

STOLEN PICASSO PAINTING RECOVERED IN ISTANBUL



Police in Istanbul have recovered a stolen Pablo Picasso painting in an undercover sting operation, they said Saturday. The recovery of 'Woman Dressing her Hair', a 1940 oil on canvas painting, saw undercover officers negotiate with the sellers over a month before meeting them in a cafe on Friday and arresting two men. The artwork was recovered at the same time. Acting as a potential buyer, police contacted the suspects, who offered the painting for \$8 million, a police source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said. >>>**CULTURE AND ART**

FAMILIES OF ISTANBUL VICTIMS OFFERED FREE HOLIDAYS



The mayor of a Mediterranean resort in Turkey has offered free holidays for life to the families of the German victims of the terror attack in Istanbul. In a meeting between Mustafa Gul and Martin Vetter, Germany's consul in Antalya, Gul said relatives of the 11 victims could have yearly one-week holidays in Kemer for the rest of their lives, according to an Anadolu Agency correspondent. The town, which sits on the Gulf of Antalya surrounded by sandy beaches, relies heavily on tourists from Germany, the Netherlands and Russia. >>>**TURKEY**

ANTIQUATED CAUCUS METHOD FEATURED IN CHOOSING US PRESIDENT



In two days, Iowa will decide which Republican and Democrat candidates will be the first to win a statewide election in America's staggered presidential nomination cycle. But voters will not take to a traditional voting booth as they would in a primary or other major elections. They will instead participate in caucuses across Iowa. Rather than filling out ballots in narrow curtained booths, caucus voters participate in a time-intensive process from the 1800s where they flock to caucus sites at appointed times. >>>**POLITICS**

WEATHER / ANKARA

Saturday
CLOUDY
1°C

Sunday
CLOUDY
6°C



ANADOLU POST

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Syrian opposition likely to take part in Geneva talks

UN envoy Staffan de Mistura says 'good reason' to believe opposition will join peace negotiations

The Geneva peace talks on Syria that began Friday are likely to be joined by the opposition delegation on Sunday, the UN's envoy said.

Staffan de Mistura said there was "good reason to believe" the High Negotiations Committee (HNC) had been "very seriously" considering participating.

The Saudi-backed opposition group failed to take part Friday due to a lack of assurances from the UN on the ending of airstrikes by the Syrian regime and Russian forces and the lifting of sieges.

"On probably Sunday we actually start the discussion with them in order to progress intra-Syria talks," de Mistura said.

He added that the UN team considered Monday an "important day to reassess the situation".

Speaking at a news conference following talks with delegates representing President Bashar al-Assad's government, de Mistura said a cease-fire, which would allow humanitarian aid to access besieged towns, was "obviously something that we are aiming at".

He added: "For us it is very important to have an indication about where we are on the presence of the HNC."

Noting the committee's concerns, he said UN officials had been "strongly suggesting to them [that] the best way actually to discuss the implementation of such improvements has to be done here with us."

The Geneva conference aims to focus on setting up an interim government, forming a constitution and staging elections within two years.



The initial priorities are to establish a cease-fire, supply humanitarian aid and tackle Daesh.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry's director general for the Middle East, Can Dizdar, will be in Geneva to follow the negotiations.

The conflict has been raging since early 2011 and has led to the deaths of more than 250,000 people and

driven more than 10 million from their homes, according to the UN. It also led to the rise of Daesh, which now controls large parts of Syria and Iraq, and the subsequent formation of a U.S.-led coalition to tackle the group in both countries.

>>>**MORE DETAILS**

Ten dead as refugee boat sinks off western Turkey

Five children among dead from Afghanistan, Myanmar, Syria



Ten people, including five children, drowned off Turkey's western coast Saturday, the Turkish Coast Guard said, in what is the latest loss of refugees in the region.

Their boat was heading for Lesbos, one of the main Greek islands located just a few kilometers (miles) off Turkey's Aegean coastline. Among the casualties were na-

tionals of Afghanistan, Myanmar and Syria. According to the coast guard, their vessel set off from near Bademli, a village in Canakkale province, before running into trouble during the crossing and sinking. A patrol was able to save 43 refugees.

Turkey's Aegean provinces - Canakkale, Balikesir, Izmir, Mugla and Aydin - are prime spots for refugees leaving Turkey for the EU, with many Greek islands lying within sight of the Turkish coast. Over the past year, hundreds of

thousands have made short but perilous journeys in a bid to reach northern and western Europe in search for a better life.

Of the more than 1.1 million refugees who arrived in the EU last year, more than 850,000 arrived by sea in Greece from Turkey, according to the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Over the course of the year, 805 people died in the Aegean.

In the first month of 2016, more than 52,000 people arrived by sea in Greece and 218 have died off the Turkish coast, the IOM said.

