

EU Warns Britain any Membership Deal will be Hard Won

LONDON - The European Union warned Britain on Monday that any breakthrough in talks on a better membership deal would have to be hard-won after senior officials were given an extra 24 hours to iron out differences.

Prime Minister David Cameron and European Council President Donald Tusk left a dinner on Sunday saying they had failed to reach a deal, and the two sides were somber in their assessments of how the negotiation stood on Monday.

Eurosceptic British lawmakers said the divergence was being played up to make an eventual agree-



ment seem like a triumph, but EU officials poured some cold water on what

Britain had called a "significant breakthrough" on measures to curb immigration.

"It's difficult," said a source close to the negotiations. "The talks are going

on non-stop, both negotiating teams are already in Brussels for further talks."

The two sides have indicated they want a deal agreed by EU leaders at their Brussels summit in mid-February, enabling Cameron to call a referendum on EU membership as early as June.

Cameron's spokeswoman told reporters: "There is more work to do in all four areas, more work in some areas than in others." But she said a "significant" agreement had been reached with the European Commission, the EU executive, allowing Britain to suspend some payments to migrants from the bloc for four years immediately after the referendum. (Reuters)

Security Forces Repel Major IS Attack in Iraq

TIKRIT - Iraqi security forces on Monday repelled a major attack of the Islamic State (IS) militants in a mountainous area in the country's northern central province of Salahudin, leaving at least 25 IS militants killed, a provincial security source said. The onslaught occurred in the early morning when dozens of IS militants backed by heavy machine guns, mortar and rockets barrage advanced on the military positions in Makhoul mountain range, the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. The troops

and allied paramilitary units, known as Hashd-Shaabi, fought back the attackers covered by the Iraqi aircraft and managed to repel their attack, leaving at least 25 IS militants killed and destroyed three of their suicide truck bombs and four vehicles carrying heavy machine guns, the source said, adding that four security members were also killed and 19 others wounded by the clashes. During the battle, the Iraqi warplanes and helicopter gunships pounded the IS supply routes on the roads from the IS-held town ... (More on P4)... (23)

Over 50,000 Migrants Cross Macedonian Border in one Month

SKOPJE - Macedonian Ministry of Interior declared Sunday that 53,434 refugees have crossed the Macedonian border to enter into Europe in the first month of 2016. According to the ministry, most of the refugees are Syrians (26,490), Afghans (16,897) and Iraqis (10,047). The ministry also said that a total of 931 certificates have been issued in the past 24 hours for intended asylum requests of foreign nationals. These migrants included 351 Afghans, 297 Syr-



ians and 283 Iraqis, the ministry added. Migrants and refugees have flooded into Europe's passport-free Schengen zone through the route of Macedonia, Serbia and Hungary over the past months. (Xinhua)

Korea Repeats Need for Deploying U.S. Missile Defense System

SEOUL - South Korea's defense ministry Monday reiterated the need for the deployment of a U.S. missile defense system on the Korean peninsula to better deal with ballistic missile and nuclear threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Moon Sang-Kyun, newly appointed spokesman of the defense ministry, told his first regular press briefing that it would be "of course" helpful to defense and security of South Korea if the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense

(THAAD) is deployed on the peninsula. Moon said the THAAD deployment will help South Korea's national defense as the advanced U.S. missile defense system is one of tools to defend the country against the DPRK's nuclear and missile threats. His comments are the repetition of former spokesman Kim Min-Seok's remarks made last Friday during a press briefing. It indicated South Korea's possible change in position over the THAAD deployment as Seoul had stressed the development



of its indigenous missile defense system. Asked whether the THAAD is necessary for South Korea even after completing the development of its indigenous missile defense

system, Moon said that the THAAD deployment would be helpful to South Korea's security as the two are separate systems with different ranges and operational systems. (Xinhua)

