

Money Politics in U.S. Deepen Social Divide

WASHINGTON - A dozen U.S. states are holding their primaries Tuesday to decide the candidates to represent the Republican and Democratic parties in the November 2016 general presidential election. Republican candidate Donald Trump and Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton are projected to come out as winners of this year's "Super Tuesday," one of the most decisive days in the presidential primaries. However, for many American voters, who will be chosen to represent the two parties in the presi-



previous elections, most of the money in this election cycle is flowing not into the campaigns, but into outside groups like "Super-PACs," also known as political fundraising organizations that are allowed to raise unlimited amounts of money from individuals and corporations. "Super-PACs" have altered the political landscape in the United States, allowing a cadre of billionaires and multimillionaires to channel their extreme wealth to candidates in a far more effective way. As a result, ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

UN may Delay Syria Talks, Says U.S., Russia Must Guarantee Truce

GENEVA - The United States and Russia must make Syria's cessation of hostilities work or else it may become necessary to delay the resumption of peace talks, U.N. Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura told Reuters on Tuesday. Since the agreement to halt nearly five years of fighting came into force on Saturday, the Syrian government and the opposition have accused each other of violating the deal but international observers have reported a de-

cline in violence. Without progress on the cessation of hostilities and on access for humanitarian aid, de Mistura said he could "slightly" postpone the next round of peace talks, which has been penciled in for Monday, March 7. "The decision on whether they will be on Monday or slightly later will be taken in the next few days, depending on what is happening on the ground," he said. "We don't want discussions in Geneva to become a discussion about



infringements or not of the ceasefire, we want them to actually address the core of everything." The United Nations hopes that the cessation of hostilities will allow humanitarian aid to be ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

France Seeks "Strategic Partnership" with Australia through Huge Defense Contract

CANBERRA - France plans to broaden its defense ties with Australia if it secures the nation's lucrative contract to build its next generation of submarines. While touring an Adelaide shipyard on Tuesday, French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian revealed his government hoped to forge an enhanced relationship with Australia should its proposal beat out rival bids. France is currently in direct competition with Japan and Germany to construct the fleet of un-

derwater vessels, in what is presently the biggest defense contract up for grabs in the world. "We want to contribute something to Australia to help it guarantee its own security by offering these high-tech submarines," Le Drian told reporters on Tuesday. "It would form part of a truly strategic partnership with Australia, based here in Adelaide," he added. Le Drian said French-built submarines, known for their long-range capabilities, would offer a strategic ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

Russia wants Syrian Border with Turkey Closed: Lavrov

GENEVA - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called Tuesday for the closure of Syria's border with Turkey to cut off outside supplies to "terrorists", including through humanitarian convoys. "Of course, neither in ceasefire agreements, nor in the process of political settlement is there a place for terrorists and extremists," Lavrov told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. "A very special task is to cut the terrorists' supply from the outside. For this

purpose it is important to close the Syrian-Turkish border, since across this border those gangs receive arms, including with humanitarian convoys," Lavrov said, according to an official transcript in English of his remarks. He insisted that a "landslide defeat of (the Islamic State group)... al-Nusra and those of their kind is a necessary precondition for securing the rights of long-suffering peoples of Syria" and the rest of the region. His comments came after ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Refugee Crisis Escalates as Balkan Countries Close Borders

BEIJING - Europe's refugee crisis keeps simmering as clashes erupted in the northern Greek town of Idomeni Monday between the police and hundreds of migrants trying to break through the fence into the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The FYROM security forces fired tear gas and stun grenades to disperse the crowd that was pelting rocks. No serious injury was reported from the clashes. Meanwhile in France, police started to bulldoze a migrant camp and clear

the site in the northern port city of Calais, where about 3,000 migrants were staying, leading to an angry backlash as pro-migrant activists threw projectiles at the police and the latter used tear gas. Local authorities said they intended to handle the operation "smoothly," proposing to relocate the migrants to a state-run container shelter nearby or other refugee centers across France. POTENTIAL HUMANITARIAN CRISIS According to official statistics, the number of refu-



gees and migrants stuck in Greece has increased to more than 20,000 as Balkan countries have stepped up border restrictions in the past week. Humanitarian organizations have warned of more incidents along the Greek border due to the swelling migrant population stranded in the area. *(Xinhua)*

