

EU's Tusk Slams 'Appeasement' of Russia As Bloc Talks New Sanctions

BRUSSELS - Senior figures in the European Union brandished a threat of new sanctions against Russia over the weekend violence in eastern Ukraine, with one blasting what he called "appeasement" of Moscow. That remark on Twitter by Donald Tusk, the former Polish prime minister who now chairs summits of EU leaders, used language recalling the eve of World War Two that conveyed both fierce condemnation of Russian President Vladimir Putin and criticism of recent EU

talk of easing sanctions against Moscow. "Once again, appeasement encourages the aggressor to greater acts of violence. Time to step up our policy based on cold facts, not illusions," Tusk tweeted after a call with Ukraine's president on a response to Saturday's bloodshed in Mariupol. The remark showed Tusk, who became president of the European Council last month, breaking with the backroom discretion of his Belgian predecessor and seeming to take sides in the internal EU debate

about a possible more conciliatory approach to Russia. Tusk, a hawk on Russia while he was Polish premier, commented just as Latvia, which currently chairs EU councils, warned of new sanctions and called for an emergency foreign ministers' meeting. EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini replied on Twitter she was "working on it". Criticized by hawks last week for drafting a paper on ways to improve relations with Russia, the Italian said violence "would inevitably lead to a fur-



ther grave deterioration of relations between the EU and Russia". Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics, who

has been trying to revive a truce agreed in September at Minsk, was blunt: "Separatists attack on Mariupol breached

Minsk agreements," he tweeted. "Russia fully responsible to stop them, if not more isolation & sanctions to come." (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

China Pledges Anti-Terror Support for Pakistan

BEIJING - China reaffirmed support for Pakistan in its fight against terrorism on Sunday during Pakistani chief of army staff general Raheel Sharif's visit to Beijing. Fan Changlong, vice chairman of China's Central Military Commission, made the remarks while meeting with the

guests. "China will, as always, give firm support to Pakistan's efforts to combat terrorism," Fan said. Thanking China for its support, Sharif said his country is willing to cooperate with China to eradicate all kinds of terrorism and maintain peace, stability and prosperity. (Xinhua)

Rouhani Sees Georgia as Possible Route for Exporting Gas to Europe



TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in a meeting with Georgian Speaker Davit Usupashvili on Sunday said Tehran sees Georgia as a potential energy transit route for exporting its gas supplies to Europe. "Georgia can be one of the routes for exporting Iran's gas to Europe, while the North-South corridor and the Islamic Republic of Iran's railway network can link Georgian ports to the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Oman," Rouhani said during the meeting in Tehran on Sunday. He described Usupashvili's visit to Tehran as a turning point to start a jump in expanding relations between Tehran and Tbilisi, and said Iran is eager to expand its cooperation with Georgia on scientific, cultural and regional issues.

Noting that tensions between the neighboring states harm the regional stability and security, Rouhani said, "Respecting each others' geographical borders is the way for the establishment of peace and stability and if there is a problem, it should be settled through talks." Usupashvili, for his part, underlined the broadening of ties between the two countries in recent years, and said, "Today, good cooperation has been established between Tehran-Tbilisi energy and economy ministries and we are determined to further expand such cooperation." He also underscored Iran's significant role in the region, and said, "Given its close relations with the regional states, the Islamic Republic of Iran can play a positive role in the establishment of peace and security in the region, specially the South Caucasus, and you can consider Georgia as your partner in this area."

In September, President Rouhani and Georgian Prime Minister Irakli Garibashvili in a meeting in New York voiced their enthusiasm for the further enhancement of Tehran-Tbilisi relations in different spheres. In the meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly, President Rouhani emphasized Iran's capabilities in energy, gas, water and transportation fields, announcing the country's engineering firms' readiness to implement infrastructural projects in Georgia. (FNA)

Delegats from Uzbekistan to Attend OSCE Preparatory Meeting

TASHKENT - According to the press service of the foreign ministry of Uzbekistan, the delegation of the Republic of Uzbekistan, headed by the Chairman of the State Committee for nature protection Bakhtier Abdusamatov, on January 26-27, 2015 will participate in the work of the first preparatory meeting for economic and environmental forum of the Organization for security and cooperation in Europe. The event will be held on the theme "Water resource management in the OSCE region - increasing security and stability through cooperation" in Vienna (Austria). (Agencies)

35 Militants Killed in Army Airstrikes in NW Pakistan

ISLAMABAD - At least 35 militants were killed in Pakistan army's airstrikes in the northwestern restive tribal region of North Waziristan, the military said on Sunday. The Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR), Pakistan army's mouthpiece, said jet fighters pounded the hideouts of militants in Datta Khel area of the tribal region bordering Afghanistan. The militants belonged to the banned outfit Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), while some foreign militants were also among the killed terrorists, the military said in a statement. The strikes are the part of Pakistan army's ongoing operation Zarb-e-Azb (Sharp Strike) against militants in the region that it launched last year.

