

# New Talks to Produce Roadmap for Syria: UN Envoy

GENEVA - UN Special Envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura said Monday that the intra-Syrian talks aim to reach a "clear roadmap" for the five-year-old crisis. As the first round of the talks was opened on Monday, de Mistura told a press conference that there should be "at least a clear roadmap, not an agreement, but a roadmap" by the end of the three rounds. "This is what Syria expects from us," he said. According to de Mistura, the first round will end around



March 24, followed by a recess of a week or 10 days, then a second round lasting at least two weeks, and the third round will begin after another recess. If warring parties showed no willingness to negotiate, the issue

would be brought back to the United States and Russia, which act as co-chairs of the International Syria Support Group, as well as the UN Security Council, the envoy noted. "The only Plan B available is return to war, and even worse war than we have had so far," he warned. De Mistura said both the humanitarian and cessation of hostilities task forces will continue to convene simultaneously, enabling the talks to focus on the political transition. (Xinhua)

## Turkey Arrests 18 Suspects Following Ankara Bomb Attack

ANKARA - Turkish security forces have arrested 18 suspects following a car bomb attack that killed at least 37 people in the capital city of Ankara, private Dogan news agency reported on Monday. The arrests were made in simultaneous operations in the northwestern province of Eskisehir and the southeastern province of Sanliurfa, Eskisehir Governor Gungoz Azmi Tuna was quoted as saying. "The suspects were involved in terrorist propa-

ganda and tried to embrace terrorists. They were involved in various actions," the governor said. Documents related to "illegal organizations" were seized during the raids, he added. Sunday's blast took place in Kizilay district in the heart of Ankara near a bus stop where many people were waiting, leaving 37 dead and several others wounded. "Turkey has become a target of terror attacks due to the instability in the ... (More on P4)...(26)

## Merkel Sticks to Migrant Course After German State Elections

BERLIN - Chancellor Angela Merkel said Monday she would stick to her course in Europe's migrant crisis following state elections that sent conflicting signals about Germans' opinion of her liberal approach and highlighted divisions in her conservative bloc. Merkel acknowledged that Sunday's three elections, which produced painful losses for her conservative Christian Democratic Union, were dominated by the migrant issue and many vot-

ers believed there is "no conclusive and satisfactory solution." However, "I am firmly convinced, and that wasn't questioned today, that we need a European solution and that this solution needs time," Merkel said after party leaders met in Berlin. The nationalist, anti-migration Alternative for Germany, or AfD, powered into three state legislatures after campaigning against Merkel's welcome for last year's huge influx of migrants. That made clear a sizeable



minority is uneasy about Merkel's policies. AfD attracted people who didn't previously vote, and took votes from established parties. (AP)

## European Leaders Express Condolences over Ankara Attack

BRUSSELS - Several European leaders and international institutions on Monday strongly condemned the terrorist attack in Ankara that left 37 dead and more than 120 wounded over the weekend. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said there could be no justification for such heinous acts of violence. "All NATO Allies stand in solidarity with Turkey, resolute in our determination to fight terrorism in all its forms," he said. The terror attack hit the Turkish capital for the sec-

ond time on Sunday in less than a month. Explosions occurred in Kizilay Square, near a bus station, a park and several government ministries. Nobody has so far claimed responsibility for the deadly attack. Greek political leaders on Monday expressed deep condolences to the families of the victims and solidarity with Turkish people. Greek President Prokopis Pavlopoulos expressed his condolences to his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan, while Greek Prime Minister ... (More on P4)...(27)

## Free Trade Merely Campaign Weapon in Eyes of U.S. Presidential Candidates

WASHINGTON - Amid a domestic controversy on free trade, U.S. presidential candidates of both parties have been publicly opposing the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) pact to woo some voters, utilizing the issue to gain political interests for themselves. "The rhetoric of the 2016 presidential campaign has effectively weaponized free trade," U.S. political news organization Politico said in an article. During a campaign event

in Youngstown, Ohio, on Saturday, Hillary Clinton said she supports tougher trade rules regarding the auto industry, criticizing auto provisions in the 12-nation TPP pact. Clinton's hard stance aims to prevent Democratic rival Bernie Sanders, a sharp trade critic, from winning over more voters in the coming primaries, with the next one to be held on Tuesday in Ohio. The announcement is a step toward strengthening



her position on trade issues following Clinton's loss in Michigan last week, which may have been driven by Sanders' anti-trade mes-

sage, the Washington Post noted in an article. Clinton has been fiercely criticized by Sanders over ... (More on P4)...(28)

## UN Humanitarian Agencies Call for End of Suffering in Syria

GENEVA - Several UN humanitarian agencies on Monday urged warring parties in Syria to work toward an end to the conflict, on the occasion of the fifth anniversary of the start of the crisis. "No one wants to see a sixth year of conflict," heads of the groups said in a joint statement. With fewer bombs, better humanitarian access and the restart of the political process, the world has seen a glimmer of hope that the war in Syria would eventually come to an end, the statement said. However, it added, medical supplies and equipment are still being removed at checkpoints, which is unacceptable. "We are able to reach more people now in besieged areas, but we are yet to reach one in every five besieged Syrians who urgently need help and protection," the statement noted. Around 500,000 people are stranded behind front lines in northern Syria's Homs and Aleppo, and 2 million ... (More on P4)...(29)

## India Successfully Testfires Agni-I Nuclear Missile

NEW DELHI - India on Monday successfully test-fired its home-made, nuclear-capable intermediate range Agni-I ballistic missile from a test range off the coast of the eastern state of Odisha, sources said.

"The surface-to-surface, single-stage missile, with a target range of 700 km, was test-fired from the Integrated Test Range. It successfully hit the target during the testfiring that was part of a user trial by the Indian Army," the sources said.

Developed by the state-owned Defense Research and Development Organization, Agni-I is equipped with sophisticated navi-



gation system that makes sure the missile hits the target with a high degree of accuracy and precision. The missile was developed under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Program after the Kargil

War with Pakistan in 1999 to fill the gap between 250 km range of Prithvi-II and 2,500 km range of Agni-II. It was first launched in January 2002 from a road mobile launcher at the same test range. (Xinhua)

## Russia Opposes Sanctions on Iran for Ballistic Missile Test

UNITED NATIONS - Russia opposes imposing sanctions on Iran over recent ballistic missile tests that Moscow's ambassador to the United Nations said Monday were not in violation of a UN resolution. Asked whether the Security Council should impose penalties on Iran, Vitaly Churkin said: "The clear and short answer is no." The council met Monday at the request of the United States to discuss the missile tests that US Ambassador Samantha Power has said were "provocative and destabilizing." But Churkin said Iran was not in violation of a UN resolution that endorsed the nuclear deal reached between Western powers and Tehran. That resolution calls on Iran to refrain from developing ballistic missiles capable of carrying a nuclear warhead. Tehran maintains that the latest missile tests, which took place on Tuesday and ... (More on P4)...(30)

## Canada PM Trudeau to Talk Climate, Peacekeepers At UN

OTTAWA - Increasing Canada's contribution to international peacekeeping, the fight against climate change and advocacy for women's rights are on the agenda for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's visit to the United Nations, his office said Monday. His visit to UN headquarters in New York on Wednesday comes one month after Secretary General Ban Ki-moon praised Ottawa's renewed engagement on the world stage. Trudeau has said his government would contribute more to mediation and conflict resolution, peacekeeping and reconstruction in global hotspots. He said Canada would also seek ... (More on P4)...(33)

## Cambodian, U.S. Forces Hold Joint Military Exercise

PHNOM PENH - Cambodian and U.S. military personnel on Monday kicked off a joint military exercise dubbed "Angkor Sentinel 2016," aimed to strengthen bilateral military ties and cooperation. The two-week exercise is being held at the Training Centre for Multinational Peacekeeping Forces in Phnom Sroch district of Kampong Speu province, about 70 km west of Phnom Penh, according to a statement from the U.S. Embassy here. This year marks the 7th iteration of the

exercise designed to strengthen the two countries' humanitarian assistance and disaster relief capabilities and improve military-to-military cooperation, the statement said. The exercise will include training and exchanges covering humanitarian assistance, disaster response, first aid, engineering, explosive ordnance disposal, countering improvised explosive devices, transporting people and supplies and developing ... (More on P4)...(31)

## EU Suspends Direct Aid to Burundi over Political Crisis

BRUSSELS - The European Union has suspended direct financial support for the Burundian government after concluding that it had not done enough to find a political solution to conflict that has so far cost more than 400 lives. Burundi's President Pierre Nkurunziza triggered the crisis in April last year when he announced a bid for a third term. He went on to win a disputed election in July, in the face of

street protests and violent clashes. The European Council, the body that represents the 28 EU nations, said in a statement on Monday that it had finished talks with Burundi and declared that commitments proposed by Burumbura were insufficient to address EU concerns. EU aid to Burundi for 2014-2020 is estimated at 432 million euros, going toward energy, rural devel-

## Neighbor News

### China's Political Advisors Make over 5,000 Proposals

BEIJING - Altogether 5,375 proposals have been submitted to the annual session of China's top political advisory body this year, according to a report released Monday. Among them, 4,248 have been formalized after being reviewed and 824 were listed as opinions and suggestions. Some proposals were combined with other proposals or withdrawn, according to the report read out at the closing meeting of the fourth session of the 12th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Of the total, 42 percent centered on economic affairs and 10.5 percent on political issues. Proposals on social affairs and eco-

logical progress accounted for 31.4 percent and 9.8 percent respectively. Political advisors proposed advancing supply-side structural reform during the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020), alleviating the tax burdens on enterprises, implementing an innovation-driven development strategy, developing e-commerce in rural areas, strengthening treatment of air, water and soil pollution, and others. The proposals will be given to 164 government bodies to handle after the session, and the CPPCC National Committee will select key proposals to work together with related departments and individuals who make the proposals. (Xinhua)

### Iranians to Vote in Parliamentary Run-Off Race End of April

TEHRAN - Iran will hold the second round of the Majlis (parliament) elections late next month to fill the remaining vacant seats, an Iranian legal official announced on Monday. "The Guardian Council (as the highest legislative body of the country) has agreed for the second round of parliamentary elections to be held on April 29," the secretary of the Guardian Council, Ali Pournali Motlaq, told official IRNA news agency. In the run-off race, 138 hopefuls will compete for the rest 69 seats, Pournali Motlaq was quoted as saying. 221 out of the 290 seats were filled up in the first round of the polls held on Feb. 26. According to data available from the local media, the reformists and moderates have

gained ground in Iran's Friday vote for Majlis, although none of the heavy weight political groups have been able to seize a majority in the first round. In the 2012 Majlis race, the principalists or the loyalists to Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei and powerful clerics won the majority of about 75 percent in the first round of the votes. The Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said earlier this month that the turnout in the first round, out of about 55 million eligible voters, was around 50 percent in capital Tehran and some 62 percent across the country. While in 2012, the turnout in the first round was more than 64 percent out of some 48 million eligible voters. (Xinhua)

### Russian Central Military District Commander Arrives in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - General Vladimir Zarudnitskiy, Commander of Russia's Central Military District, visited Tajikistan on Monday to inspect preparedness of the unified group of Russian and Tajik armed forces for a joint military exercise that will start at the Halqayor training ground in Tajikistan's Khatlon province on Tuesday, according to the Central Military District press center. Russian general has reportedly inspected readiness of bodies of military management of the unified group and air force for the joint carrying out of training and combat missions within the frame-

work of a joint Russian-Tajik command and staff drill. On March 15, the exercise will be conducted at the Halqayor training ground and on March 16 it will continue at the Mumirak training ground. On March 17, the exercise will be conducted at the Lohour training ground and on March 18-20, the exercise will continue at the Harbmaydon training ground, the Central Military District press center said. The purpose of the exercise is reportedly to rehearse coordination and interaction in combat missions in mountains. (Asia-Plus)

### Gen. Raheel Stresses 'Consolidation of Long-Term Gains' at Corps Commanders Meet

RAWALPINDI - Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff General Raheel Sharif on Monday emphasized the "need to consolidate long-term gains" as the military moves towards the conclusion of a large-scale kinetic operation in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). The director general of Inter-Services Public Re-

lation, Lt Gen Asim Basteen, said the army chief directed "escalating the pace of intelligence-based operations (IBOs) across the country to eliminate the entire infrastructure of terrorism in Pakistan." Gen Raheel, who was addressing a corps commanders conference held at the General Headquarters ... (More on P4)...(34)