

# UN-Sponsored Libya Talks Restart without Tobruk Delegation

SKHIRAT - The fate of U.N.-sponsored Libyan peace talks were thrown into doubt on Friday after the delegation from the internationally recognized parliament did not show up in Morocco for the next round of negotiations.

U.N. special envoy Bernardino Leon had expressed optimism after talks began last week over a unity government and security arrangements. The delegations then took a break to return to Libya for consultations.

While the delegation from the Tripoli-based General National Congress returned and met with Leon Friday, there has been no sign of its Tobruk-based rival, which has asked for the talks to be postponed.

The Tripoli delegation said they would discuss any requests for postponing the talks, but raised the tone by slamming key Tobruk ally Gen. Khalifa Hifter —



who was recently appointed as head of its army. "We gave an official request to Leon to respond to Tobruk's appointment of the war criminal known as Hifter as the chief of the army," said Omar Humidan of the GNC to journalists during a break in the talks. For his part, Hifter, whose forces are battling Islamist militias in Benghazi and who wields a great deal of influence on the Tobruk govern-

ment, called on Tuesday for the talks to be scrapped. "The U.N. and Europe cannot oblige us to sit at the table with terrorists," he told the Italian ANSA news agency. "Forming a unity government with leaders of extremist movements, as proposed by mediators would... subvert the results of elections and the will of the vast majority of Libyan citizens." Central authority has broken down in Libya, with scores of competing militias battling each other and rival parliaments claiming legitimacy on opposite ends of the country.

The situation has become more urgent with the rise of groups claiming allegiance to the radical Islamic State group and carrying out attacks on oil fields and in Tripoli. The talks, which began last week, represented the first time the GNC had sent a delegation to actively negotiate a resolution to Libya's crisis. (AP)

## Tackling Disasters Vital to End Poverty: World Bank Chief

SENDAI - In the past 30 years, the world has lost more than 2.5 million people and almost \$4 trillion because of natural disasters, the president of the World Bank said on Friday as governments prepare to adopt a new global plan to reduce disaster risk.

Speaking in Tokyo on his way to the northeastern city of Sendai, where a U.N. conference aims to finalize the plan, Jim Yong Kim said the 2010 earthquake in Haiti destroyed more than a decade of growth in the country, and in 2013, Typhoon Haiyan pushed nearly half a million Filipino households into poverty. Over the last 16 months, the Ebola epidemic killed nearly 10,000 people in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and caused those countries' growth rates to plunge from some of the highest in the world to expected levels near or below zero, the World Bank chief said.

"To end poverty, we must



continue to expand our understanding of how to manage disasters and deploy this knowledge aggressively," Kim said in prepared remarks to journalists. Due to global warming, the frequency, intensity and duration of extreme weather events like droughts will increase, he warned, making disaster risk "worse in the future". The conference tasked with agreeing the new disaster reduction plan opens on Saturday and will be attended by U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and 20 heads

of state and government, including Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Denis McClean, spokesman for the U.N. Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), said the current 10-year plan, known as the Hyogo Framework for Action, had been a "limited success". "In many countries we have seen the growth of a culture of disaster risk management which was not there before, and would not have been possible without the guidance and the guidelines ... (More on P4)...(31)

## Aggression in Baltics, Poland Not Possible: Russian Envoy

WARSAW - Russia's ambassador to Poland says it's "not possible" for Russia to repeat the incursion it made into Ukraine in the Baltic states or in Poland.

Ambassador Sergei Andreyev told Polish Radio 1 late Thursday that Russia's actions in Crimea were an "exceptional

situation" and "transferring that to other countries and other regions is not possible." "Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimean Peninsula in March 2014 after sending troops in several weeks earlier. The envoy says if Polish politicians "say there is a threat from Russia to Poland or to the

Baltic states, the basic question is why would Russia threaten these countries?" He rejected suggestions that Russia could want to expand its area of influence.

Andreyev said Russia's tense relations with Poland eventually "will pass and we will be back to normal." (AP)

BRUSSELS - European Union leaders are unlikely to reach agreement at their summit next week to prolong economic sanctions on Russia that expire in July, a senior EU official said on Friday.

New sanctions on Russia are also off the table for now because EU governments want to give a chance to a fragile ceasefire in eastern Ukraine.

But some of the EU's 28 member states had pushed for an early decision on extending sanctions on Russia's financial, energy and defense sectors adopted in July last year over Russia's annexation of Crimea and support for separatists in eastern Ukraine.

While leaders will discuss sanctions at next week's summit, the senior EU official said a majority would probably want to hold over discussion of



renewing the economic sanctions on Russia until July.