According to official figures, more than 2,000 militants and 190 soldiers have been killed so far in the military operation that was launched on June 15 against foreign and local terrorists hiding in North Waziristan, once the stronghold of the TTP. The operation was carried out after failed peace talks and a deadly attack at the country's busiest airport in Karachi on June 8, which left at least 40 people, including 10 terrorists, dead. The Pakistan army claimed to have recaptured and cleared more than 90 percent area of the region and have also destroyed hundreds of hideouts, including bomb-making factories and command and control centers of the terrorists. (Xinhua)

Obama Announces Nuclear Breakthrough on Landmark India Trip

NEW DELHI - In a glow of bonhomie, U.S. President Barack Obama and Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi unveiled a deal aimed at unlocking billions of dollars in nuclear trade, a step that both sides hope will help establish an enduring strategic partnership.



The two countries reached an understanding on two issues that, despite a groundbreaking 2006 agreement, had stopped U.S. companies from setting up reactors in India and became one of the major irritants in bilateral ties. "We are committed to moving towards full implementation," Obama told a joint news conference with Modi after he arrived in the Indian capital in a state visit. "This is an important step that shows how we can work together to elevate our relationship." The new deal resolved differences over the li-

ability of suppliers to India in the event of a nuclear accident and U.S. demands on tracking the whereabouts of material supplied to the country, U.S. ambassador to India Richard Verma told reporters. "Ultimately it's up to the companies to go forward, but the two governments came to an understanding," he added. Signaling his determination to take ties to a higher level, Modi broke with protocol to meet and bear-hug Obama as he landed in New Delhi earlier in the day. It was a remarkable spectacle given that, just a year ago, Modi was persona

non grata in Washington and denied a visa to the United States. After a working lunch that included kebabs made with lotus stem, figs and spices, the two leaders got down to talks. They emerged with deals on defense cooperation that included the joint production of drone aircraft and equipment for Lockheed Martin Corp's C-130 military transport plane. They agreed to a number of financing initiatives aimed at helping India increase its use of renewable energy. But Modi cautioned that work was still needed to create ... (More on P4)... (18)

65 Killed in Clashes, Bomb Attacks in Iraq

BAGHDAD - A total of 56 people were killed in the clashes between security forces and the Islamic State (IS) militants across Iraq and 9 others killed in bomb attacks targeting restaurants in the capital Baghdad on Sunday, security sources said.

In Iraq's eastern province of Diyala, the security forces backed by Shiite militiamen and aircraft retook control of eight villages in the rural area in northeast of the volatile town of Maqadiyah, some 100 km northeast of Baghdad, after fierce clashes with the IS militants, leaving at least 35 IS militants killed, an Interior Ministry statement quoted Lieutenant General Jamil al-Shimari, the provincial police chief, as saying.

By Sunday's battles, the troops have freed the whole area of Shirween valley and redeployed later to free the remaining small area in north of Maqadiyah which still under the IS control, the statement said.

The battles in Diyala were part of a major offensive by the Iraqi forces and allied Shiite militias launched early Friday with the aim of ending the presence of the extremist militants in whole Iraq's eastern province of Diyala.

In Anbar province, the IS militants clashed with the Iraqi forces in al-Khasfa area in west of the town of Haditha, some 200 km northwest of Baghdad, which has been freed on Thursday by the Iraqi forces from the extremist militants, leaving 12 security members killed and seven others wounded, a provincial security source anonymously told Xinhua. The battle also resulted in the killing of four IS militants and the capture of three others, the source said. Separately, clashes erupted between the Iraqi security forces backed by allied Sunni tribesmen and the IS militants in south of the militants-seized city of Fallujah, some 50 km west of Baghdad, leaving five IS militants killed and 12 others wounded, the source added.

Earlier in the day, a police source told Xinhua that a total of nine people were killed and 27 wounded in three bomb attacks targeting restaurants in Baghdad. Five people were killed and 12 others wounded when a bomb hidden in a plastic bag detonated in a restaurant in Bab al-Sharji area in downtown Baghdad. Another bomb went off near a small restaurant in al-Sibaa area in central Baghdad, left three people killed and eight others wounded, the source said. (Xinhua)

Yemeni President Decides to Withdraw Resignation: Advisor

to continue to serve the country, a presidential advisor told Xinhua on Sunday. A presidential advisor, requesting anonymity, told Xinhua that Hadi made his decision to withdraw the resignation based on the international efforts led by United Nations envoy Jamal Bin Omar, as well as representatives of the political parties in the country. Hadi has six advisors who are among the country's decision-making body, including one from the Shiite Houthis group. However, a government spokesman told Xinhua

that there is no official announcement about Hadi's decision. Domestic and international efforts are still underway to convince the president to withdraw his resignation, the spokesman said on condition anonymity. Hadi on Thursday night submitted his resignation to the parliament amid standoff with the Shiite Houthis group who control the capital. Yemeni Prime Minister Khaled Bahah and his cabinet also presented resignation to the president on the same day. (Xinhua)

27 Al-Nusra Commanders Killed in Syrian Air Force Strikes

TEHRAN - The Syrian air force staged a massive targeted attack on a joint meeting of two major terrorist groups in Damascus countryside early on Sunday, killing and injuring a large number of the terrorist leaders. The army airstrike targeted a gathering of Al-Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham commanders in Mazaya district in the town of Zabadani in Damascus countryside. A sum of 27 commanders of the Al-Nusra Front and Ahrar al-Sham were killed in the air raid. The leader of the Al-Nusra Front, Abdulrahman Nassif, was also wounded during the airstrike.

