



## BUFFER ZONE DEAL 'Ukraine won't pull back troops'

AFP, Donetsk

Ukraine yesterday insisted it would not pull back its troops from the frontline until all sides cease fire under a peace plan aimed at ending five months of bloodshed in the east.

Kiev and pro-Russian rebels are supposed to pull back their forces and weaponry to create a 30-kilometre wide buffer zone in line with a reinforced truce deal agreed in Minsk on Saturday.

But heavy gunfire erupted around the eastern insurgent stronghold of Donetsk yesterday, just hours after Nato's top military commander had said there was a ceasefire "in name only" on the ground.

National Security and Defence Council spokesman Andriy Lysenko said the first point agreed in the Belarussian capital referring to a mutual ceasefire had to be respected before the rest of the plan could be implemented.

"But the first point has not yet been fulfilled, so we cannot speak about the other points," he said.

"If (Ukrainian forces) are withdrawn, it will be done simultaneously with the Russian troop withdrawal."

The nine-point Minsk plan is meant to reinforce a truce forged on September 5 in a bid to stem fighting that has claimed nearly 3,000 lives since April and threatened Ukraine's very survival.

Nato's top commander General Philip Breedlove said on Saturday the continued clashes had shown it was a ceasefire "in name only" and accused Russia of keeping soldiers on Ukrainian soil to bolster the insurgents.

## IS closes in on Syria Kurd town

Thousands flee to Turkey; Syria opposition asks West for air strikes

AFP, Suruc

Islamic State militants closed in on Syria's third-largest Kurdish town yesterday as tens of thousands fled in terror across the border into Turkey fearing massacre.

The UN refugee agency said as many as 70,000 Syrian Kurds had poured into Turkey since guards cut barbed wire to open the border on Friday. UNHCR said it feared the massive influx of refugees would only grow.

Kurdish fighters in the area, backed by reinforcements from Turkey, are battling to hold off the jihadists' advance on the strategic border town of Ain al-Arab, known as Kobane by the Kurds.

The IS group has seized large parts of Iraq and Syria, declaring a "caliphate", imposing its harsh interpretation of Islamic law and committing widespread atrocities including beheadings and crucifixions.

Local officials have warned of potential massacres should IS extremists take control of further territory in Kurdish parts of Syria, and have pleaded for an international intervention.

The Syrian opposition National Coalition has urged foreign air strikes to "stop mass atrocities" if IS advances into Ain al-Arab.

But despite promises by Washington to expand its air campaign against IS in Iraq to Syria, there were no signs yet of US strikes in the country.

IS fighters have been advancing on Ain al-Arab since late Tuesday, hoping to seize it and cement their control over a large part of Syria's northern border with Turkey.

Jihadist fighters were within just 10 kilometres of Ain al-Arab, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitoring group, said yesterday.

The jihadists have captured more than 60 villages around Ain al-Arab over the past five days, and some 300 Kurdish fighters have entered Syria from Turkey to reinforce the Syrian Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) fighting IS, the Observatory said.

Washington has organised a coalition of more than 40 countries to support its campaign against the jihadists. US warplanes have so far launched 183 air strikes targeting IS vehicles, checkpoints and outposts across Iraq.



Marches make their way across Central Park South during the People's Climate March in New York, yesterday. Inset, Actor Leonardo DiCaprio and former US Vice President and environmental activist Al Gore (2nd from left), New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio and UN chief Ban Ki-Moon participates in the March in New York City. Activists mobilised in cities across the globe yesterday for marches against climate change.

PHOTO: AFP



#MomentForAction

## 'Stick to 2C or face mayhem'

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

World leaders must commit themselves to holding current rises in global temperatures to 2C. That is the stark message of experts and campaigners in the runup to the United Nations climate summit that will be held in New York later this week.

They say that 2C is the maximum temperature increase that the world can tolerate without causing environmental mayhem, and they insist that politicians attending the meeting, including Barack Obama and David Cameron, must agree to that upper limit.

If Obama and the others decide that 2C has to be the limit, then negotiators will subsequently find it so much easier to hammer out a framework for curtailing carbon dioxide emissions over the next year, said Nicholas Stern, the British economist and climate expert who will be attending the meeting.

The importance of setting an upper

temperature limit is also backed by Archbishop Desmond Tutu, writing in the Observer.

The meeting in New York is not part of the United Nations' official climate negotiating process. Instead it has been called by UN secretary-general Ban Ki-moon to kickstart the full-scale carbon emission negotiations that are scheduled to be held in 2015. These are



intended to culminate in official talks in Paris next year when it is hoped that a framework will be hammered out for limiting carbon emissions over the following three decades.

