

# Syria FM Stresses Gov't Commitment to Inter-Syrian Dialogue without Preconditions

DAMASCUS - Syria's Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said on Tuesday that his government is committed to an inter-Syrian dialogue without preconditions, state news agency SANA reported. Speaking during his meeting with the visiting UN peace envoy to Syria Staffan De Mistura, al-Moallem said the Syrians are the only ones authorized to determine their future without foreign pressures. The remarks came just a couple of weeks after the first round of the Syrian talks in Geneva collapsed, with the government blaming the failure, in part, on the opposition's preconditions. Another round of talks were planned on Feb. 25, and al-Moallem's remarks



indicate his government's readiness to attend it. Meanwhile, al-Moallem pointed out to De Mistura the efforts exerted by the Syrian government to deliver aid to the people in need, stressing that this move emanates from the government's duties, noting that it's not related to the Geneva talks. Al-Moallem also underscored the need for the Western countries to lift their unilateral sanctions on Syria. Mistura said after the meeting with al-Moallem that they discussed the humanitarian access to all besieged Syrian areas, not only those besieged by the government, but those under the siege of the opposition and the Islamic State (IS) group as well. (Xinhua)

## Turkish PM Accuses Russian Jets of Bombing Civilians in Syria

ANKARA - Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu Tuesday identified Russian airstrikes in Syria as "dishonorable", claiming the bombing does not target Islamic State (IS) group but the opposition groups which fight against the Syrian regime. Citing that "dishonorable Russian planes" have launched almost 8,000 sorties in a bid to seal corridor to Aleppo province of Syria sortie, those jets are responsible



for killing Syrian civilians in bombing raids on hospitals and schools in Syria, the prime minister said at the parliament. "Russia is bombing hospitals and

schools. And then it is referring Turkey to the United Nations Security Council to take measures for its border security," Davutoglu... (More on P4)... (17)

## Russian Experts See Challenges in Implementing Munich Agreement on Syria

MOSCOW - The agreement reached Friday in Germany's Munich among members of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) marked a significant step toward a peaceful settlement of the Syrian crisis, but its implementation faces many challenges, Russian experts said. At the heart of the Munich agreement are plans to initiate a nationwide cessation of hostilities in Syria soon, and deliver humanitarian aid to besieged areas in the country. As parties are working out the details, Igor Korotchenko, editor-in-chief of the Russian magazine National Defense, said he is skeptical about the prospects of implementing the agreement. "I have serious doubt that Syria's... (More on P4)... (18)

## UN Peace Envoy Discusses Humanitarian Access with Syria FM

DAMASCUS - The UN's peace envoy for Syria Staffan De Mistura said here on Tuesday that he has discussed unhindered humanitarian access to besieged Syrian areas with Syria's Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem. In a briefing to journalists following his meeting, Mistura said he discussed the humanitarian access to all besieged Syrian areas, not only those besieged by the government, but those under the siege of the opposition and the Islamic State (IS) group as well. The UN envoy said he will hold another meeting to discuss with Syrian officials the outcome of the recently-held talks in Munich, Germany, where world powers called for immediate aid access throughout Syria and a "cessation of hostilities" to begin within a... (More on P4)... (19)

## Over 84,000 Refugees, Migrants Reach EU by Sea Since Beginning of 2016

GENEVA - The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) on Tuesday said that 84,320 refugee and migrant maritime arrivals have been recorded in Europe since the beginning of the year. The vast majority (78,333 arrivals) have been reported in Greece, with the remaining 5,987 registered in Italy. This month's sea arrivals in Greece are considerably lower than the influx recorded in January, with IOM indicating last week that bad weather had significantly hampered mi-

grant crossings. Figures show that some 16,140 people reached the southeastern European country in the first half of February compared to 62,193 for the whole of January. The Eastern Mediterranean route separating Turkey and Greece remains by far the deadliest passage, claiming the lives of 320 people since the start of the year. Ninety individuals have died while crossing the Central Mediterranean passage which links North Africa with Italy. (Xinhua)

