

Syrian Army Controls 95 Pct of Aleppo, 100,000 Civilians Evacuated: Russian MoD

MOSCOW - The Syrian army has taken complete control of over 95 percent of Aleppo's territory previously held by rebels, with over 100,000 civilians evacuated from the Syrian city, the Russian Defense Ministry said Monday.

According to the Russian Center for Reconciliation of Opposing Sides, the Syrian army has seized three more neighborhoods in the war-ravaged eastern Aleppo in the last 24 hours, as a result of which, the total territory held by rebel militants in the eastern part



of the city is less than 10 square km.

Meanwhile, more than 100,000 civilians, including 40,484 children, have been evacuated from the city since the Syrian government's offensive began, the center said in a statement.

It added that 2,215 militants have laid down their weapons and up to 2,137 were granted amnesty.

Aleppo, once Syria's largest city and former commercial center, has been bitterly contested by the Syrian army and the rebels due to its strategic location. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

Pakistan PM Seeks Scholars' Help to Eliminate Extremism

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif Monday urged religious scholars to play a role in eliminating root causes of extremism from the society.

The prime minister made the remarks during a conference of religious scholars in the country's eastern city of Lahore.

Violent extremism has claimed lives of thousands of people, mostly civilians, over the past several years. Major-

ity in Pakistan reject the violent extremism and terrorism; however, Pakistan still faces the problem due to a handful of extremist elements. The prime minister pointed out that due to the efforts and sacrifices of the national leadership, religious scholars, armed forces and police, the hideouts of the terrorists have almost been eliminated. "Now it is the responsibility of the religious ... (More on P4)...(21)

Iran will Help Iraq Establish Stability, Security: FM Zarif

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif will spare no efforts to help the Iraqi government and people restore stability and security in the war-stricken country.

"All Iraqi ethnicities, tribes and groups must also take steps in this path," Zarif said in a meeting with Head of the Iraqi National Alliance (INA) Ammar al-Hakim in Tehran on Monday.

He added that the stellar

relations between Iran and Iraq must serve as a model for other countries in the region.

The top Iranian diplomat hailed the very valuable political and military achievements by the Iraqi government, nation and groups and said INA's bid for national reconciliation in Iraq is admirable and very important for the country's political future.

"There is the possibility of cooperation among all ... (More on P4)...(22)

New Bilateral Anglo-Ireland Agreement Needed as Part of Brexit

LONDON - The challenges of Britain's exit from the European Union (EU) call for a new Anglo-Irish agreement, said a report released on Monday by Britain's House of Lords' EU Committee.

The report issued a call for all parties to the upcoming Brexit negotiations to give official recognition to the special, unique nature of British-Irish relations.

The message from politicians in Britain's upper house at Westminster is directed at both the Brit-

ish government and institutions of the Brussels-based European Union. Following the June referendum when Britain voted to leave the EU, the committee outlined "the many economic, political, legal and institutional challenges of Brexit for Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland and for UK-Irish relations as a whole". In its findings published Monday, the committee concluded that any negative impact of ... (More on P4)...(16)

Italy's Newly-Nominated PM Expected to Announce Cabinet: Reports

ROME - The newly nominated Italian Prime Minister, Paolo Gentiloni, was expected to announce the team of his cabinet later on Monday, according to media reports.

Gentiloni, 62, was named as new prime minister by Italian President Sergio Mattarella on Sunday, and asked to form a transitional government, following the resignation of Matteo Renzi from the

A few changes in the list of ministers would be expected, compared to the outgoing Renzi's center-left

government, since Gentiloni can rely on the same majority in parliament. All opposition forces have been unavailable to take part in the new executive, and some of them were pressing hard to go to immediate elections.

Gentiloni has been holding talks with all parliamentary groups since Sunday evening, soon after receiving the mandate.

According to his official schedule, he would conclude his consultation in early afternoon with the representatives of the



center-left Democratic Movement (M5S) and Northern League have both refused to hold consultation with him. (Xinhua)

Turkish Police Detain 235 People after Deadly Bombing Attack

ISTANBUL - Turkey's police rounded up more than 200 people, mostly Kurds, as the country on Monday mourned the dozens killed in a bombing attack near an Istanbul soccer stadium.

The interior ministry issued a statement saying 235 people were detained in 11 cities for their alleged connections to a terrorist organization.

The detainees were affiliated with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and a Kurdish umbrella organization, and included individuals

deemed guilty of spreading terrorist propaganda on social media, the statement said.

The majority of those arrested, according to local media reports documenting the raids, were members of a pro-Kurdish party that was elected to the Turkish Parliament in 2014. Among them were two provincial leaders and an Ankara representative of the Peoples' Democratic Party, or HDP.

The ministry statement did not specify whether those... (More on P4)...(17)

ISIS Prepares for the Final Battle in Mosul

Mosul - On a recent December evening, from the middle of ISIS-occupied territory in Mosul, Saad spoke quietly into his mobile. The Iraqi army had just been mauled at the nearby Salam hospital in a fierce ISIS ambush, and the insurgents were prowling the streets of Saad's neighborhood. "They are moving around the area in their suicide vests," he told The Daily Beast over the phone in a hushed voice.

