



Ukrainians flee

A woman sees off her acquaintances who have boarded a bus to escape a military conflict in Debaltseve, Ukraine, on Wednesday. The European Union's foreign policy chief supported a call for a temporary truce in the town to allow for the evacuation of civilians. SERGEY POLEZHAKA / REUTERS

UNITED KINGDOM

Suppressing IS seems 'more realistic than destroying it'

By REUTERS in London

Containing Islamic State may be a more realistic strategy than defeating it, a committee of British lawmakers said, calling on Britain to play a greater role in the fight against the extremist group in Iraq and Syria.

Britain has so far taken part in US-led airstrikes against the militants in Iraq and Syria, but not Syria. It has also provided some equipment and training for Kurdish forces.

Parliament's defense committee said in a report released on Thursday that these actions were "strikingly modest", with on average less

than one airstrike a day, and said it was "surprised and deeply concerned" Britain was not doing more.

The Iraqi security forces are weak, the committee said, while the country's communities are divided.

"There is a significant gap between the rhetoric of Britain and its partners, and the reality of the campaign on the ground. ... It will be very difficult to destroy the group," the report said.

"Given the deep polarization and structural weaknesses of the Iraqi state, we wonder whether containment and suppression of the group

would not be a more realistic goal than total elimination."

IS is a breakaway al-Qaida group that declared an Islamic caliphate across parts of Syria and Iraq in summer. It has killed thousands in what the United Nations has called a reign of terror. On Tuesday, the group released a video showing a captured Jordanian pilot being burned alive.

The committee said that it was not calling for combat troops to be deployed, a move the government has ruled out, but said Britain should meet a request from the Iraqi army to provide training to counter improvised explosive devices

and also help with mission planning and tactics.

It also criticized officials for failing to provide a clear idea of Britain's objectives or strategy in Iraq and called on the government to "radically" increase its defense and diplomatic engagement with regional powers such as Turkey and Saudi Arabia.

"We must clearly acknowledge the previous failures in Iraq and reform our approach. But that does not mean lurching to doing nothing," said committee chairman Rory Stewart, a lawmaker from Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservative Party.

TERRORISM

Russia seeks support to halt ransom money

Moscow also wants flights to and from militant-held area in Iraq and Syria stopped

By AGENCIES in United Nations

Russia is pressing for adoption of a new UN resolution aimed at preventing terrorists from collecting ransom payments or money from the illegal sale of oil or antiquities.

Alexey Zaytsev, spokesman for Russia's UN Mission, said on Wednesday, "We are preparing it and we hope that it will be adopted in the next few days."

The Security Council passed a resolution in January 2014 calling on the 193 UN member states to prevent terrorists from benefiting directly or indirectly from ransom payments and a presidential statement in July 2014 reminding all countries that buying illegally obtained oil violates UN sanctions.

Diplomats said the Russian draft includes specific measures to squeeze the finances of terrorist groups including Islamic State from ransom, oil and antiquities. They spoke on condition of anonymity and did not provide details of the measures because the negotiations have been private.

China's UN Ambassador Liu

Jieyi, the current council president, said the proposed resolution is being discussed with the four other veto-wielding permanent council members — China, the United States, Britain and France. It must then be given to the 10 elected council members.

"It's a very important issue," Liu said. "We are working on it. It looks that we may get there."

In November, a UN panel of experts monitoring al-Qaida recommended new sanctions that would authorize the seizure of tanker trucks carrying oil from areas in Syria and Iraq controlled by Islamic State.

It also recommended that the UN Security Council orders a worldwide moratorium on the trading of antiquities from Syria and Iraq — and orders all countries to deny aircraft permission to land or take off if they are coming from or going to territory held by the two terrorist groups.

'Harsh' war

The experts said that Islamic State received between \$35 million and \$45 million in ransom payments in 2014 — and that kidnapping for ransom continues to grow.

Many governments do pay ransom but the US, Britain, Japan and others have refused, often leading to the deaths of their hostages.

Jordan's king vowed to wage a "harsh" war against Islamic

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Liu Jieyi, China's UN ambassador

\$35-45 billion

ransom payments Islamic State extremists received in 2014

State after the militants burned a captive Jordanian pilot in a cage and released a video of the killing.

But the United Arab Emirates has withdrawn troops from the international coalition campaign against IS fighters, US officials said on Wednesday.

The officials, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the UAE had suspended its participation in the air campaign because of concern for pilots' safety after the death of the Jordanian pilot.

AP—XINHUA—REUTERS

Shandong report

Governor: Emphasis now on quality growth

By JU CHUANJIANG and WANG QIAN



Shandong's provincial government has lowered its GDP target and shifted its focus to the quality of growth, said Guo Shuqing, governor of the eastern coastal province.

"What we currently need is not rapid GDP growth, but optimization of the economic structure and promotion of better economic quality," Guo said in his government work report to the provincial People's Congress and People's Political Consultative Conference meetings held from Jan 26 to Feb 1.