>>>**MORE DETAILS**

Turkish president calls opposition 'PKK servants'

Hunger-striking lawmakers serve cause of terrorists, Recep Tayyip Erdogan



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday accused hunger-striking opposition lawmakers of acting like the "servants" of PKK terrorists.

Three Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) deputies have been on hunger strike in the Interior Ministry building since Wednesday in a protest against the alleged lack of am-

bulances in Cizre, southeast Turkey, where a military curfew has been in place since mid-December. Rejecting the claims, Erdogan told reporters: "They can hold a hunger strike or do any [kind of protest]. The place for all this is the parliament. The parliament is the venue for such [complaints]. They are currently acting like servants of the

terrorist organization."

Cizre is one of the towns at the center of counter-terrorism operations as security forces attempt to dislodge PKK terrorists.

Erdogan said ambulances are stationed in secure zones within 1,000 meters (1,100 yards) of the scene of fighting and claimed the terrorist organization PKK refused to take the injured to the ambulances, instead calling for medical teams to come into areas where they would be at risk.

"As you know, similar things happened before," the president said. "An ambulance driver was martyred. Then a nurse and a doctor were wounded."

Last September, an ambulance

driver was killed and paramedics kidnapped while trying to help wounded security personnel during a terrorist attack in Sirkak, the province where Cizre is located.

Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu previously rejected the ambulance claims, saying that security forces and medical teams were striving to serve the local population despite the terrorist organization PKK shelling ambulances. The PKK - also considered a terrorist organization by the U.S. and the EU - resumed its 30-year armed campaign against the Turkish state in late July 2015. Since then, more than 240 members of the security forces have been martyred. >>>**MORE DETAILS**

Italy fails to assure on Turkey's refugee aid package

Rome waiting for answers from EU Commission before approving contribution to 3 billion euro deal

Prime Minister Matteo Renzi on Friday raised concerns about Italy's commitment to help fund the EU's 3 billion euro (\$3.25 billion) aid package for Turkey during a trip to Berlin.

Following talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Renzi said Italy was "willing to do its part" to support the plan to help Turkey host 2.5 million Syrians but would first wait for a response from the European Commission to questions about Rome's contribution. He told a news conference that Italy had agreed to the deal in November but was "waiting for answers from our friends at the European Commission."

The EU and Turkey agreed on a plan on Nov. 29 to address the refugee crisis that saw more than a million refugees arrive in the EU last year, with the EU promising financial aid to improve the living conditions of refugees.



However, Italy is yet to approve its contribution amid a row with the commission over spending for refugees while Italy's 2016 budget is under review. Merkel has warned about the influx of refugees and urged swift progress on the implementation of the EU-Turkey plan.

"It needs to be urgently implemented, we need progress," she said. "Nearly 2,000 migrants are coming each day through the Western Balkan route. For winter, this is a high number." The chancellor praised recent measures by Turkey, such as opening the labor

market to Syrian refugees and introducing visas for Syrian nationals.

She called on EU partners to accept refugees through quotas. Germany received a record 1.1 million refugees in 2015 and the numbers have put a strain on local authorities, triggering anti-refugee sentiments and increasing pressure on Merkel ahead of state elections in March.

Merkel has so far defended her open-door policy and has said a solution to the crisis can only be achieved by addressing the root causes through cooperation with Turkey. >>>**MORE DETAILS**

Soldier dies from wounds in Turkey's southeast

Soldier injured in counter-terrorism operation in Sur, Diyarbakir province, military says



A Turkish soldier was martyred in southeast Turkey on Friday, the military said in a statement.

The Turkish General Staff said the soldier had been heavily wounded in an attack by PKK terrorists in Sur, Diyarbakir province, and later died in hos-

pital. In another development, Diyarbakir security forces said police seized more than 150

grenades, 200 rockets, 57 long-barreled weapons and 6,000 cartridges and defused 13 improvised explosive devices in raids at separate addresses.

Fighting between security forces and the terrorist organization PKK in Sur peaked over the last month, with the military reporting more than 120 PKK deaths.

The PKK - considered a terrorist organization by Turkey, the U.S. and EU - resumed its 30-year armed campaign against the Turkish state in last July. Since then, more than 240 members of the security forces have been martyred and thousands of PKK terrorists killed in operations across Turkey and northern Iraq. >>>**MORE DETAILS**

Istanbul police launch raids across city

Operation Yeditepe Huzur targeting organized crime, terrorism



Police in Istanbul launched a massive operation on Friday night targeting terrorism, drugs, smuggling and or-

ganized crime. Police sources said nearly 5,000 officers were involved in Operation Yeditepe

Huzur (Seven Hill Peace, a reference to the hills the city was originally established on). The operation was backed by helicopters and involved raids on predetermined addresses throughout the night. >>>**MORE DETAILS**