

# UN Agency Launches Plan to Deal with Refugee Crisis in Europe

GENEVA - The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) issued Friday a six-point plan to guide EU member states in solving the refugee crisis which is showing no signs of abating. "We are running out of time, and strong leadership and vision are urgently needed from European leaders to deal with what is, in my view, a situation that can still be managed if properly addressed," said High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in a statement. "This is as much a crisis of European solidarity as it is a refugee crisis," he added. UNHCR suggested fully imple-



menting the 'hot spot' approach and the relocation of asylum seekers out of Greece and Italy while re-

turning those who don't qualify for refugee protection. The UN agency also called for increased sup-

port to Greece to address the humanitarian emergency, while ensuring compliance with all EU laws

and asylum directives by member states. The agency also proposed to make available safer, legal ways

for refugees to travel to Europe through humanitarian admission programmes, private sponsorships, family reunion, student scholarships and labor mobility schemes. The safe-guard of individuals at risk, including unaccompanied and separated children, and the implementation of measures preventing sexual and gender-based violence were integral to the plan. Finally, UNHCR called for Europe-wide systems of responsibility to achieve a managed and orderly solution to the crisis which has already seen close to 135,000 migrants reach EU soil this year. (Xinhua)

## Denmark to Send F-16s, Troops to Combat IS in Iraq, Syria

COPENHAGEN - The Danish government on Friday announced plans to send special forces and F-16 fighter jets into Iraq and Syria to join the fight against the Islamic State (IS). "The government wants to intensify the fight against the terrorist organization IS... It is a serious decision to send Danish men and women on mission in the world's trouble spots," said Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen in a press statement. "We must never give up

the fight for peace and freedom," Rasmussen added. The proposal to intensify Denmark's military contribution to the fight against IS from the middle of 2016 has received a wide cross-party support at a meeting with Danish foreign policy committee on Friday. The contribution of Danish forces will consist of seven F-16 fighter jets, a transport aircraft and some 400 Danish soldiers including pilots and support personnel. The Danish government will submit a



proposal about the plan for the parliament's approval, according to the statement. It is not the first time that Denmark has sent troops

to fight the IS. Danish F-16 jets returned home for repairs and rest last October after taking part in the coalition's air strikes against IS in Iraq. (Xinhua)

## EU Outlines Plan to Save Open Borders, Cajoles Turkey

BRUSSELS - The European Commission set out a timetable on Friday for restoring open borders in Europe by the end of the year as EU leaders cajoled Turkey to act to stop the flow of migrants fleeing conflicts in the Middle East and beyond. Ahead of an emergency European Union summit with Turkey on Monday, the EU executive announced the first payouts from a 3 billion euro (\$3.3 billion) fund to help it cope with the roughly 2.5 million Syrian migrants on Turkish soil. It also said Turkey was making pro-

gress towards achieving eagerly sought visa liberalization for its citizens in the EU. In return, Brussels is demanding that Ankara crack down on people smuggling and take back all illegal migrants who do not qualify for asylum in the 28-nation EU. Meeting in Paris, the leaders of Germany and France agreed that refugees fleeing war in Syria should stay in the region and said their common objective was to put Europe's frayed Schengen passport-free travel agreement back into... (More on P4)... (25)

## UN Team Calls Destruction in Iraq's Ramadi 'Staggering'

BAGHDAD - Destruction in Ramadi is "staggering" and worse than anywhere else in Iraq, a U.N. team concluded this week after making the first assessment visit to the city since its recapture from Islamic State. It said the main hospital and train station had both been destroyed, along with thousands of other buildings. Local officials told the UN team 64 bridges and much of the electricity grid had been ruined. Iraqi forces declared victory over the jihadist group in Ramadi in December

and has since cleared most of the western Iraqi city. Islamic State fighters still hold pockets in the northern and eastern outskirts. Its recovery boosted Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi in his campaign to oust the militants from their northern stronghold of Mosul later this year. But more than six months of fighting shattered most infrastructure and leveled many homes in Ramadi, the Anbar provincial capital where around half a million people once lived. (Reuters)