"I don't think there is unanimity at all for the rollover of sanctions, the sanctions that are due in July," the official, briefing reporters on condition of anonymity, said.

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico said on Friday that new or extended EU sanctions against Russia would not help the ceasefire in eastern Ukraine.

"The ceasefire needs to be supported and we

will hardly support it by saying that we will bring some new and further and further sanctions," Fico said in Prague.

The EU is divided on sanctions and Fico has in the past called them "meaningless and counterproductive".

Slovak Foreign Minister Miroslav Lajcak said the prevailing view in the EU was that sanctions should remain in place in their current form for the time being.

"We have not gotten that far ... (More on P4)...(32)

## Japan, France Agree to Transfer Defense Equipment, Technology

TOKYO - Defense and Foreign ministers from Japan and France reached an agreement Friday on the transfer of defense equipment and technology, as well as provision of supplies and services between the two countries defense forces.

The announcement was made during their second round of bilateral "two plus two" meeting, which was set last year in Paris. The two countries vowed to enhance

their cooperation in the fight against terrorism through curbing the flow of foreign militants, terrorist financing and formation of terrorist networks, local reports quoted unnamed Japanese officials as saying.

As both countries suffered from atrocities by the Islamic State recently, the ministers agreed to boost efforts to prevent extremism in partnership with the international community. Last month,

two Japanese nationals were allegedly seized and executed by the IS militants. On Jan. 7, brothers Cherif and Said Kouachi stormed into the Paris-based Charlie Hebdo satirical magazine, and shot dead 12 people, including 10 journalists and two policemen.

The two countries also confirmed that they will continue cooperation in humanitarian assistance and disaster relief activities. (Xinhua)

## UNICEF Urges Dialogue with IS to Ensure Access

GENEVA - Countries should seek dialogue with the Islamic State (IS) group in war-torn Syria to help aid workers gain access to areas under its control, the UN children's agency said Friday.

The militants have so far refused to talk with a range of United Nations agencies trying to send aid into areas under their control, making it difficult to help or even estimate the needs. UNICEF representative in Syria, Hanaa Singer, insisted Friday that countries and political actors should help aid workers gain the access they need. "It is not the responsibility only of the humanitarian agencies," she told reporters in Geneva.

"This is a political responsibility for the political parties to talk and to put pressure and to start a dialogue with ISIS," she added. Asked if she meant that nation states should try to talk to the group, she said: "Other state parties, yes."

UNICEF and other agencies have managed to get some aid into areas held by the jihadist militants through local groups and partners on the ground, but far from enough, they say.

Singer stressed the need to establish a dialogue with the jihadist militants who control large swathes of Syria and neighboring Iraq "at least to protect the children."

The UN agency estimates that 14 million children are paying the price for warfare in Syria and Iraq, with as many as two million children living in parts of Syria largely cut off from humanitarian aid.

Around 2.6 million children are out of school in the country. Syria's conflict has left more than 210,000 people dead and 11.4 million displaced since it began in March 2011 with peaceful anti-government protests, eventually escalating into a full-blown civil war after the regime brutally cracked down on the demonstrations. (AFP)

## Nieghbor News

### Dushanbe Hosts EU-Central Asia High Level Security Dialogue

DUSHANBE - The second High Level Security Dialogue between the European Union and the Central Asia countries of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan took place yesterday in the Tajik capital Dushanbe, Avesta news agency reported. According to the EU Delegation to Tajikistan, Afghanistan was invited as a special guest to the Dialogue.

The meeting was held at the level of deputy foreign ministers and chaired by Helga Schmid, the Deputy Secretary General of the European External Action Service (EEAS). The participants exchanged views on key security issues of relevance to the EU, Central Asia and Afghanistan, including radicalization and foreign fighters, migration, regional stability and security connected to the fight against drug trafficking and smuggling. The parties agreed to intensify joint efforts between the EU and Central Asian states in all these areas, and to extend these efforts also to regional cooperation between Afghanistan and Central Asia.

This Dialogue provided a platform addressing political and security issues of shared concern, including terrorism, extremism, drug trafficking and CBRN (chemical, biological and nuclear) risks.

The participants agreed to reinforce their cooperation in the following areas: - preventing the proliferation of CBRN materials through the opening of a regional Centre of Excellence in Tashkent, Uzbekistan in spring 2015; - developing new forms of cooperation between experts of the EU and Central Asian states on countering terrorism and violent extremism in Brussels in March as well as in Bishkek in May;

- promoting the participation of Central Asian states in activities of the Hedayah Centre of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism in Abu Dhabi; - strengthening further cooperation in border management and the fight against drug trafficking by the renewed EU regional programmes BOMCA and CADAP, now to be implemented by EU ... (More on P4)...(33)

### Turkmenistan and Iran to Increase Bilateral Trade to \$60 Billion

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan and Iran are set to increase their bilateral trade from today's US \$3.7 billion up to \$60 billion during the next 10 years. It was announced during a meeting between Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and Turkmenistan President Gurbanguly Berdimukhammedov yesterday in Ashgabat.

