viktor Orban says migration "must be stopped" and has reiterated his call for a "European defense line" on the northern borders of Greece to end the influx of people. Orban, who hosted Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo on Monday, said that the "migrant phenomenon did not break into Europe violently" but that migrants were called into Western Europe "without ... (More on P4)... (27)

Al-Qaida Militants Battle Each other in Southern Yemen

SANAA - Al-Qaida militants battled each other on Monday in a southern Yemeni city controlled by the group, in what appeared to be an internal power struggle that erupted after a senior militant was killed in a U.S. drone strike. The clashes broke out in the southern city of Zinjibar late Sunday, leaving at least seven militants

dead and another nine wounded, according to Yemeni officials. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to brief the media. The rival factions are led by local commander known as Abu Anas al-Sanani and another known as Oussan-Baliedy, the brother of Jalal ... (More on P4)... (25)

Japan to Adopt Resolution to Protest DPRK's Rocket Launch

TOKYO - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on Monday once again denounced the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) launch of a long range rocket on Sunday as being in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, as bipartisan lawmakers plan to convene on Tuesday to adopt a resolution protesting the launch. Speaking at a ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) liaison

meeting, Abe once again condemned what he called the firing of a long-range ballistic missile and said that Japan would take "resolute measures" such as the imminent strengthening of its own sanctions against Pyongyang. The Japanese leader, calling the launch "absolutely unacceptable" and "clear violation of UN Security Council resolutions," added that the launch ... (More on P4)... (26)

Neighbor News

Iran Awards Medals of Honor to its Nuclear Team

TEHRAN - Iran awarded medals of honor on Monday to its nuclear negotiators, who helped clinch a landmark deal with world powers last year. President Hassan Rouhani presented the "Medal of Merit" to Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and the "Medal of Courage" to Defense Minister Hossein Dehghan and Vice President Ali Akbar Salehi, who is also the country's nuclear chief. The July 14 agreement brought about the lifting of international sanctions last month after the United Nations certified that Iran had met all its commitments to curbing its nuclear activities.

"We passed behind us difficult days, difficult hours and nights," Rouhani said at the ceremony. "But we did not lose the right path and God did not leave us alone." The agreement was a major accomplishment for Rouhani, who was elected in 2013 on a platform promising constructive engagement with the world and an end to Iran's international isolation. His allies are hoping for a strong showing in Feb. 26 parliamentary elections. Rouhani expressed gratitude for the support he received from Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has the final say on all major policies. (AP)

Dutch Queen to Visit Pakistan on Feb 9-11: Foreign Ministry

ISLAMABAD - Queen Máxima of the Netherlands, who is also UN Secretary General's Special Advocate (UNSGSA) for Inclusive Finance for Development, will visit Pakistan from Feb 9 to 11, the Foreign Ministry said on Monday. In her capacity as the UN secretary-general's special advocate, Queen Máxima encourages universal access for individuals and enterprises, at a reasonable cost, to a wide range of financial services, provided by diverse responsible and sustainable institutions. The Special Advocate works in partnership with stakeholders globally to raise awareness, encourage leadership and foster action towards financial inclusion. During her visit, the

queen will have meetings with the prime minister and the president besides other engagements with a range of stakeholders from the public and private sectors, the Foreign Ministry said. The prime minister had met the queen on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum in Davos in January 2016. Inclusive Finance for Development is one of the key priorities of the government's economic development policies. Pakistan has taken a number of important measures in recent years, including the launch of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (NFIS), in order to promote the key objectives of financial inclusion, the Foreign Ministry said. (Xinhua)

China Invests over 2 Trillion Yuan on Water Projects in Past 5 Years

BEIJING - China invested more than 2 trillion yuan (about 304 billion U.S. dollars) on water projects in the five years between 2011 and 2015, official data showed. Drinking water safety, flood control, drought relief, agricultural irrigation, and rural hydropower are the areas that have benefited the most from the investment, according to the ministry of water resources. Of the funding, 800 billion yuan went to 172 major water conservation and supply projects in the five years, the ministry said. In the past five years, major water projects were accelerated and the "strictest" management system for water

resources was implemented, said Jiao Yong, vice water resources minister. In the 13th five year period from 2016 to 2020, more efforts will be made to enhance water safety and speed up reforms related to the utilization of water resources, Jiao added. In carrying out large water projects, the ministry will continue to make full use of all available preferential financial policies, and create conditions for private capital to join so as to ensure investment in water projects grow steadily, Jiao said. A priority for the next five years will be to guide more water project investment to the poor areas, he added. (Xinhua)

Kazakhstan to Provide Humanitarian Aid to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan

BAKU - Kazakhstan will provide humanitarian aid to Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, the website of the Kazakh prime minister said. This decision was taken Feb. 8 at a meeting of the commission on international humanitarian aid under the chairmanship of Bakytzhan Sagintayev, First Deputy Prime Minister of Kazakhstan.

The victims of mudflow and flood in Tajikistan's districts will be provided with canned meat and milk, vegetable oil and butter, flour, and pasta. Meanwhile, beddings, utensils, stoves and winter tents are planned to send to Kyrgyzstan, which was struck by a strong earthquake in November 2015. (Agenceis)