

Iran, IAEA Seek to Resolve Outstanding Issues: Senior Nuclear Negotiator

TEHRAN - Iran and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) seek to resolve the outstanding issues pertaining to Iran's nuclear program, senior Iranian nuclear negotiator Abbas Araçchi was quoted as saying by Press TV on Tuesday. He will hold a meeting with the IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano in the Austrian capital of Vienna on Tuesday to discuss the outstanding issues through cooperation, Araçchi, also the deputy foreign minister, said. He said Iran will be able to settle issues with the agency as soon as possi-

ble, which will help progress in Iran's nuclear negotiations with the world powers.

The meeting between Araçchi and Amano follows the three-day sit of the representatives from Iran and the P5+1 group, namely the United States, Britain, France, Russia, China and Germany, on Iran's disputed nuclear program which concluded in Geneva on Monday.

The UN nuclear agency had made no major progress in verifying outstanding issues related to Iran's alleged nuclear weapons program, an official report said last



Thursday.

The report revealed that the IAEA had yet to receive information

from Tehran on two outstanding issues related to the alleged nuclear bomb research, the so-

called "possible military dimensions (PMDs)," which Iran denies. "Iran has not provided

any explanations that enable the Agency to clarify the two outstanding practical measures," the report said.

"These measures are related to the initiation of high explosives and to neutron transport calculations," the report noted.

However, Iran insists it is not responsible for the stalled investigation.

Iran and IAEA have held several rounds of talks to address unresolved issues concerning Tehran's nuclear plans, and both sides have agreed to cooperate in clarifying issues through step-by-step measures. (Xinhua)

IS Abducts at Least 90 from Christian Villages: Monitor

AMMAN - Islamic State militants have abducted at least 90 people from Assyrian Christian villages in northeastern Syria, a monitoring group that tracks violence in Syria said on Tuesday. The British-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the militants carried out dawn raids on rural villages inhabited by the ancient Christian minority west of Hasaka, a city mainly held by the Kurds.

Syrian Kurdish militia launched two offensives against the militants in northeast Syria on Sunday, helped by U.S.-led air strikes and Iraqi peshmerga. This part of Syria is strategically important

in the fight against Islamic State because it borders territory controlled by the group in Iraq, where it last year committed atrocities against the minority religious Yazidi community.

Many Assyrian Christians have emigrated in the nearly four-year-long conflict in which more than 200,000 have people have been killed. Before the arrival of Kurds and Arab nomadic tribes at the end of the 19th century, Christians formed the majority in Syria's Jazeera area, which includes Hasaka.

Sunday's offensive by Kurdish YPG militia reached within 5 km (3 miles) of Tel Hamis, an



Islamic State controlled town south east of Qamishli, the Observatory said.

At least 14 IS fighters died in the offensive, which involved Assyrian fighters, and eight civilians were also killed in heavy shelling by the Kurdish side which

seized several Arab villages from Islamic State control, the monitoring group said.

Last year, Islamic State fighters abducted several Assyrians in retaliation for some of them fighting alongside the YPG. Most were released after long ... (More on P4)...(26)

Ukraine Rebels Say They Withdrawing Weapons; Kiev Doubtful

DONETSK - Pro-Russia separatists said on Tuesday they had begun pulling heavy weapons from the front line in east Ukraine under a ceasefire deal, but Ukraine said the rebels were using the cover of the truce to reinforce for another advance.

Fighting has eased in eastern Ukraine in recent days, raising hope that a ceasefire due to start on Feb. 15 can finally take effect after the rebels initially ignored it to storm a government-held town last week.

Since taking the railway hub of Debaltseve in one of the worst defeats for Kiev of the war, the Moscow-backed rebels have indicated they want the

truce to take effect. But Kiev says the rebels are still shooting, which the rebels deny.

Western countries have not given up on the ceasefire deal to end fighting that has killed more than 5,600 people, but have made clear they are suspicious of the rebels and their presumed patron, Russian President Vladimir Putin.

European countries have warned of new economic sanctions against Moscow if the rebels advance deeper into territory the Kremlin calls "New Russia". Washington says it could arm Kiev.

"Today at 9 in the morning (1 a.m. ET) the planned withdrawal of heavy equipment start-



ed," rebel commander Eduard Basurin told Reuters. "We're pulling it back 50 km (30 miles) from the boundary line ... Of course we won't say exactly where we're pulling it back to."

Basurin denied Ukrainian military reports of fighting in southeast Ukraine, saying there had been "provocations"

from the government side but no serious clashes.