Rouhani said that the target figure is quite possible given the potential of the two countries and the political will of their leaders, Iranian media reported. At a joint press conference with his Turkmen counterpart, President Rouhani said that Iran and Turkmenistan are determined to speed up the construction and launching of the North-South transport corridor from the Gulf of Oman and Iran to Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan to boost regional trade. Turkmenistan and Iran signed 17 cooperation

agreements in political, economic, and cultural spheres, as well as for cooperation in the sphere of environment and fighting terrorism.

Rouhani also said that Iran intends to continue natural gas imports from Turkmenistan, and to increase cooperation in the fields of electricity imports, technical services, environment, combating drugs, and water supplies. "Iran and Turkmenistan are two important countries in energy production and should expand their cooperation in this sphere," Rouhani said. "The volume of trade between the two countries is increasing every year and there are good possibilities for its further enhancement," the Turkmen president said. "The Joint Economic Cooperation Commission of the two countries should play its role as a coordinator and activate these possibilities." (Agencies)

### Pakistan Successfully Tests First Indigenous Armed Drone

KARACHI - Pakistan on Friday successfully tested its first indigenous armed drone named Burraq, and its laser guided missile named Barq. The drone has the ability to fly in all types of weather conditions and

strike its targets with pinpoint accuracy. Pakistani Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif attended the ceremony and witnessed the test fire of the new missile on static and moving targets. (Monitoring Desk)

### Iran Yet to Receive \$7.8 Billion for Oil Sales

DUBAI - Iran has yet to receive \$7.8 billion for crude oil sales made in recent months, government spokesman Mohammad Baqer Nobakht was quoted as saying, as Western sanctions keep Tehran shut out of the global banking system.

Iran's state-run Press TV said Nobakht gave no reason for payment delays, but reported that Tehran's oil customers were mainly China, India, Japan, South Korea and Turkey and that "U.S. and European sanctions are preventing international banks from transferring

money to the Islamic Republic." Sanctions imposed by the West over Iran's nuclear program have made it hard to obtain the U.S. dollars Tehran needs for international transactions. Iran says the sanctions are illegal and has vowed to sidestep them. Tehran is in talks with world powers about its nuclear program, seeking a deal to lift the sanctions that have halved its oil exports and hammered its economy. Nobakht said oil revenue in the past 12 months had totaled \$52.8 billion, Press TV reported. (Reuters)

### Oil Price will Likely Fall Further: Global Agency



LONDON - A global energy agency says the oil market has further to drop as supplies from the U.S. show no sign of slowing.

The International Energy Agency, a watchdog that represents the world's main oil-importing nations, says in a monthly report that the recent stabilization in oil prices is "precarious." "Behind the facade of stability, the rebalancing triggered by the price collapse has yet to run its course," it said in the report, published Friday.

The price of oil fell on Friday in the wake of the report. The U.S. contract was down \$1.02 at \$46.02.

The contract slumped from over \$100 a barrel last summer to around \$47 in January before stabilizing around \$50 a barrel in recent weeks. (AP)

### Syrian Kurds Call for Air-strikes on IS in Northeast Syria

BEIRUT - A spokesman for Syria's main Kurdish force has called on the U.S.-led coalition to attack Islamic State group positions in northeastern Syria where the jihadis are on the offensive. The call by Redor Khalil came as activists said dozens of Kurdish and IS fighters were killed this week in clashes near the Syrian village of Tal Tamr.

Khalil, a spokesman for the People's Protection Units, or YPG, also called in his statement for young men in the area to join the battle against IS. Weeks of airstrikes by the U.S.-led coalition recently helped tip the balance against IS fighters in their attack on the northern Syrian town of Kobani.

Since then YPG fighters have regained full control of Kobani as well as dozens of surrounding villages. (AP)

### Egypt's El-Sissi Inaugurates Three-Day Economic Conference

SHARM EL-SHEIKH - Kuwait for lavish praise for the Egyptian president has opened an international economic conference designed to attract billions of dollars' worth of foreign investment, outlining an ambitious recovery plan for his nation's ailing economy.

Addressing hundreds of delegates, including royalty, heads of state, Cabinet ministers and businessmen, Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi on Friday singled out Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and

Egypt has and will always be the first line of defense against the dangers faced by the region," said el-Sissi. (AP)