Guo said Shandong's GDP last year totaled 5.94 trillion yuan (\$949.2 billion), an increase of 8.7 percent from 2013 and 0.3 percentage points short of the 2014 target.

"This year's GDP growth is expected to reach 8.5 percent. The rate, slightly lower than the actual growth last year, has been set deliberately," he said.

"The Chinese economy has entered a period of slower, more sustainable growth driven by consumer demand, which has become known as 'the new normal'. By setting lower GDP growth targets, local governments can invest more in projects that will benefit the people in the long run instead of those bringing returns mostly in the short term," he explained.

The governor also said the government will prioritize improvements in the quality of life and enable more people to share in the fruits of economic growth by further reforming the healthcare system and increasing public services.

The provincial government hopes to help 1.2 million rural

“By setting lower GDP growth targets, local governments can invest more in projects that will benefit the people in the long run.”

Guo Shuqing, governor of Shandong

laborers find jobs in cities and offer 1 million new vacancies to urban residents. The per capita disposable income of its urban residents and the net income of rural people will increase by 9 and 10 percent respectively this year, Guo predicted.

Shandong also took measures to improve air and water quality. Last year the province became the first in China to establish a compensation incentive based on air quality.

Under the plan, cities that have worsening air quality have to pay compensation to the provincial government

every month, which in turn is given to cities where air quality improves.

According to the provincial environmental protection bureau, Shandong handed out 213 million yuan to its 17 cities last year. The money was used to help further improve air quality.

The province's annual air quality assessment showed that the average PM2.5 reading in Shandong was 82 micrograms per cubic meter last year, a 16.3 percent decrease over the previous year. It had about 199 "blue-sky" days — with visibility of more than 10 kilometers — last year, 17.8 days more than in 2013.

A province famed for its open economy, ports and trade businesses, Shandong will also increase trade with more emerging markets through new routes. It is expected to realize 6 percent growth in foreign trade this year.

The provincial government will also embrace the national strategy to build the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st-Century Maritime Silk Road by boosting economic cooperation with countries along the modern-day trade routes.

Statistics from the provincial bureau of commerce show that the province's foreign trade value reached \$277.1 billion in 2014, a year-on-year increase of 4 percent and 0.6 percentage points higher than the national average.

Its trade with 32 countries along the maritime Silk Road and 47 countries along the overland Silk Road rose by 7.3 percent and 4 percent respectively.

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Grand ceremony for Confucius has been held in his hometown Qufu every year for people to memorialize China's greatest sage.

JU CHUANJIANG / CHINA DAILY

Ancient culture offers renewal

By ZHAO RUIXUE zhaoruixue@chinadaily.com.cn

Shandong Governor Guo Shuqing said cultural resources in the province should be better developed and used to offer new strength for local growth.

"Shandong is one of the birthplaces of the Chinese civilization," Guo said in his work report to this year's Shandong People's Congress that wrapped up on Feb 1.

"Confucianism and other philosophies developed by ancient local sages such as Mo-Tzu, Chuang-Tzu, Sun-Tzu, Guan-Tzu and Xun-Tzu have played important roles in Chinese history and had a great influence on world civilization," said the governor.

More work should be done to keep and develop the essence of the local Qilu culture, he added.

As the home of the Qi and Lu states at the Spring Autumn (770-476 BC) and Warring States (476-221 BC) periods, Shandong is also called Qilu.

In his report, Guo used around 2,000 words to describe the Qilu culture. The governor said its essence lies in commerce, science and patriotism, as well as the harmony between humans and nature.

"We should bear environmental protection in mind and develop a recycling economy to maintain sustainable development," said Guo.

This year, Shandong will implement a program called "Rural Memory" to protect cultural relics in the countryside including villages that have survived for hundreds of years and ancient farming tools.

"This program aims to con-

serve both intangible culture and the tangible landscape amid rapid urbanization to provide people a place to experience the ancient essence," said Xie Zhixiu, head of the cultural relics bureau of Shandong.

Governor Guo stressed that culture should be integrated into economic development.

"Cultural brands with Qilu characteristics should be cultivated," said Guo.

A program called "Honest Lushang" is being promoted among local enterprises using the ancient name for businesspeople from Shandong.

The program will appraise enterprises with new criteria including assessments on product quality, environmental protection, intellectual property and safe production.

"The program which encourages businesspeople to be honest will enhance the

overall competitiveness of local enterprises," said Qin Yufeng, chairman of Dong'e Ejiao Co Ltd, the nation's largest producer of ejiao, a medicine made from donkey hide.

The governor also expressed his support for the 22nd International Congress of Historical Sciences.

The congress will be held in Jinan, capital city of Shandong, from Aug 23 to 29 this year, the first time it will be held in Asia.

According to the event's organizing committee, more than 2,000 historians from about 100 countries and regions will attend the congress.

"The event will be a good opportunity to showcase Chinese civilization and help Chinese culture go global," said Zhang Rong, president of Shandong University.