Scientists say that humans have now poured around 1,950bn tonnes of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere – by burning fossil fuels – over the last 200 years. If that total reaches 3,670bn

tonnes, they add, it will be hard to avoid a 2C rise in global temperatures and that would trigger a host of devastating changes to the climate. These would include major rises in sea levels, the melting of ice-caps, droughts in Africa, America and Asia, storms and ocean acidification.

The trouble is that, at present rates of fossil fuel consumption, that 3,670bn-tonne limit will be reached in less than three decades. The aim of the New York meeting – which will be marked by a people's climate march in several cities – is to give new impetus to climate change negotiations which have stalled over the past two or three years.

Observers at the meeting will look for a strong lead from Obama. According to Stern, it is critically important that the US president announce his commitment to limit global temperatures to a rise of no more than 2C. It is also hoped that the Chinese leadership will play a more active role in talks, he added.

## Israel to join Cairo truce talks tomorrow

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel yesterday said it would send a delegation to attend indirect Gaza truce talks with Hamas in Cairo next week, although a minister said they would likely achieve nothing.

Confirmation that Israel would return to the Egyptian capital tomorrow to resume negotiations on cementing an August 26 ceasefire agreement which halted 50 days of bloodshed in Gaza, came from a senior Israeli official.

The negotiations are to tackle a number of unresolved issues including a Palestinian demand for a seaport and airport in Gaza, and Israel's demand for militants in the territory to disarm.



Protestors march with placards reading "enough! Don't turn our schools to Imam Hatips" at Kadikoy in Istanbul. In recent months, parents have demonstrated outside of schools in Turkey which have been turned into Imam Hatips – schools specialising in religious education combined with a modern curriculum. Some 200 people have demonstrated against the transformation of a mainstream school into an Imam Hatip in Istanbul's secular Kadikoy district.

## Lanka ruling party suffers blow at polls

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapakse suffered a political blow yesterday when his ruling party's popularity dropped in a local election seen as a gauge for snap presidential polls.

Although Rajapakse's United People's Freedom Alliance (UPFA) won the election in the island's southeastern province, its popularity plummeted by up to 22.98 percentage points from the last polls there in 2009, results showed.

The UPFA secured 19 out of the 34 seats in the election for the Uva provincial council held on Saturday, winning 48.79 percent of the overall vote, according to results released by the Department of Elections.

The main opposition, the United National Party, almost doubled its vote in the district while the Marxist JVP or People's Liberation Front also made gains.

The election was seen as a crucial test of whether Rajapakse has enough support to call snap presidential polls for January, when candidates need more than 50 percent of the vote to win. The province was previously considered a UPFA stronghold.

Political analyst Victor Ivan said the results were a setback for Rajapakse, who personally campaigned in Uva to shore up his party's vote – only to oversee its worst decline since he came to power in 2005.

In previous local polls Rajapakse, who has consolidated his power since 2005, has taken advantage of his popularity among the Sinhalese majority for crushing Tamil rebels and ending the 37-year-long separatist war in 2009.

## NEWS IN brief

### German MH17 victims families to sue Ukraine

AFP, Berlin

Relatives of German victims of downed Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 plan to sue Ukraine and its president for criminal negligence for not closing the country's airspace, a lawyer said yesterday.

The lawsuit will be filed before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

The Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 exploded over insurgent-held east Ukraine on July 17, killing all 298 on board.

### Nepal's former king suffers heart attack

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's last king, Gyanendra Shah, was in a stable condition in a Kathmandu hospital yesterday after suffering a heart attack, his doctor said.

Gyanendra, 67, was rushed to Kathmandu's Norvic Hospital late Saturday after he complained of chest pain. Doctors said the former king was recovering well and could be discharged as early as tomorrow.

### Kenya marks mall attack anniversary

AFP, Nairobi

Thousands of mourners gathered in Kenya's capital yesterday for emotional commemorations marking a year since Somali Islamist gunmen attacked Nairobi's Westgate shopping mall and massacred at least 67 people. The African nation is on high alert for the anniversary, which comes just weeks after the Shebab's leader and the alleged mastermind of the attack, Godane, was killed in a US air strike.

### Bomb kills two near Egypt foreign ministry

AFP, Cairo

At least two policemen were killed when a bomb exploded near a checkpoint outside the foreign ministry headquarters in Cairo yesterday, officials said, shattering a months-long respite from deadly attacks in the capital. Two lieutenant colonels died and six people were wounded in the explosion.