He lives adjacent to the Wahda district on the east bank of the Tigris river, and has borne witness to the latest bout of fighting in the contest for the city.

Saad said he heard the gunfire and the detonation of a suicide bomber who blew himself up amid Iraqi soldiers, and he could see the top floor of the hospital ablaze after the Iraqi army retreated.

Iraqi security forces have been slowly pushing into the eastern part of Mosul since November 1, liberating a series of neighbor-



hoods on the outskirts. On December 6, the Iraqi 9th Armored Division tried a new approach, dashing through several areas in an attempt to seize Wahda, barely a mile from the first of five bridges that connect the two halves of the city. (AP)

IS Retakes Syria's Ancient Palmyra City

DAMASCUS - The Islamic State (IS) recaptured the ancient city of Palmyra in central Syria on Sunday, just nine months after losing the city to the Syrian army, a monitor group reported.

Following four days of a wide-scale offensive, IS successfully captured the millennia-old oasis city of Palmyra in the eastern countryside of the central province of Homs, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The city as well as its air-base, ancient part and citadel fell to IS, said the



Observatory. It added that over 120 Syrian soldiers were killed during the offensive as well as tens of the IS militants. The Syrian soldiers withdrew to the desert in southern Palmy-

ra, amid intense Russian and Syrian airstrikes on IS positions there.

Meanwhile, the governor of Homs, Talal Barazi, told local Ekhbariyeh TV that the ... (More on P4)...(18)

Turkey Ambassador to Israel Takes Office after Long Vacancy

JERUSALEM - Turkey's new envoy to Israel submitted his credentials to Israel's President Reuven Rivlin on Monday, ending years of diplomatic strife between the two countries.

The ceremony, at the Presidential Residence in Jerusalem, marked the first time Turkey sent an envoy to Israel in six years. Mekin Mustafa Kemal Okem, accompanied by his wife and two children, told Rivlin that "this is indeed a new beginning in our bilateral relations and a resumption of the ties between our countries that have known days of fruitful cooperation in the past." He said he was eager to "explore every possible aspect of cooperation" with Israel. In response to Okem's statement, Rivlin said "today is a truly historic moment." Rivlin offered his condolences to the Turkish people ... (More on P4)...(19)

EU Agrees Money-for-Migration Deal with Mali



BRUSSELS - The European Union, under an agreement published on Monday, will provide funds to Mali to help it create jobs and strengthen border management in return for the African country's aid in fighting people smugglers and accepting deportees from Europe.

The Mali agreement comes as they EU is stepping up migration collaboration with countries of origin and transit in Africa and the Middle East to prevent a repeat of last year's uncontrolled influx of refugees and migrants to its shores. Announced by the Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders after his talks in Bamako, the deal also envisages EU support to Mali on development, biometric passports and advancing security in northern part of the West African country.

Ever since French forces intervened in 2013 to push back Islamists who had hijacked an ethnic Tuareg uprising in Mali's desert north, world powers - especially former colonial master Paris - have invested huge sums in trying to soothe the tangled rivalries that caused Mali to implode. Only last week, suspected Islamist militants freed nearly 100 prisoners during an attack on a jail in central Mali, the... (More on P4)...(20)

UK Leader to Introduce Official Definition of Anti-Semitism

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May is introducing an official definition for anti-Semitism in hopes of curbing attacks against Jews.

May says the ground-breaking step will mean that anyone whose language or behavior displays hatred toward Jews "will be called out on it."

Jewish groups say a clear definition will make it easier to demonstrate when actions are anti-Semitic.

Though the language has no binding legal effect, Jewish rights groups hope that it will be used by courts and other government institutions. (AP)

EU Warns of Possible New Sanctions in South Sudan

BRUSSELS - The European Union says it stands ready to impose fresh sanctions against anyone who incites ethnic hatred, obstructs the peace process or stops U.N. agencies from doing their work in South Sudan.

EU foreign ministers said in a statement Monday that they are "profoundly disturbed" by intensifying conflict five years after South Sudan gained independence.

They called on the transitional government to protect civilians, and for all parties to respect international law and bring an end to human rights violations. The U.N. recently warned that South Su-



dan is at risk of genocide and that ethnic cleansing is being carried out in several parts of the country. Tens of thousands have been killed and more than 2 million people displaced by the civil war. (AP)

Turkmenistan, General Electric Discuss Cooperation Projects

ASHGABAT - President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov met with General Electric Vice President, President and Chief Executive Officer Ronald J. Pollett. The President noted that Turkmenistan had been always open for mutually beneficial business relations with the leading representatives of the world business, including

the United States business market. Emphasizing that Turkmenistan pays a big importance to enhancing power industry potential, President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov praised the results of cooperation with General Electric - the long-time partner of Turkmenistan in this sector of the national economy, the state ... (More on P4)...(23)