

Relief in Ukraine Conflict Zone but Doubts about Truce

DONETSK - Residents of the rebel stronghold of Donetsk breathed a sigh of relief on Sunday morning following a first night without bombardments after a fragile ceasefire came into force in east Ukraine.

But despite the sudden outbreak of peace few around the conflict zone seemed confident that the truce would last long after the collapse of previous ceasefire deals.

"I have trouble believing that the ceasefire will be respected for long. But even if it lasts a few days, then that isn't bad," said pensioner Andrei, 77,



who lives in one of the worst affected areas of the city.

"That would maybe allow us to re-establish water, gas and electricity

to our house after it was cut off since bombing in January."

Across the road from the railway station -- which has been shelled repeat-

edly -- there was more life on the streets of Donetsk than at any time in recent months.

"There are ten times more people at the mar-

ket than normal," said cake-stall worker Irina, 55. "It is almost like it was before the war."

Irina said she would dearly love to believe that the end of fighting had come and peace was here to stay but she feared that was too much to expect.

"We always have hope because you can't live without hope, but if you think about it there is little chance that this will last."

Running a neighbouring stall, Natalia recounted how she waited with bated breath for the start of the...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Jordan Sentences Brotherhood Leader

AMMAN - A Jordanian court on Sunday sentenced a senior Muslim Brotherhood leader to one year and a half in jail over charges of harming the kingdom's ties with the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

The State Security Court in Jordan found Zaki Bani Rshaid, the group's deputy leader, guilty of souring relations with the UAE.

Rshaid was arrested in November last year after he published an article criticizing the UAE for designating the Islamist movement as a terrorist group. Jordan's Muslim Brotherhood is the country's biggest political opposition party. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

Operation Will Continue Till Elimination of Last Terrorist: PM

LAHORE: Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has asked media to extend their cooperation to government in implementing the National Action Plan to rid the country of terrorism.

Addressing a meeting of Council of Pakistan Newspapers Editors (CPNE0 in Lahore today, he pointed out that the plan was conceived after consensus amongst all political leadership. He said the military operation against terrorists is progressing successfully and it will continue till the elimination of last terrorist.

Nawaz Sharif said the terror acts cannot deter our resolve in the fight against this menace. He said the country is

passing through the most difficult times and responsibility rests with all the institutions including the media to play their role to steer the country out of all the challenges.

Nawaz Sharif said he believes in an independent judiciary and the media. However, the media should also hold itself accountable and evolve an effective code of ethics. He expressed the confidence that the media will play a balanced and constructive role on issues of national security.

Referring to the situation in Karachi, the prime minister said the operation is continuing successfully in the provincial capital and situation has improved to a great deal there. (Agencies)

US Wants to Expand Its Engagement in Central: State Department

BISHKEK - Because of the location of Central Asian countries at a crossroads between Asia and Europe and because Central Asia borders on many large countries with whom the United States has important and complicated relationships, the US has an interest in this region, US Deputy Assistant Secretary for Central Asia Daniel Rosenblum said at a telephonic press briefing with journalists from Bishkek, Tashkent, and Astana held in Brussels earlier this week.

Rosenblum oversees US policy and diplomatic relations with five Central Asian states -- Ka-

zakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.

"We don't want to see the Central Asian countries become safe havens for terrorist groups. So we want to expand our security cooperation to meet threats that we share, transnational threats, terrorism, narcotics trafficking, and we also talked about the emergence of ISIL, the organization of ISIL," the Deputy Assistant Secretary said.

He also said that the US wants to expand its economic engagement, to have more bilateral trade, more investment opportunities, and help



build more connectivity within the region, and more connections between Central Asian countries.

He also emphasized that the US wants to "expand and also address our concerns regarding what we call usually the human dimension, sup-

porting efforts to institute reforms, supporting human rights, that that was part of our relationship with each of these countries."

The Deputy Assistant Secretary was asked a question whether none of the US presidents have...*(More on P4)...(24)*

Dubai World Gets Creditor OK for \$14.6B Debt Re-structuring

DUBAI - State-backed conglomerate Dubai World says it has reached a deal with creditors to rework terms on \$14.6 billion of debt, giving it more breathing room as it works to move beyond its financial challenges.

The company said Sunday it will pay back \$2.92 billion worth of the debt earlier than scheduled this year and extend repayment of the rest from 2018 until 2022. The lenders include banks and in-

vestors from the Middle East, Europe and Asia.