But the Kiev military said in a statement that rebel assertions they were pulling back guns were "mere empty words".

"On the contrary, the terrorist groups, making use of the ceasefire period, are reinforcing their ... (More on P4)...(27)

Putin Rules out War with Ukraine as Diplomats Try to Salvage Peace Deal

PARIS - Foreign ministers from Ukraine, Russia, Germany and France gathered Tuesday to try to revive a shaky ceasefire in eastern Ukraine as Russian President Vladimir Putin ruled out an "apocalyptic scenario"

Top diplomats from the four countries, whose leaders hammered out the initial peace plan in the Belarussian capital Minsk 12 days ago, met in Paris, with Kiev accusing Moscow and pro-Russian rebels on the ground of torpedoing the truce.

"The Minsk agreements are not being respected and everyone has to say clearly that this can not go on," a high-ranking Ukrainian diplomatic source told AFP. Germany has voiced concern that a "comprehensive truce" remains elusive, but European Union

foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said the deal was the only hope for peace in Ukraine.

"The agreement is 10 days old, we have to insist to make it work. This is what the Ukrainians are asking us, this is what our duty is as Europeans," Mogherini said on a trip to London.

Fighting has dropped off significantly since rebels ignored a truce to seize the strategic transport hub of Debaltseve last week, but clashes still continue around strategic flashpoints in Ukraine's industrial east.

Ukraine's military said one soldier was killed and seven injured in the past 24 hours and that rebels had again tried to storm the village of Shyrokyne which lies east of the key port town of Mariupol. A rebel com ... (More on P4)...(28)

Egypt Says Political Accord Not Enough to Tackle Terrorism in Libya

CAIRO - Egypt's Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry says a potential political agreement in Libya would not counter the threat posed by the ISIL Takfiri terrorists who have a base of support in eastern Libya. Shoukry made the remarks during a press conference in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, on Tuesday.

"The approach by several countries, which imagine an accord between politicians will deal with the effects of terrorism, is astonishing," the Egyptian foreign minister said. The internationally

recognized parliament of Libya, which is based in the eastern town of Tobruk, said Monday it would end its participation in negotiations brokered by the United Nations between rival factions in the country.

The move by the Libyan parliament came after President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi of Egypt said in a televised speech the need for "a unified Arab force" against ISIL was "growing and becoming more pressing every day." Western powers do not appear to have embraced the request. (Press TV)

Neighbor News

Chinese FM, UN General Assembly President Meet on World Peace, Development

UNITED NATIONS - The international community should make concerted efforts to jointly tackle challenges toward world peace and development, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Monday. Wang made the remarks during a meeting with Sam Kutesa, president of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, at the UN headquarters in New York.

This year marks the 70th anniversary of the founding of the United Nations, he said, adding that peace and development are being focused as two major themes that call for "full cooperation and joint response" from the international community.

On peace, he said China hopes that the international community will take the opportunity of the anniversary to seriously sum up historical

lessons and explore effective ways to maintain international peace and security under new situations.

On development, Wang said China attaches importance to and supports relevant UN initiatives and actions.

"China will actively participate in the negotiations of the post-2015 development agenda, as well as the Paris climate conference process," said the foreign minister, adding that China will safeguard the legitimate rights of the large number of developing nations. Kutesa, for his part, said 2015 is a milestone year for the United Nations, voicing the world body's support for China and relevant parties in commemorating the 70th anniversary of its founding, as well as the victory of the World Anti-Fascist War. (Xinhua)

Shaif Meets Gen. Raheel, Reviews NAP, Operation Zarb-E-Azb

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif met Pakistani Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif on Tuesday to discuss matters pertaining to operation Zarb-e-Azb and commended Army's

continuous success in the operation. Rehabilitation of temporarily displaced persons (TDPs) came under discussion whereas implementation on the National Action Plan was also reviewed. (Agencies)

Iran, Syria Widening Cooperation in Science

TEHRAN - Syrian Minister of Higher Education Muhammad Amer Mardini and Iranian deputy health ministers in a meeting in Tehran on Tuesday underlined the need for the further expansion of mutual cooperation in scientific fields. During the meeting in the Iranian capital, Mardini and Iranian officials explored avenues for bolstering and reinvigorating bilateral ties in scientific and technological fields, including exchange of university students and professors.

The Syrian minister of higher education voiced his country's preparedness to admit Iran's medical university students to the Syrian universities. "We hope that the two countries' health ministries would be able to sign a memorandum of understanding similar to the MoU signed between Iranian and Syrian ministries of higher education," Mardini said.