Army Refrains from Retaliating to Rebel Ceasefire Breaches: Assad

DAMASCUS - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has described the currently-holding truce in his country as a glimmer of hope, adding that his troops have refrained from retaliating to the rebels' breaches. In an interview with German TV released on Tuesday, the president said "we will do our part so that the whole thing works," adding that "we have refrained ourselves from retaliating in order to give (a) chance for the agreement to survive." The cessation of hostilities, which has been in place since the weekend,



is still holding in its fourth day Tuesday. Meanwhile, the president promised "full amnesty" to rebels who gave up their arms, amid reports from the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitor group that Syr-

ian warplanes are dropping leaflets on rebel-held areas, urging the rebels to lay down their arms and embark on a reconciliation with the government. "That's what we can do, but at the end everything ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

Iraqi Forces Launch Push to Retake Area North of Baghdad

BAGHDAD - Backed by paramilitary forces and aerial support, Iraqi troops on Tuesday launched a new push to retake a key area north of the capital, Baghdad, and dislodge Islamic State militants from there, officials said. The operation came as a group of suicide bombers targeted a military headquarters in western Iraq, killing eight officers on Tuesday. No one immediately claimed responsibility for that attack. According to a statement by the Joint Operations Command, the "new offensive" began at dawn in a swath agricultural area northwest of the city of Samarra, 95 kilometers (60 miles) north of Baghdad, with the aim to cut IS supply lines and to tighten the grip around the IS-held northern city of Mosul. The command says paramilitary forces, mostly Shiite militias, and the Iraqi air force were backing the push on the area, ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Ukraine Teeters on Brink of Chaos Amid New Political Crisis

KIEV - The political crisis that has been dragging on in Ukraine for almost a year took new twists in February after the parliament unsuccessfully tried to oust the government, the ruling coalition lost its legislative majority and the prosecutor general resigned at the request of the president. The developments highlight the deep divisions within Ukraine's ruling elite and have raised concerns that the country could face a new power shift and another period of instability, which could push it toward chaos. Feb. 16 was a day of political drama for Ukraine as President Petro Poroshenko unexpectedly asked Prime Minister Arseniy ...*(More on P4)...(26)*

Foreign Journalists Hurt by Artillery Fire in Syria: Russia

MOSCOW - A group of foreign journalists came under artillery fire in Syria's northern province of Latakia with some of them wounded, the Russian Defense Ministry said Tuesday. "The shells were fired from the Turkish border, the area of Dama, near Idlib," the TASS news agency quoted Defense Ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov as saying. The group consisted of 33 journalists from Bulgaria, Canada, China, Germany, Greece, Russia and the United States, and was organized by the Russian Defense Ministry to visit the Latakia air base in Syria. Konashenkov said a total of eight artillery shells were fired and they crashed at distances ranging from 150 meters to 400 meters away from the journalists. ...*(More on P4)...(29)*

UNHCR Warns of Humanitarian Crisis in Greece as Migrant Arrivals Soar

GENEVA - The UN refugee agency (UNHCR) warned Tuesday that Greece is on the verge of a humanitarian crisis as disunity and inconsistency continue to mar European response plans. "For us, there is no plan B. Relocation is one of the important solidarity

measures vis-a-vis Greece. Solidarity can't be just financial transfer to Greece," said UNHCR director of the bureau for Europe Vincent Cochetel. "Greece needs a safety valve, and that safety valve is the orderly intake of refugees through the relo ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

S. Korean President Says to Force DPRK to give up Nuke Program

SEOUL - South Korean President Park Geun-hye said Tuesday that the government will force the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to give up its nuclear program based on firmer defense readiness and international cooperation. Park made the remarks during her speech to commemorate the 97th anniversary of Independence Movement Day against Japan's 1910-45 colonial rule of the Korean peninsula. "It became clear for existing responses to be unable to discourage North Korea (DPRK)'s nuclear development," Park said, adding that if the DPRK is left as it is, Pyongyang will conduct fifth and sixth nuclear tests which will threaten stability in Northeast Asia and peace in the world as well as survival of Korean people. The DPRK carried out what it claimed was its first ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