Australia, Pacific Island Countries on High Alert for Zika Virus

SYDNEY - Australia and Pacific island countries are on high alert for the mosquito-borne Zika virus that has been linked to severe birth defects. "There is great deal that remains unknown about the Zika virus, but the reports and suspected links to birth defects and neurological problems mean that this threat must be taken very seriously," Papua New Guinea's Prime Minister Peter O'Neill said in a statement. Australian authorities have implemented

measures to help stop the spread of the virus through the Torres Strait with monitoring in the nation's remote north already underway. "We'll monitor closely through the Torres Strait. We already do that with a number of infectious diseases," Queensland state health minister Cameron Dick told reporters on Monday. Dick said the Zika virus does not pose a significant health risk to Queensland "at this time ... but we're going to con ... (More on P4)... (24)

German Populist Party Escalates Immigration Debate with 'Shoot Migrants' Remarks

BERLIN - Germany's interior ministry on Monday dismissed remarks from a populist politician who called for police to be given powers to use firearms against illegal migrants, pointing out that such shootings would be illegal. The suggestion by Frauke Petry, leader of the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, has fueled an already heated debate about Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to open Germany's doors to refugees. "It goes without saying; no German policeman will use a firearm against people who are searching for protection in Germany," Interior Ministry spokesman Johannes Dimroth told a news conference on Monday. "And it goes without saying that the use of firearms against people to stop an illegal border crossing is unlawful." Vice Chancellor Sigmar Gabriel, whose left-leaning ... (More on P4)... (25)

849 People Killed in Violence Across Iraq in January: UN

BAGHDAD - A total of 849 Iraqis were killed and 1,450 others wounded in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in January across Iraq, the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) said in a statement on Monday. The statement said that a total of 490 civilians and 359 security members were killed, while 1,157 other civilians, including 47 civilian policemen, and 293 security members, were wounded. The UNAMI excluded the casualties in Anbar province where fierce clashes are underway between the Iraqi forces and the Islamic State (IS) militant



group which has seized most of the province. "In general, the UNAMI has been hindered in effectively verifying casualties in conflict areas," it said, adding that "the figures reported have to be considered as the absolute minimum." It

added that there are an unknown number of people who died from secondary effects of violence after having fled their homes due to exposure to the elements, lack of water, food, medicine and health care. According to the ... (More on P4)... (26)

UN Chief Tells Israel, Palestinians: 'Writing is on the Wall'

UNITED NATIONS - U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon is concerned a stalemate in the peace process between Israel and Palestinians is reaching the point of no return for a two-state solution. "The time has come for Israelis, Palestinians and the international community to read the writing on the wall: The status quo is untenable," Ban wrote in an opinion piece published in the New York Times late on Sunday. "Keeping another people under indefinite occupation undermines the security and the future of both Israelis and Palestinians."

The Palestinians want an independent state in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem - areas Israel captured in a 1967 war. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu slammed Ban last week, saying he gave a "tailwind to terrorism" after the secretary-general put some of the blame on Israel for four months of stabbings and car rammings by Palestinians. Ban, who will step down at the end of 2016 after 10 years as U.N. chief, had told the U.N. Security Council that it is "human nature to react to occupation."

"I will always stand up to those who challenge Israel's right to exist," Ban said in the Times, "just as I will always defend the right of Palestinians to have a state of their own. That is why I am so concerned that we are reaching a point of no return for the two-state solution."

The United States and the European Union - Israel's closest allies - also have had unusually stern criticism of Israel in recent weeks, reflecting their frustrations with Netanyahu's right-wing government. (Reuters)

UN Envoy's Meeting with Syrian Gov't Delegation Rescheduled: Spokesperson

GENEVA - In an announcement just ahead of the scheduled time, the office of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria on Monday said the meeting with the delegation of the Syrian government had been "rescheduled". The office said the Special Envoy, Staffan de Mistura,

is still expected to meet with the representatives of the opposition team, the High Negotiations Committee (HNC), later Monday afternoon as planned. On Monday morning, a spokesperson from HNC confirmed the opposition had decided to meet the U.N. ... (More on P4)... (27)