The company says the deal gives it "more time to dispose of non-core assets." Its portfolio includes several companies, including port operator DP World and shipbuilder Drydocks World. Dubai World previously renegotiated terms on \$24.9 billion in debt in 2011 -- a key step in re-solving fallout from the Dubai's 2009 financial crisis. (AP)

Kazakh Leader's Allies Suggest Early Election to Strengthen Economy

ALMATY - An influential organization chaired by Kazakhstan's President Nursultan Nazarbayev has proposed holding an early presidential election this year, saying the veteran leader needs another term to steer his oil-rich state through economic crisis.

Nazarbayev, a 74-year-old former steelworker, has ruled his steppe nation of 17 million with a strong hand since 1989 when he became the head of the local Communist Party. He keeps a tight lid on dissent and faces no real challenge from the small opposition. His swift re-election in a snap vote would end continued speculation about his possible successor, a question closely watched by investors in Kazakhstan.

"It is crucial to strengthen the economy and ensure the continuity of the

current policy by holding an early election," the Assembly of the People of Kazakhstan, a constitutional body representing Kazakhstan's ethnic groups and headed by Nazarbayev, said in a statement issued late on Saturday.

The president's office could not be reached for comment. Nazarbayev was elected by almost 96 percent of votes in 2011 and his five-year term ends only in late 2016.

But the assembly, which he calls "an efficient tool of our fledgling democracy", said the nation could not hold both a parliamentary and a presidential election next year, at a time a new crisis starts to bite. Kazakhstan's economy is hit by low prices for its vital oil and metal exports, and by a crisis al-ready raging in its sanctions-hit neighbor Russia. (Reuters)

Egypt Court Puts Morsi on Trial over Espionage Charges

CAIRO - A court in Egypt is trying the country's first democratically-elected president, Mohamed Morsi, on charges of endangering national security by leaking state secrets to Qatar. On Sunday, the Cairo criminal court tried Morsi and 10 others on charges of espionage and leaking classified documents to the Qatari intelligence and Al-Jazeera news network. The documents that the court accuses Morsi of leaking to Qatar allegedly include information on Egypt's army, military dispositions and armaments, as well as additional information on the country's domestic and foreign policies. Last September, Attorney General Hesham Barakat ordered the defendants to be referred to the court following investigations by the Supreme State Security Prosecution. Morsi on Sunday described his trial as a "farce," prompting presiding judge Mohamed Fahmi to threaten filing a

separate lawsuit against him for insulting the court. "This court does not represent anything to me," Morsi said.

"What happened on July 3 was a military coup and its leader is the one who should be behind bars," he added in reference to his July 2013 military ouster by then army chief and now President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Among the defendants are the former head of Morsi's office, Ahmed Abdel-Ati, and secretary Ameen al-Serafi, along with journalists from Arabic-language Al Jazeera news network and Muslim Brotherhood's Misr 25 satellite channel. They will be sentenced to death if found guilty. The Egyptian government has been cracking down on any opposition since Morsi was ousted. Sisi has been accused of leading the suppression of Morsi supporters, as hundreds of them have been killed in clashes with Egyptian security forces over the past year. (Press TV)

Conditions Conducive to Iran Nuclear Deal: Iran FM

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the current conditions are conducive to a comprehensive deal between Tehran and the P5+1 world powers on Iran's nuclear program.

"Given the prevailing political will, we are sure that the ground is prepared for achieving a comprehensive solution [to Iran's nuclear program issue] in the near future," Zarif said at a joint press conference with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi in Tehran, on Sunday.

He said Iran is hopeful that China, as a member of the P5+1 group, would be instrumental in the conclusion of a permanent deal over Iran's nuclear issue.

The Chinese foreign minister, for his part, said a

historic opportunity has emerged in the talks between Iran and the P5+1, noting that some problems need to be resolved. He also said the talks have progressed significantly and expressed hope for good results.

Wang said Beijing is prepared to cooperate with Tehran in countering terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crimes.

Iran and the P5+1 countries -- Britain, France, China, the United States and Germany -- are seeking to seal a high-profile political deal by the end of March and to confirm the full technical details of the accord by July 1.

The scale of Iran's uranium enrichment and the timetable for the removal of anti-Iran sanctions are seen as the major stumbling blocks in the talks. (Press TV)

China, UAE Agree to Boost Cooperation, Ties

ABU DHABI - China and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) agreed here on Saturday to boost their strategic partnership and bilateral cooperation.

China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi is on an official visit to the UAE. He held a meeting with his UAE counterpart Sheikh Abdullah Bin Zayed Al Nahyan on Saturday.

During the talks, Wang said China and the UAE have maintained the momentum for the growth of their relations, and have always respected and supported each other despite differences in their respective societies and cultures.

China values the spirit of openness and inclusiveness the UAE has displayed, as well as the country's pivotal role in the region, said Wang, adding that Beijing is

ready to promote bilateral partnership for cooperation from a strategic and long-term view.