Neighbor News

China Plans 30 Overseas Nuclear Power Units by 2030

BEIJING - China aims to build 30 nuclear power units in countries involved with the Belt and Road Initiative by 2030, Sun Qin, president of China National Nuclear Corp. (CNNC), said Tuesday. The CNNC has reached bilateral agreements on nuclear energy cooperation with countries including Argentina, Brazil, Egypt, Britain, France and Jordan, Sun said. More than 70 countries are now planning or are already developing their own nuclear power projects, and it is estimated 130 more nuclear pow-

er units will have been built by 2020, Sun said. The CNNC is willing to cooperate with countries throughout the whole nuclear power industry chain. It will actively promote localization of the technology and strive to establish an integrated industrial system for countries involved with the Belt and Road Initiative, Sun said. Currently China has 30 nuclear power generating units with a capacity of 28 million gw and another 24 units are under construction, all of which are on land. *(Xinhua)*

Iranians to Vote in Parliamentary Run-Off Elections for 69 Seats

TEHRAN - Iran will hold the second round of the tenth Majlis (parliament) elections in mid-April to choose parliamentarians for the remaining 69 vacant seats, an Iranian Interior Ministry official announced on Tuesday. In the first round of the elections held on Feb. 26, 221 out of the 290 seats were filled and the fate of 69 others will be decided in the run-off contests with 138 candidates, Pour Ali Motlaq was quoted as saying by state IRIB TV. According to data available from the local media, the reformists and moderates have gained ground in Iran's Friday vote for Majlis, but none of the heavy weight political groups have been able to seize the majority in the first round. In the ninth Majlis elections on

March 2012, the principalists or the loyalists to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and powerful clerics had won the majority of about 75 percent in the first round of elections. On Monday, Iran's Interior Ministry announced the end of vote counts on Iran's two recent key elections of the parliament and Assembly of Experts. The Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said that the turnout, out of about 55 million eligible voters, was around 50 percent in the capital Tehran and some 62 percent across the country. The turnout in the first round of parliamentary elections in the country in 2012 was more than 64 percent out of some 48 million eligible voters. *(Xinhua)*

Differences on Nuclear Issue Surface at US-Pak Strategic Talks

WASHINGTON - Pakistani Foreign Affairs Adviser Sartaj Aziz urged the United States on Monday to show a greater understanding of Pakistan's security concerns as US Secretary of State John Kerry asked Islamabad to consider reducing its nuclear arsenal. The two top diplomats made these remarks at the inaugural session of the US-Pakistan Strategic Dialogue, which both sides used also to vent their concerns on pressing issues instead of confining themselves

to traditional bonhomie exchanged at such occasions. "Nuclear safety is of obvious concern to both our countries, and I expect that we will continue to discuss the obligations of being a responsible state with nuclear weapons in the coming year," Mr Kerry said. He recalled that the US and Russia once had more than 50,000 atomic warheads each but they reduced those to 1,500 each and were working on further reductions. *(Agencies)*

US Embassy Conducts Communications Training for Tajikistan Border Guards

DUSHANBE - U.S. Embassy Dushanbe yesterday completed a two-week Radio Networking Training Course for communications officers from the Border Guard Main Administration of the State Committee of National Security, with funding provided by the United States Central Command (CENTCOM) Counter-Narcotics Office. According to the U.S. Embassy Mr. Randy Ockman, Director of the CENTCOM Counter-Narcotics program, presided over a graduation ceremony and provided certificates to thirteen

graduates of the training. After completing this communications training course, Border Guard officers are now well-versed in different networking and radio operations. The training significantly increased their ability to send and receive data through radio equipment recently provided through the CENTCOM Counter-Narcotics program. Participants in the program also received instruction on how proper use of various antenna configurations can best support radio transmissions. *(Asia-Plus)*