The Syrian minister, meantime, called for boosting cooperation with Iran in area of stem cell science. Iranian Deputy Health

Minister Seyed Amir Hossein Ziyadee, for his part, said that the Iranian health ministry is pursuing the policy of exchanging university students and admitting foreign students, and added, "Given the capacity of Iranian medical universities, we are ready to admit foreign university students at all levels."

Iran and Syria have had close ties in the past three decades. Syria was one of the most important partners of Tehran in war time with Iraq (1980-1988), during which Damascus closed the Iraqi oil pipeline carrying the country's crude to the European markets.

Since 2011, after protests of some Syrian opposition groups turned into insurgency due to the meddling of certain western countries and their regional allies, Iran has been one of the main strategic partners of President Bashar Al-Assad's legal government.

Iran has also held some conferences to find a peaceful way to end ongoing bloodshed in the Muslim country. (FNA)

Tajikistan Seeks Consultant for Construction of Its Section of Turkmen-Chinese Gas Pipeline

DUSHANBE - The Ministry of Finance of Tajikistan (MoF) has announced a tender for selection of a consulting company for providing technical, legal, economic and financial services for implementation of the Turkmenistan-China Gas Pipeline Project.

The MoF Secretariat notes the deadline for applications is March 12, 2015. We will recall that Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and visiting Chinese President Xi Jinping attended the construction commencement ceremony of the Tajikistan section of Line-D of the China-Central Asia Gas Pipelines on September

13, 2014. The ceremony took place in the Roudaki district.

Line D is the fourth in the pipeline network. The current pipeline network comprising lines A, B and C passes through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan before reaching China's western Xinjiang province.

In November 2011, Ashgabat agreed to send an additional 25 billion cubic meters/year of gas to China, bringing total volumes to 65 billion cu m/year by 2020. Some of the additional gas supplies would come from the supergiant Galkynynsh gas field in Turkmenistan. (Asia-Plus)

Domestic Demand Revives German Economy

BERLIN - The German economy regained its momentum in the fourth quarter of last year thanks to strong domestic demand, official data showed on Tuesday.

Europe's biggest economy grew by 0.7 percent in the last three months of 2014, said German federal statistical office Destatis, confirming its earlier estimation.

Positive contributions mainly came from domestic demand, which contributed 0.5 percentage points to the growth of gross domestic product (GDP), according to the Wiesbaden-based institute. Household consumption rose by 0.8 percent quarter on quarter, government consumption increased by 0.2 percent, meanwhile investment expanded by 1.2 percent.

Foreign trade also powered economic growth. Exports increased by 1.3 percent quarter-on-quarter. Imports, however, also increased by 1 percent. Net exports thus contributed merely 0.2 percentage points to the GDP growth.

"Following a dynamic start into the year and the subsequent period of weakness last summer, the economic situation stabilised towards the end of the year," said Destatis in a statement, adding that German GDP increased by 1.6 percent over the whole year of 2014. The German economy narrowly avoided a recession during the summer months last year due to external uncertainties including Ukraine crisis and weak growth of eurozone. Falling oil prices and a weak

euro were believed to be stimulus to German economy at the end of 2014 and would continue to play a supporting role in economic growth this year. Germany's central bank said earlier this month that it might lift its forecast for German economic growth in 2015, citing robust domestic demands supported by stable labour market and falling energy prices, as well as a revival of exports fueled by a weaker euro. "The continued employment structure and strong wage growth will boost private consumption," said Ferdinand Fichtner, an expert at the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW). Nonetheless, Germany's economy still faces "significant risks," according to Simon Junker, another DIW economist. (Xinhua)

Japan to Provide Further Humanitarian Aid to Syrian Refugees

million U.S. dollars in emergency aid as part of an expansion of its Middle East humanitarian assistance program.

The Foreign Ministry said the funds would be made available to those at need and would also be accessible to Syria's neighbors, including Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey.

The proceeds will be made primarily through the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Program (WFP) and four other such international organizations, the ministry said.

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida told reporters earlier Tuesday that the latest aid package is part of the government's extended humanitarian and



diplomatic assistance to the region, to help in the fight against terrorism and militant groups like the Islamic State who purportedly killed two Japanese.

Despite the Islamic State claiming that the slaying of the two Japanese hostages was an answer to Prime Minister Shinzo Abe pledging 200 million U.S. dollars in aid when

he was on a recent tour in the Middle East, Abe has said that Japan will "never give in to terrorism."

The financial aid has been earmarked to buy blankets, heating equipment and food, the ministry added, as freezing winter temperatures in the region are further contributing to the harsh living conditions for the refugees. (Xinhua)