Earlier today, a large number of terrorists were killed in heavy fighting between the Syrian army and the Al-Nusra Front in Damascus province. The army soldiers struck a heavy blow at the terrorists in the areas of Kfeir Yabous, al-Zabadani, Eastern Ghouta, Douma and al-Qalamoun in Damascus, killing and injuring scores of them. Syria has been the scene of insurgency since 2011 when certain western powers and their regional allies voiced loudly that Syrian protests have no diplomatic solution and they started supplying the country's opposition groups with their arms and funds. (FNA)

Turkish PM Vows to Push on Peace Process with Kurds

ANKARA - Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu on Sunday said that his government and his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) are ready to sacrifice their everything "for the sake of success of the peace process" with Kurds in Turkey. During his speech at AKP's provincial congress of southeastern province of Diyarbakir, populated mostly by Kurds, Davutoglu said the peace process with Kurds is not a cyclical effort. It is not an effort targeting to win the election or not to lost the elections, adding that "we initialized it as a national, permanent project." He said previous peace efforts of former Turkish leaders in 1990's years had been prevented and hampered by some "nationalist" political circles and added that there are always political powers in the country who aim to prevent the last peace process of AKP. He claimed that as well as hampering of Turkish nationalists, Kurdish na-

tionalists have also been trying to destroy the peace process. Turmoils and demonstrations in some Turkish cities last October occurred due to the "Islamic State" siege of the Kurdish-populated Syrian city of Ayn al-Arab, also known as Kobane. Davutoglu peace process has gained momentum nowadays, adding "we are negotiating with every side, who are related to the peace process. Not only one side." He said that Islam is an adhesive power of the process with Kurds, adding that their aim is a new constitution following the general elections in next June. "The new constitution will be egalitarian and libertarian for all our citizens," Davutoglu said. The outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK), listed as a terrorist group by Turkey and other countries, took up arms in 1984 in an attempt to create an ethnic homeland for the Kurds in southeast Turkey. (Xinhua)

Germany Halts Arms Exports to Saudi Arabia

BERLIN - Germany has decided to stop arms exports to Saudi Arabia because of "instability in the region," German daily Bild reported on Sunday.



Weapons orders from Saudi Arabia have either been "rejected, pure and simple," or deferred for further consideration, the newspaper said, adding that the information has not been officially confirmed. The decision was taken on Wednesday by the national security council, a government body that includes Chancellor Angela Merkel, Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel and seven other ministers, it said. "According to government sources, the situation in the region is too unstable to ship

arms there," added the daily. Saudi Arabia follows a strict and highly conservative form of Islam, and as home to some of its holiest sites plays a key role as a spiritual leader for Sunni Muslims and mediator in the Middle East. Its importance was made clear on Saturday when world leaders converged on Riyadh to offer condolences following the death of King Abdullah, including Britain's prime minister

and France's president. Germany was represented by former president Christian Wulff. The kingdom is "one of the most important clients of Germany's arms industry," with 360 million euros (\$400 million) of arms shipments authorized in 2013, Bild said. But it has also come under fire from human rights groups for its harsh treatment of religious minorities and women, as well as the lack of transparency in its legal system. (AFP)

Libya's Deputy FM Kidnapped in Beida

TRIPOLI - The deputy foreign minister in Libya's internationally recognized government, Hassan Alsaghir, was kidnapped by unknown gunmen on Sunday in the eastern city of Beida, according to Libyan government sources. An armed group stormed the Marhaba hotel at the early hours on Sunday, "violently" taking Alsaghir by a car in dark color, according to an official who declined to disclose his name from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Some hotel staff said that the gang claimed themselves policemen and beat Alsaghir in his room. Beida's security forces denied that they have issued any arrest warrant for Alsaghir. The motivation for the abduction has not been immediately known. Alsaghir was a diplomat before being appointed as a member of the National Transitional Council of Libya, the de facto government of Libya during the 2011 civil war which toppled the former strongman Muam-

mar Gaddafi. The security conditions in the North Africa country has been plagued by assassinations, kidnappings and armed robberies since the removal of Gaddafi. Libya's Islamist group Ansar al-Sharia, which has been warring with the Libyan army since May, said earlier that it had set up an offshoot in Beida attempting to confront the government forces. There have been some bomb attacks in recent months in the city, but is otherwise quiet. (Xinhua)