Turkey Must Probe Shooting of Civilians: UN Rights Chief

GENEVA - The U.N. human rights chief called on Turkey on Monday to investigate the alleged shooting of unarmed people in southeastern Turkey that turned up in "extremely shocking" footage posted online last week. Zeid Raad al-Husseini also voiced concern over reports that the cameraman, Refik Tekin, faces arrest over possible charges of

membership in the banned Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, when he leaves a hospital where he is treated for gunshot wounds sustained in the shooting in the southeastern town of Cizre. Turkish authorities have imposed curfews in Cizre and other towns and districts to flush out militants from urban areas in ... (More on P4)... (28)

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Sharif to Attend N-Summit in US

WASHINGTON - Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will represent Pakistan at a nuclear summit in March this year when the US outgoing Obama administration would try to reach some understanding with recognised and unrecognised nuclear states to control proliferation, official sources told Dawn. Earlier this week, Pakistan attended a sherpa (preparatory) meeting for the summit in San Francisco. Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry

and Ambassador Jilil Abbas Jilani represented Pakistan at the meeting. US President Barack Obama will host the fourth and the final Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) on April 1 in Washington. Leaders from 50 countries and international organisations will participate. Chinese President Xi Jinping and India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi will also be among the leaders expected to attend the meeting. (Agencies)

China Hopes Syrian Talks Proceed Without Preconditions

BEIJING - China hopes the Syrian government and opposition delegations will participate in the Geneva talks without preconditions, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lu Kang said Monday. "China welcomes the new round of the Geneva meeting as it signals the international effort to push for a political settlement to the Syrian crisis," Lu said at a regular news briefing. The UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura has separately met representatives of the Syrian government and the main opposition High Negotiations Committee (HNC) since the talks began on Friday. This is the third time rival Syrian parties have come to the negotiating table after meetings in Geneva in 2012 and 2014 failed to resolve the crisis. Talks, which may be long and difficult, are the only way to resolve the Syrian issue. China hopes the two

sides will lift preconditions and find what fits the county and people best, Lu said. The Syrian government and opposition should take measures to build trust in each other, by lifting sieges and allowing humanitarian access, to contribute to the success of the talks, the spokesperson said. Major countries and regional players should assist in the talks. China will continue working with the international community to promote dialogue for a political resolution, Lu said. The indirect talks in Geneva are part of a process outlined in a UN resolution last December that envisages an 18-month timetable for a political transition in Syria, including the drafting of a new constitution and elections. The first stages of the talks are expected to last between two and three weeks and the entire talks over six months. (Xinhua)

Iran Seeks to Boost Regional Ties with Russia: Leader's Aide

TEHRAN - Iran is after deepening strategic cooperation with Russia regarding regional issues, says a senior Iranian official. Speaking to reporters upon arrival in Moscow on Monday, Ali Akbar Velayati, the adviser on international affairs to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, said the Leader's "View to the East" will also be discussed in talks with senior Russian officials. He said Tehran and Moscow have expanded relations in different fields, particularly in nuclear and defense, as well as

regional cooperation including a coalition among Iran, Syria, Russia and Iraq to fight terrorism. The top Iranian official said during his stay in the Russian capital, he will also attend a seminar on bilateral cooperation in the modern geopolitical situation. Velayati arrived in Moscow on Monday morning to hold talks with senior Russian officials on ways to strengthen relations. The visit comes at the invitation of Director of the Russian Institute of Strategic Studies Leonid Petrovich Reshetnikov. (PressTV)

Strength of Russian Military Base in Tajikistan Expected to be Reduced

DUSHANBE - The numerical strength of the Russian military base deployed in Tajikistan is expected to be reduced. The Russian military base deployed in Tajikistan will be reorganized into brigade this year without loss of its fighting capacity, commander of the Russian Central Military District, Colonel-General Vladimir Zarudnitskiy, was quoted as saying by Russian news agency

TASS. "However, its role as the outpost of the Russian federation in Central Asia and the guarantor of peace and stability in the region will remain invariable," Russian general said. Meanwhile, the Russian Central Military District press center says reorganization of the Russian military base in Tajikistan into brigade will reduce its numerical strength but increase its mobility. (Asia-Plus)