## Leonard Cohen: Life of an outsider

AFP, New York

Releasing a new album near his 80th birthday, Leonard Cohen cheekily addresses his age in the very first song, intoning, "It's not because I'm old ... I always liked it slow."

The legendary poet and songwriter nonetheless glides confidently through a gamut of themes and styles on the album "Popular Problems," ruminating in his husky and undiminished voice on war, loss and his own spiritual odyssey.

The Canadian-born talent turned 80 yesterday, two days before the release of "Popular Problems." But Cohen said that the timing of his 13th studio album -- his first since 2012 that comes decades after classic songs such as "Hallelujah" and "So Long, Marianne" -- was coincidental.

Cohen, who is concerned about world affairs, has long mourned bloodshed in songs such as the Vietnam War-era "Story of Isaac." He has pleaded for peace in the Middle East but has also defied calls to boycott Israel.

Elsewhere on the new album, Cohen alludes to war and genocide -- and, incongruously, "all my bad reviews" -- and says of them with dark irony, "Lord, it's almost like the blues."

Cohen, who struggled for years with depression, said that he has benefited from the itinerant life of touring.

"Getting back on the road has improved my mood considerably because I was never very good at civilian life," he said at the New York club.

Asked about his plans as an octogenarian, Cohen said, perhaps tongue-in-cheek, that he had long intended to resume smoking at age 80, divulging his craving for a strong Greek or Turkish cigarette.

## India gets first transgender news anchor

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

India's first transgender news anchor has appeared on regional television just months after the country's Supreme Court recognised it as a legal third gender.

Padmini Prakash, 31, worked as a dance instructor and acted in soaps before being recruited to Lotus News in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

She told the Times of India she was disowned by her family when she told them she was transgender and has faced discrimination throughout her life.

But she has won widespread praise since her first broadcast in August. Her popularity with viewers ensured a rapid promotion to be the face of the daily 7:00pm news bulletin.

Campaigners estimate there are hundreds of thousands of transgender people in the country but because they were not legally recognised until earlier this year, they have been ostracised, faced abuse and often been forced into prostitution.

## Sena-BJP ties at crossroads

TNN, Mumbai/new Delhi

Coalition politics in Maharashtra in India as we have known it for the past 25 years could be in for a complete shake-up unless the Shiv Sena and the BJP, allies for more than two decades step back from the brink.

On Saturday, there were signs that both alliances were on the verge of cracking: the BJP rejected the Shiv Sena's fresh offer of 126 seats, sending the alliance, a Sena leader said, "in the ICU".

Shiv Sena chief Uddhav Thackeray yesterday made a final offer of 119 seats to BJP to save the alliance even as he served an ultimatum to its ally.

"We are making last effort to save the alliance," he warned.

According to Shiv Sena's final formula, it will contest 151 seats, BJP 119 while 18 seats will be left for others. The state BJP is keen on its formula of 130 seats for itself, 140 for the Sena and the remaining 18 seats for junior allies.

Hours after Uddhav Thackeray made the announcement, the BJP rejected it and hit out at its ally for using media to convey the "final offer". Reacting to Uddhav's "last effort to save the alliance", the BJP said there is no last formula in an alliance.

Earlier addressing party workers, Uddhav Thackeray admitted to a 'tug of war' in alliance with the BJP and said seat distribution was a complicated affair.



Uddhav Thackeray



Amit Shah

In what was a direct message to the Prime Minister, Uddhav Thackeray reminded Narendra Modi that late Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray had supported him after the Gujarat riots.

Members of the BJP's core committee

in the state were to travel to New Delhi for the party's central parliamentary board meeting, where a call on the alliance may be taken.

"They are throwing crumbs at us," said a senior member of the BJP's parliamentary board. "We are keeping fingers crossed. Things don't look good," said another member whose views will have a crucial bearing on the decision the board takes.

Sources said the BJP had two options: one, they could take a decision on terminating the alliance on their own, and two, they could give another, final ultimatum to the Sena, saying if it did not respond in, say, 12 hours, the party would be forced to draw its own conclusions.

State BJP leaders have been privately asking Thackeray of being "adamant".

"We had several rounds of talks with the Sena. Even senior central leaders stepped in to resolve the dispute, but the Sena is adamant. Under such circumstances, we may have no option but to terminate the alliance in a day or two," a senior BJP leader told ToI.

A BJP leader said that if ties with the Sena are snapped, the BJP will contest 241 out of the 288 seats, giving the remaining 47 seats to the smaller allies.

Afghan presidential candidates Abdullah Abdullah and Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai shake hands after signing a power-sharing agreement at the Presidential Palace in Kabul, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP