

# Syrian Rebels Suspend Talks over Alleged Truce Violations

BEIRUT - Syrian government forces pressed ahead with their offensive in the water-rich Barada Valley northwest of Damascus on Tuesday as 10 rebel groups said they were suspending talks about planned peace negotiations because of what they describe as ongoing government violations of a cease-fire deal. The cease-fire, brokered by Russia and Turkey, is meant to be followed by talks later this month in the Kazakh capital of Astana between mainstream rebel factions and government representatives.



The U.N. Security Council on Saturday unanimously adopted a resolution supporting efforts by Russia and Turkey, which support opposing sides of the Syria war, to end the nearly six-year conflict and jump-start peace negotiations. But the nationwide four-day-old truce is looking increasingly shaky, with opposition factions angered in particular about the ongoing military offensive in the strategically-important Barada Valley. The government and the opposition disagree about whether the region is...*(More on P4)...(21)*

## Germany Plans Security Overhaul after Berlin Attack



BERLIN - Germany's interior minister on Tuesday outlined plans for a security services overhaul, seeking greater federal powers on domestic intelligence and quicker expulsions of illegal migrants following the Berlin truck attack. Thomas de Maiziere also wants federal police to be given wider oversight across the country's 16 states, and for a new national crisis management centre to be set up. "We don't have federal jurisdiction to deal with national catastrophes. The jurisdiction for the fight against international terrorism is fragmented," he wrote in a guest column for the daily Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung. "The federal police's scope of action is restricted to railway stations, airports and border controls," he wrote, stressing that "it is time" to reexamine Germany's security

set-up. Policing and domestic intelligence services in Germany are currently decentralised, with responsibilities split between the federal and state governments. The plans for a sweeping reform come after a series of embarrassing security failures, with the December 19 attack training a spotlight on the gaps. After Tunisian suspect Anis Amri allegedly rammed a truck into a crowded Christmas market, killing 12, it swiftly emerged that the asylum seeker had slipped through the net of security services. Amri, 24, who was days later shot dead by Italian police, had been under surveillance since March, but German police dropped their watch in September thinking he was a small-time drug dealer. (AFP)

## UK Ambassador to EU Resigns Months before Brexit Negotiations

LONDON - Ivan Rogers, Britain's ambassador to the European Union, has resigned just months before Brexit negotiations are due to begin, the Press Association reported Tuesday. Before he quit, Rogers was due to lead the UK's negotiations to leave the EU. Prime Minister Theresa May has said the UK will begin the formal process of doing so by the end of March. News of the resignation comes weeks after the EU's chief Brexit nego-

tiator, Michel Barnier, warned Britain that it may only have 18 months to strike an exit deal from the bloc. Barnier said the process would need to be completed by October 2018 to allow for ratification by the 27 remaining member states within the two-year time scale prescribed by EU rules. "Should the UK notify the council by the end of March 2017, as Prime Minister Theresa May said she would, it is safe to say negotiations could



start a few weeks later and an Article 50 agreement be reached by October 2018," he said. Barnier warned the time

available to conclude a deal would be short. "All in all, there will be less than 18 months to negotiate." (CNN)

## US Stocks Ring in 2017 with Gains as Energy Companies Rise

NEW YORK - U.S. stock indexes are jumping at the start of the first trading day of 2017. Energy companies are climbing with the price of oil, while banks are advancing thanks to a bump in interest rates. Those two sectors were the best-performing parts of the market in 2016. KEEPING SCORE: The Dow Jones industrial average leaped 122 points, or 0.6 percent, to 19,884 as of 10 a.m. Eastern time. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 15 points, or 0.7 percent, to 2,253. The Nasdaq composite added

38 points, or 0.7 percent, to 5,420. The Russell 2000 index, which is made up of small-company stocks, jumped 9 points, or 0.7 percent, to 1,366. The Russell rose almost 20 percent last year and did far better than indexes focused on larger companies. U.S. stocks are coming off a three-day losing streak. OIL: Benchmark U.S. crude gained \$1.33, or 2.5 percent, to \$55.05 a barrel in New York. Brent crude, used to price international oils, rose \$1.37, or 2.4 percent, to \$58.19 a barrel in London. That sent energy



companies higher. Marathon Petroleum surged \$2.74, or 5.4 percent, to \$53.09 and Halliburton added \$1.82, or 3.4 percent, to \$55.91. Natural gas futures dropped 7.5 percent.

BONDS: Bond prices fell. The yield on the 10-year Treasury note rose to 2.50 percent from 2.43 percent late Friday. Higher bond yields are linked to higher...*(More on P4)...(22)*

## 386 Civilians Killed in Violence, Armed Conflicts in Iraq in December: UN

BAGHDAD - Terrorist acts, violence and armed conflicts killed 386 civilians and wounded 1,066 others in December across Iraq, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) said on Monday. A UNAMI statement said that figures of casualties do not include the security members and exclude the casualties in Iraq's western province of Anbar, as the casualty figures there for the month were unavail-



able due to the volatility of the situation on the ground and the disruption of services. According to UNAMI re-

cord, a total of 6,878 civilians were killed and 12,388 wounded in 2016, the statement said, adding that the...*(More on P4)...(23)*

## Cambodia Expels 3,376 Illegal Immigrants in 2016: Police Official

PHNOM PENH - Cambodia deported 3,376 illegal foreigners, including 738 females, to their birth countries in 2016, a senior immigration police official said Tuesday. The illegal immigrants of 63 nationalities had been arrested and expelled from Cambodia last year after they lived and worked here without passports or valid visas, Major General Uk Heisela, chief of the investigation department of the General Department of Immigration (GDI), told Xinhua. "Some 2,453 (or 72 percent) of them are Vietnamese," he said. According to the official, since the establishment of the GDI in April 2014 until the end of 2016, Cambodia had deported a total of 11,661 illegal immigrants of 72 nationalities, 84 percent of them are Vietnamese. Under...*(More on P4)...(24)*

## Restoring Production in Syria's Aleppo Top Government Priority: PM

DAMASCUS - Restoring the production wheel in Syria's northern city of Aleppo is a top priority for the Syrian government after the army forces wrested control over that key city last month, Prime Minister Imad Khamis said Monday, according to state news agency SANA. "Aleppo has never been absent from the government's concern," Khamis said during a ministerial meeting held in Aleppo on Monday following its recapture. The delegation of 15 ministers was dispatched to Aleppo upon the directives of President Bashar al-Assad to evaluate the service and economic situation in the city. Khamis said the top priority of the government is the restoration of production in the city, by rehabilitating the industrial city of Sheikh Najjar all the way to the smallest workshop in Aleppo. He said that a work team will be formed to review the status of damaged factories and provide facilitation to its owners, as well as providing loans to those who wish to begin production. Following a month-long military offensive, the Syrian army and allied fighters succeeded to wrest control on the rebel-held part east of Aleppo, after dislodging the rebels out of the city last month. Since then, thousands of people started returning to check on their homes to see what can be fixed and what needs to be rebuilt from scratch. Government trucks were quick to start removing the sandbags and the wrecks of buses...*(More on P4)...(24)*

## Neighbor News

### China to Work with Turkey to Fight Terrorism

BEIJING - China firmly opposes any form of terrorism and is ready to work with Turkey and the international community to prevent and respond to the threat of terrorism, said Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang on Tuesday. Geng made the remarks at a daily press briefing when asked to respond to an attack on a nightclub in Istanbul, Turkey in the early hours of the new year that killed at least 39 people. Some media reports said the suspects in the New Year's attack may belong to East Turkistan terrorist forces. In response, Geng said the result of the investigation is yet to be confirmed by Turkey. However, he stressed that East Turkistan terrorist forces, led by the East Turkistan Islamic Movement (ETIM), are moving around Central Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Middle East, constituting a grave security menace to many countries and

regions, including China. China is ready to enhance coordination and cooperation with Turkey and the international community to jointly prevent and cope with the threats of terrorism to safeguard regional and world peace and security, said Geng. After the attack, the Chinese Consulate General in Istanbul began an emergency mechanism and issued safety alerts on its website, warning overseas Chinese nationals about security hazards, he said. There have been no reports of deaths or injuries of Chinese nationals in Istanbul so far, said Geng. A gunman stormed into Reina nightclub early Sunday morning and shot at hundreds of people who had gathered there for New Year celebrations, leaving at least 39 dead and over 60 injured. Istanbul Governor Vasip Sahin described the shooting spree as an act of terrorism. (Xinhua)

### Nawaz Terms 'Peaceful Coexistence, Mutual Respect' Major Foreign Policy Objectives

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Tuesday said that "peaceful coexistence, mutual respect and an economically integrated region" must be the "shared objective" of government servants to establish strong and mutually beneficial relations with countries in the region. He was speaking at a meeting held at the Prime Minister House which reviewed the country's foreign policy viz-a-viz current regional and global challenges, a PM's office statement said. The meeting reviewed the current status of Pakistan's relations with its neighbours and strategic partners, and evaluated various policy options in response to different challenges with regard

to foreign relations. Nawaz said that China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was a cornerstone of the country's quest for regional connectivity and shared prosperity. "This could be possible only when we demonstrate a commitment to our aspirations of peace, progress and prosperity," Nawaz added. The meeting was attended by Finance Minister Ishaq Dar, Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan, Army Chief Gen Qamar Javed Bajwa, DG Inter-Services Intelligence Lt. Gen Naveed Mukhtar, PM's Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi and National Security Advisor Lt. Gen (retd) Nasser Khan Janjua. (Monitoring Desk)

### Iran Invites 29 Foreign Firms to Attend Oil, Gas Tenders

TEHRAN - The National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) has invited 29 international companies to participate in the country's oil and gas projects put in tenders, local media reported Tuesday. The tenders envisage developing upstream projects in Iran's oil and gas sector, a big step to open up Iran's oil and gas fields to western invest-

ment, Iran's Petro-Energy Information Network (SHANA) said. To this end, the NIOC has endorsed qualification of 29 international exploration and production firms to enter partnership with Iran under new Iranian oil contracts. The companies are from 14 countries across the world, according to SHANA. (Xinhua)

### Russia Announces Intent to Establish Air Base in Tajikistan

DUSHANBEH - Russia is seeking to expand its military presence in Tajikistan by renting the Ayni airbase, Moscow's ambassador to Dushanbe has said. Tajikistan already hosts the 201st military base, Russia's largest base outside its borders, but the base "needs an air component," said Igor Lyakin-Frolov at a December 27 news conference in Dushanbe. Russia is currently in talks with Tajikistan about the base, which lies on the outskirts of Dushanbe, Lyakin-Frolov added. Russian media reported

in 2013 that Moscow had started negotiations with Dushanbe over the base. "Signing of an additional agreement on the Ayni air force base, which Moscow also intends to rent and to consider part of the 201st military base, is expected," Nezavisimaya Gazeta reported at the time, citing unnamed officials, though that apparently went nowhere. That Lyakin-Frolov said this on the record gives it a bit more credibility, but the recent history of Ayni has featured a lot of disappointed expectations. (Monitoring Desk)

### PNA Urges Sweden to Implement UN Resolution on Israeli Settlements

RAMALLAH - The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) will ask Sweden to follow up and implement the the UN resolution on Israeli settlements, as chair of the upcoming Security Council session this month. Palestinian Foreign Minister Riad Malki said in a statement to the Voice of Palestine that "a meeting on Jan. 17 at the Security Council will look into situation in the Middle East and Sweden, friendly state, will be chairing this meeting." He added "we will ask Sweden to follow up on the recent resolution and its details," stressing the necessity of shouldering responsibility by...*(More on P4)...(26)*

### Trump to Realign Trade Power in a Few Select Members of His Administration: Report

WASHINGTON - U.S. President-elect Donald Trump will consolidate trade policy decisions in the hands of a few select members of his administration rather than the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), local media reported Monday. "The core of trade power appears to be shifting away from the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, an agency that has led negotiations on a series of complex trade deals, including the TPP (Trans-Pacific Partnership) and a deal between the United States and the European Union," The Hill, a top U.S. political website, re-

ported Monday, noting that Trump has criticized the USTR for negotiating bad trade deals. Wilbur Ross, Trump's nominee for commerce secretary, is expected to lead the charge on trade policy going forward, with Peter Navarro, director of the newly-created National Trade Council at the White House, serving as a liaison to Trump, the report said, adding that Navarro is expected to "play a more personal role in negotiating trade policies with countries like China". But there is still "plenty of uncertainty" around...*(More on P4)...(27)*