The Chinese foreign minister also said that the two countries are now facing a key opportunity to boost their bilateral ties. According to Wang, China is now moving fast to open its doors even wider to its West, and has been working to implement "the Belt and Road initiatives." The Belt and Road Initiatives were put forward by Chinese President Xi Jinping during his over-seas visits in 2013, which includes the Silk Road Economic Belt -- from China via Central Asia and Russia to Europe, and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road -- through the Strait of Malacca to India, the Middle East and East Africa. (Xinhua)

Tajikistan Showcases Its Handicraft in Germany

DUSHANBE - For the first time, Tajik handicrafts will be exhibited on the leading international trade fair for consumer goods, Ambiente, which opened in Frankfurt, Germany today. The Tajikistan Union of Crafts and "Umed" handicraftsmanship NGO have been supported by the International Trade Center (ITC) to represent Tajikistan at this world's most important consumer goods trade fair that runs through February 17. This participation was made possible by the ITC project funded by

the Government of Switzerland within its Trade Cooperation Program (TCP) in Tajikistan. ITC Tajikistan notes that with over 4,700 exhibitors from about 90 countries, Ambiente is considered as a meeting place for about 145,000 trade visitors from 160 countries annually. During the fairs, numerous events highlight trending industry topics and offer an ideal stage for net-working and dialogue. From functional innovations through design trends, visitors benefit from a trend-setting market overview (Asia-Plus).

Takfiri Terrosists are Israel's Proxy Fighters: Irani-an DM

TEHRAN - Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan said the Takfiri terrorist groups are serving Israel's interests and security by fighting a proxy war in the region.

"The Takfiri stream operating in the region is fighting a proxy war for Israel and it is currently at the service of that regime's security," Dehqan told reporters in Tehran on Sunday. He appreciated the regional states' resistance against the terrorist groups, and said, "The Syrian government and people are confronting



their enemies through cooperation with each other and of course, the Israelis are attempting to suppress the resistance current by any means." In relevant remarks in November, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolu-

tion Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei described the ISIL terrorist group as just a branch of the Takfiri stream which has troubled the region, and said the ISIL is serving the US and Israel's interests. Addressing the po-

litical and religious figures participating in the 'International Congress on Tak-firi Streams in the Eyes of the Islamic Ulema' in Tehran, Ayatollah Khamenei described the Tak-firi stream as a problem imposed by the arrogant powers on the region in line with the US and Israel's interests, and said the Takfiri stream should be considered as a phenomenon beyond the ISIL as the terrorist group is only a branch of the Takfiri stream. "The Tak-firi stream and the governments which support...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Ukraine Rebels Turn Back Monitors from De-baltseve: OSCE

KIEV - Rebels in eastern Ukraine refused to allow monitors from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to reach the encircled town of Debaltseve after a ceasefire took effect on Sunday, the head of the OSCE mission said. The rebels have said the ceasefire does not apply to Debaltseve, scene of the worst fighting in re-

cent weeks. Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe mission chief Ertugrul Apakan said in an online briefing that the truce which began at midnight was largely being observed across eastern Ukraine. But he said Debaltseve and the rebel stronghold of Luhansk were exceptions where shooting continued. (Reuters)



Limited Climate Change Accord Likely in Paris: IPCC Expert

BRUSSELS - Encouraging progress at climate change talks points to the likelihood of an overall accord being reached at the Paris conference in December, but the deal is unlikely to adequately fight global warming, a top IPCC official said Sunday. UN talks in Geneva ended Friday with a framework pact that scientists said at least identified enough common ground to foster hopes for success in Paris. It is the first-ever proposal with buy-in from all

the world's nations. Jean-Pascal Van Ypersal, the Belgian deputy vice president of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, told AFP: "I am optimistic. We will have an accord in Paris." But the goal of limiting the global temperature increase to just two degrees Celsius remains elusive, and Van Ypersal said it appeared the world is not ready to do what is needed to deliver that essential target. "A deal in Paris will at least allow us to continue

the work, but I fear time is passing and we have to make decisions by consensus," he said. "I do not think today that we have the consensus to aim higher." The Geneva talks produced an 86-page text that listed a variety of alternative approaches on most issues, reflecting conflicting national priorities. The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) grouping 195 nations will now take the text through to Paris, hoping to do better af-

ter the 2009 Copenhagen conference failed to produce a global accord. At a minimum, the pact must be in effect by 2020 to hit the UN goal of limiting global warming to two degrees Celsius (3.6 degrees Fahrenheit) over pre-Industrial Revolution levels. Scientists warn that current greenhouse gas emission trends put planet Earth on track for double that or more, with the risk of catastrophic drought, storms and floods as well as rising sea levels. (AFP)