## Greece's Exclusion from Schengen Not to Solve Refugee Crisis: Tusk

ATHENS - Greece's exclusion from the Schengen passport free travel zone would not resolve the on-going refugee crisis that is testing Europe's cohesion, visiting European Council President Donald Tusk said here Tuesday. "Excluding Greece from the Schengen zone does not solve any problem," Tusk, after talks with Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, told the press, in response to increasing pressure from some European countries lately to expel Greece for up to two years in order to slow the refugee and mi-

grant flows. Acknowledging that debt laden Greece is bearing an enormous disproportionate burden over the past year due to its geographical position, Tusk reiterated a plea for unity and enhanced cooperation across Europe to address the common challenge. "We must unite to face the challenges that lay ahead," Tsipras stressed, according to an e-mailed press release, warning that the closing of borders would only lead to new dead ends, undermining EU's existence. Both leaders underlined that the effective manage-



ment of refugee flows is an international issue that should be tackled with respect to the principles of the international law and European values with coordinated actions, solidarity and fair burden sharing. They stressed the necessity to step up efforts so that all sides fully implement all decisions taken in late 2015 regarding the monitoring of refugee flows, pointing to neighbor Turkey. ... (More on P4)... (20)

## Syrian Army Captures Thermal Station East of Aleppo

DAMASCUS - Syrian army on Tuesday captured the thermal station in eastern countryside of the northern province of Aleppo, following battles with the Islamic State (IS) group, a military source told Xinhua. The thermal station is the main power supply of the entire city of Aleppo, the source said on condition of anonymity. Its capture has enabled the Syrian army to become closer to the rebel-held eastern part of Aleppo, the source added.



The victory is the latest in a series of military gains the Syrian army achieved in Aleppo. The ultimate goal of the recent progress and the

all-out assault in Aleppo are to isolate the city from its northern countryside and to cut the rebel supply lines from Turkey into that key city. (Xinhua)

## Merkel Says No Sense in New Quotas for Migrants

BRUSSELS - The Latest on preparations for Thursday's European Union summit. German Chancellor Angela Merkel says it makes no sense to talk about new quotas of migrants for European countries to take in when initial quotas agreed upon still haven't been divided among the EU. Merkel said Tuesday instead her focus at an upcoming EU summit will be efforts to work with Turkey on reducing the flow of migrants to Europe in general. Merkel says "I'll put all my energy into arguing this European-Turkish approach is the best way forward." She says European countries have not yet divided up 160,000 asylum seekers as had been previously agreed so that it made no sense to discuss new quotas. European Union chief Donald... (More on P4)... (21)

## Ukraine's Poroshenko Asks Embattled PM to Resign

KIEV - Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko on Tuesday asked Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk to resign in the face of the government's perceived failure to fight endemic corruption and overcome a deep economic crisis. Poroshenko's dramatic intervention came as opinion polls showed growing public disenchantment with the pro-Western team that took over the leadership of the former Soviet nation after its 2014 pro-Western revolt. Parliament was... (More on P4)... (22)

## 10 Arrested in Belgium in IS Recruitment Investigation: Prosecutor

BRUSSELS - Ten people were arrested in the Belgian capital on Tuesday morning, as part of an investigation into a recruitment network for the Islamic State (IS), local media reported on Tuesday. L'Avenir newspaper said the raids were not linked to the Paris terror attacks of Nov. 13 last year. In total nine properties were raided in the Brussels districts of Molenbeek, Koekelberg, Schaarbeek and Etterbeek. The Belgian federal prosecutor's office said several people suspected of travelling to Syria to join the IS had been identified. The 10 suspects were taken away for questioning by the anti-terrorism branch of the federal police force in the southern Belgian city of Liege. The newspaper added that an investigating magistrate would decide later in the day whether their detention should be extended and charges brought. Among the material seized during the raids were mobile phones and computers, L'Avenir added. (Xinhua)

## High-Ranking Yemeni Government Officials Escape Gun Attack

ADEN - Unknown gunmen opened fire on the motorcade of Aden's governor and the city's chief security on Tuesday, but no casualties were reported, a military official told Xinhua. "The motorcade of Aden's governor Major General Aidarous Zubaidi and the commander of the city's security came under heavy gunfire in the neighborhood of Mansourah," the local military official said on condition of

anonymity. The attack occurred after the governor's motorcade tried to cross in the militant-controlled neighborhood Mansourah, the military source said. The governor escaped the attack, which was the fourth of its kind, according to the local official. The port city of Aden, Yemen's temporary capital, has been witnessing a state of chaos and lawlessness during the past... (More on P4)... (23)

## Abbas Due to Meet Kerry Next Week Exploiting Ways of Peace

RAMALLAH - Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is expected to meet with U.S. State Secretary John Kerry in Amman on Feb. 21, a senior Palestinian official said Tuesday. Kerry had called Abbas to discuss the latest developments on Jan. 31, over two months after their last meeting in November. Palestine's Liberation Organization (PLO) Executive Committee member Ahmed Mjadalani told Xinhua that arrangements are currently under preparation for the upcoming meeting between Abbas and Kerry during his visit to the region next week.