## Turkey, Iran Seek to Mend Ties Through High-Level Visit

ANKARA - Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu is expected to make a two-day official visit to Iran to promote ties and smooth out growing differences between the two neighbors over Syria and Iraq. The visit, scheduled to start on Friday afternoon, comes days before a round of peace talks on March 9 to be held under the auspices of U.N. Syria envoy Staffan de Mistura in Geneva. Turkey supports opposition rebel forces in Syria and considers president

Bashar al-Assad regime to be illegitimate. Iran, along with Russia, stands by Assad and provides military backing to the government forces. "Both Turkey and Iran need each other as they are being impacted by what has been happening in their neighborhood," Mehmet Seyfettin Erol, professor of international relations at Ankara-based Gazi University, told Xinhua. "As the major powers gear up for peace talks for Syria, Turkey and Iran, the two regional



heavyweights must be able to talk to each other frankly," he said. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu

acknowledged last week in Parliament that both countries have different views on regional matters. (Xinhua)

## Civilian Casualties Continue to Mount in Yemen: UN

GENEVA - Civilian casualties continue to mount in Yemen, with a total of at least 168 civilians killed and 193 injured in February, the office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) said on Friday. An agency spokesperson said since March 26, 2015, OHCHR has documented a total of 3,081 civilians killed and 5,733 injured. "These figures do not include casualties among the fighters on either side, they refer solely to reported civilian casualties," the spokesperson noted. In November last year, there was a marked decrease in air strike casualties. But since then, the



number has risen sharply, with the number killed almost doubling between January and February. The number of civilian casualties recorded last month was the highest since last September, the spokesperson added. The single-worst incident

took place on Feb. 27 when at least 39 civilians, including nine children, were killed with another 33 injured by an air strike on the Khaleq market in a north-eastern district of Sana'a. According to OHCHR, civilian infra... (More on P4)... (26)

## Russia "Seriously Concerned" over DPRK Statement on U.N. Resolution

MOSCOW - Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov on Friday expressed Russia's concerns over the statement of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on a recent sanctions resolution adopted by the U.N. Security Council. "Obviously, there is serious concern. We are very closely following the development of the situation and hope that all regional and relevant countries will show restraint and balanced approaches in this complex situation," the RIA Novosti news agency quoted Peskov as saying. Earlier in the day, the DPRK government and foreign ministry issued two statements respectively, strongly condemning the new U.N. resolution and warning to take resolute measures against it. The DPRK conducted its fourth... (More on P4)... (27)

## Syrians Use Truce to Resume Friday Protests

ALEPPO - For the first time in years, hundreds of Syrians nationwide took advantage of a nearly week-long ceasefire on Friday to resume anti-government protests under the slogan "The Revolution Continues!" Waving the three-starred tricolor flag that has become the uprising's emblem, demonstrators in opposition-held areas of Aleppo, Damascus, Daraa and Homs called for the downfall of President Bashar al-Assad's regime. "You could say we've gone back to the beginning," said Hasaan Abu Nuh, an activist from the flashpoint rebel town of Talbiseh in central Homs province. Syria's conflict first began in March 2011 with widespread protests against the regime. Demonstrations were at their largest on Fridays, and activists early on began assigning themes to the weekly marches. (AFP)

## Idea of Early Syria Elections 'Provocative': French President

PARIS - The idea that elections should take place in Syria in the coming months is "provocative" and "unrealistic", French President Francois Hollande said on Friday, highlighting a key difference over the Syrian peace process between Europe and Russia. Asked about the prospect of a joint news conference with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Friday, Hollande said he could not speak for President Vladimir Putin after a telephone conference call between the Russian leader and other European leaders held earlier on Friday. "Here I am speaking in the name of France," he... (More on P4)... (30)

## Iraqi Army Fights to Capture Mosul in Tit-for-Tat Battles with IS

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi army recaptured Ramadi from the Islamic State (IS) militants late last year and are preparing to launch attacks on Mosul, the country's second biggest city. However, the IS militants have taken revenge by launching massive bombings in Baghdad and the eastern province of Diyala,

in a bid to provoke sectarian friction between Shiite and Sunni communities to impede the army operations. Late in February, the IS group claimed a twin bomb attack in the Shiite district of Sadr City in eastern Baghdad that killed some 53 people. ... (More on P4)... (28)

