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REJECTION HIGHLIGHTS HOLE IN GENEVA DEAL

Pro-Russian militants snub Ukraine agreement

Separatist leader refuses to lay down arms, vacate seized buildings until Kiev gov't resigns

DONETSK – The leader of a group of pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine said he would ignore the international agreement reached in Geneva on Thursday to de-escalate the crisis in the country because his representatives were not at the talks.

The agreement, announced by the United States, Russia, the European Union (EU) and Ukraine, called for all protesters to vacate the buildings they have occupied and lay down their arms.

But Mr Denis Pushilin, the leader of a group that seized government buildings in Donetsk, a regional capital in the east, and declared an independent People's Republic of Donetsk that no nation has recognised, told reporters yesterday that his followers would not comply until the interim government in Kiev resigned. He repeated his group's demand for a referendum on the region's future, similar to the one that preceded the annexation of Crimea by Russia last month.

Mr Pushilin's group is only one of many groups of pro-Russian militants that have seized buildings and arms in the east and it was not immediately clear whether others would follow his line. But his rejection highlighted a critical hole in the Geneva agreement.

"Russia did not sign anything for us," Mr Pushilin said at a news conference in Donetsk.

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“We are not leaving the building, regardless of what statements are made, because we know what is the real situation in the country and we will not leave until our commander tells us to.”

Anatoly
ONE OF THE ARMED SEPARATISTS WHO HAVE TAKEN OVER POLICE HEADQUARTERS IN SLOVYANSK



PHOTO: REUTERS

CAPTAIN OF SUNKEN FERRY ARRESTED Mr Lee Jun-seok, the captain of the South Korean ferry Sewol which capsized on Wednesday, arriving at a court in Mokpo yesterday. The South Korean authorities arrested Mr Lee yesterday, while arrest warrants were issued for the third mate and another crew member on criminal charges of deserting their ship and passengers. 'Mr Lee temporarily left the steering command to his third shipmate,' said senior investigator Park Jae-uk. 'We are investigating where exactly he was at the time.' The captain returned to the bridge as soon as the ship began tilting, he added. **HOT NEWS • 2**

Spike in shops that make false claims to draw customers

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SINGAPORE – Drawn to the heavily-discounted price for a television set at a roadshow promotion, Ms Annabel Choi, 36, promptly put down a deposit for what she was told was limited stock.

Just three days before she was to receive her purchase, however, a salesperson from the well-known electronics store in Kallang called to say the model she had ordered was no longer available, even though the company had collected the balance payment from her two weeks earlier.

The communications executive was offered a newer model for an extra S\$300; she negotiated it down to S\$100.

Businesses engaging in such “false

claims” practices — not fulfilling orders for goods and services they initially promised were available, or asking for additional payments later — are on a sharp rise, triggering the concerns of a consumer watchdog.

In only one year, complaints of such cases surged nearly ten-fold, from five in 2012 to 48 last year, said the Consumers Association of Singapore (CASE). The upward trend looks set to continue — 29 cases were reported in the first three months of this year alone.

“False claims” are categorised as an unfair practice under the Consumer Protection (Fair Trading) Act.

Once rampant only in the beauty industry — asking customers who have signed up for packages to make top-ups for certain treatments — it appears such unethical sales tactics have

been creeping into other industries, such as electronics, furniture, automobiles and travel, in recent years.

CASE executive director Seah Seng Choon attributed the increase to better awareness of consumer protection laws. He added that CASE has helped some affected consumers get refunds.

“Consumers should make sure to put down in writing that the deposit was paid and that the shop would reserve the item for them. They should not pay the full amount before the item has been delivered,” Mr Seah said.

Last year, there were four cases in the electrical and electronics industry, for example, up from one case in 2012. Most of these involved neighbourhood shops, said CASE.

Businesses in the electrical and

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