Syrian Army Storms Key IS-Held City Near Palmyra

DAIKON - The Syrian army backed by Russian warplanes launched an operation Sunday to take the ancient city of Palmyra from Islamic State fighters, state television said.

The operation, lasting since late Saturday, targeted IS positions around the historic city located 217 km northeast of Damascus, state television said.

The government had earlier confirmed that IS had held the ancient city, which was captured from pro-government forces in 2013.

Syria Cease-Fire Unavailing, Fighting Continues in Aleppo

BEIRUT - Syria’s civil war has been going on for six years now, and the fighting in Aleppo, Syria’s second-largest city, has been raging for months. The cease-fire declared by the United Nations Security Council has failed to halt the fighting, and the situation in Aleppo remains tense.

The cease-fire was supposed to take effect on December 29, but it was repeatedly extended due to the ongoing conflict in the city. The latest extension of the cease-fire was announced on January 20, but the fighting in Aleppo has continued despite the ceasefire.

Syrian Opposition Not Optimistic About Geneva Peace Talks

BERLIN - Syria’s opposition groups are not optimistic about the upcoming peace talks in Geneva, saying that they will not attend the talks unless there is a significant change in the city of Damascus.

The talks were supposed to start on January 25, but they have been delayed due to differences between the Syrian government and the opposition.

Iran Nuclear Deal Proved Diplomacy Paying Off, China President Says

BEIJING - President Xi Jinping has said that the Iran nuclear deal proved diplomacy paying off, a move that will help further strengthen the Sino-Iranian relations.

Speaking in an address to the Nuclear Security Summit in Beijing, Xi said that the deal was a significant achievement in the global nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament efforts.