## Germany Demands Closure of French Nuclear Plant Near Border

BERLIN - Germany says it wants France to shut down its oldest nuclear plant as soon as possible amid reports Friday that an incident at the facility two years ago was more serious than previously known. German daily Sueddeutsche Zeitung and public broadcaster WDR reported a series of problems when engineers tried to tackle a minor water leak that ended with an emergency shut-

down of one of the two reactors at the Fessenheim plant, which lies just across the Rhine that marks the border between France and Germany. The reports cite a letter from the French Nuclear Safety Authority to the head of the nuclear plant detailing the incident on April 9, 2014. "It's not the first incident or the first problem that we know about... (More on P4)... (29)

## Neighbor News

### Pak Senate Rejects PIA Conversion Bill

ISLAMABAD - The Pakistani government suffered a major defeat in the Senate Friday when the house rejected a bill moved by the government to convert the Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) Corporation into a public limited company. The PIA Corporation Conversion Bill 2015 was introduced by the Federal Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid. Deputy Chairman of the Senate Abdul Gafoor Haideri sought verbal consent to take the bill into consideration twice, which was rejected by majority voice both

times. The senate standing committee in its report presented to the house on Tuesday also rejected the bill. The bill has now been referred to a joint session of the Parliament, which is expected to take place next week. The bill is expected to pass as the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) enjoys a simple majority in a joint session. On Jan 21, the National Assembly passed the PIAC bill amid protests by the opposition. The bill was then sent to the upper house, which referred it to the standing committee. (Agencies)

### Xi Underscores Adherence to China's Basic Economic System

BEIJING - China should adhere to its basic economic system, with public ownership playing a dominant role and diverse forms of ownership developing side by side, President Xi Jinping said on Friday. Xi made the remarks at a panel discussion of political advisors from the China Democratic National Construction Association and the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce during the ongoing annual session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee. The implementation of such a basic economic system is a major policy decided by the Communist Party of China (CPC). China must

unswervingly strengthen and develop the public sector and also unswervingly encourage, support and guide the development of the non-public sector, the president said. China remains committed to creating a favorable environment for the non-public sector, Xi said. The political advisors discussed issues related to the promotion of supply-side structural reform, the protection of intellectual property rights, cutting corporate costs and improving technological innovation. Xi said advisors have offered some very good suggestions and asked relevant departments to carefully study them. (Xinhua)

### Iran Drug Combat Efforts Benefit Entire World: Larijani

TEHRAN - Iran's top human rights official says all countries across the world will benefit from the Islamic Republic's anti-drug trafficking efforts. Iran takes into consideration all adverse consequences of drug trafficking, Mohammad Javad Larijani, the secretary general of Iran's High Council for Human Rights said in a meeting with Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, in the Swiss city of Geneva on Friday. "The battle against drug smugglers is a serious issue in Iran that should be heeded at an

international level because the whole world will in practice benefit from the fight," Larijani added. Despite high economic and human costs, the Islamic Republic has been actively fighting drug trafficking over the past three decades. Iran has spent more than USD 700 million to seal the borders and prevent the transit of narcotics destined for European, Arab and Central Asian countries. The war on drug trade originating from Afghanistan has claimed the lives of nearly 4,000 Iranian police officers over the past 34 years. (PressTV)

### Tajikistan Tops Central Asia's Nations in Energy Architecture Performance

DUSHANBE - World Economic Forum (WEF) on March 2 released the fourth edition of the Global Energy Architecture Performance Index Report 2016 (EAPI) compiling 126 countries. Tajikistan has been ranked at 45th position, which is topped by Switzerland. The annual index provides a benchmark to help countries address energy transformation challenges and identify opportunities across their power systems. It explored the energy architecture of 126 coun-

tries based on their ability to provide energy access across three dimensions of the "energy triangle" affordability, environmental sustainability, security and access. The list is topped by Switzerland followed by Norway and Sweden in the second and third place respectively, while Tajikistan stands at 45. Others in the top ten include France (4), Denmark (5), Austria (6), Spain (7), Colombia (8), New Zealand (9) and Uruguay (10). (Asia-Plus)