Mjadalani said the meeting's focus will be on the latest developments in the Palestinian territories and France's proposal to hold an international conference targeting an end to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The Palestinian president welcomed the French proposal to hold an international peace conference to revive the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said that in the event the French proposal fails, his country will subsequently officially recognize the Palestinian state. (Xinhua)

## Neighbor News

### Iran FM Visits European Parliament

BRUSSELS - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Tuesday visited the European Parliament, and discussed EU-Iran relations with members of the European Parliament (MEPs). In a first-ever debate with European Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee members, Zarif thanked the EU for its constructive approach to finding a deal on Iran's nuclear program, which, he affirmed, was and had always been peaceful. "We managed to define the problem and objective: a peaceful nuclear program," he said. Asked about ways to end violence in Syria and Yemen, Zarif stressed that the key challenges in the region are "extremism, sectarianism and violence."

He spelled out a four-point plan to tackle them, including a ceasefire, a national unity government, humanitarian assistance and elections based on new constitution. As regards relations with Saudi Arabia, he stated that Iran was following a policy of self-restraint. MEPs welcomed the Iran nuclear deal strengthening EU-Iran trade, economic, cultural and environmental ties. However, MEPs also express concern over the human rights situation in Iran. According to an official Parliament statement, Zarif acknowledged the need to improve Iran's human rights record and promised to pursue dialogue on this issue with the EU "in a spirit of mutual respect and without preaching." (Xinhua)

### China to Increase Financial Support for Industrial Upgrade

BEIJING - China will increase financial support to its industries as they are being encouraged to transform themselves amid the country's industrial upgrades, an official document said on Tuesday. China will expand credit to industrial enterprises, make capital and insurance markets more helpful and innovate in corporate financing system, according to a guideline jointly released by eight economic regulators including the central bank. The authorities will implement a differentiated strategy targeting differ-

ent sectors and areas, the document said. The development of emerging sectors and upgrades of traditional ones will receive more support, and financial institutions will be encouraged to make long-term loans to high-tech firms, technical equipment manufacturing and some basic industries. However, loans to "zombie companies" that have suffered continual losses and are unable to pay back their debts will be slashed or withdrawn, according to the guideline. (Xinhua)

### Tajikistan's External Trade Turnover Estimated at \$303.9 mln in January 2016

DUSHANBE - In January 2016, the external trade turnover of Tajikistan, including electrical power and natural gas, amounted to 303.9 million U.S. dollars, which was 88.1 percent of the January 2015 level or 40.9 million U.S. dollars fewer, according to the Agency for Statistics under the President of Tajikistan. The trade balance last year was negative and amounted to 175.8 million U.S. dollars. Exports of goods last month amounted to 64.1 million U.S. dollars, which was 31.7 percent

or 29.7 million USD fewer than in the same period last year. Over the report period, imports of goods into the country amounted to more than 239.8 million U.S. dollars, which was 4.5 percent or 11.2 million USD fewer than in January 2014. In January this year, Tajikistan had trade relations with 77 countries of the world, including ten CIS nations. In January 2015, major trading partners of Tajikistan were: China - 96 million USD; and Russia - little more than 72 million USD. (Asia-Plus)

### Pakistani Researcher from Quetta Contributed to Gravitational Waves Discovery

QUETTA - As the story of one of the world's most influential scientific discovery unfolds, it comes to the forefront that not one, but two Pakistanis were part of the various research teams which contributed to the discovery of gravitational waves. A young researcher from Quetta, Imran Khan, currently pursuing his PhD at Gran Sasso Science Institute (GSSI) in Italy, was one of the co-authors of the Physical Review Letter (PRL) paper, submitted to the LIGO Scientific

Collaboration at the helm of this discovery. "It was great to get selected among hundreds of applicants for the Marie Curie initial training network programme 'GraWIToN' to become part of the European team involved with the discovery of gravitational waves," Imran Khan told Dawn.com. The 25-year-old researcher, whose father is a retired armed forces member, hails from a middle-class family residing in Quetta. (Agencies)