

Nato warns of long war

It could last years, says Stoltenberg as Russia steps up assault

KYIV: The war in Ukraine could last for years, the head of Nato said, as Russia stepped up its assaults after the European Union recommended that Kyiv become a candidate to join the bloc.

Jens Stoltenberg said the supply of state-of-the-art weaponry to Ukraine would boost the chance of freeing its eastern region of Donbas from Russian control, Germany's *Bild am Sonntag* newspaper said.

"We must prepare for the fact that it could take years. We must not let up in supporting Ukraine," Stoltenberg, the secretary-general of the military alliance, was quoted as saying.

"We must not weaken in our support of Ukraine, even if the costs are high – not only in terms of military support but also because of rising energy and food prices."

He told *Bild* that food and fuel costs are nothing compared to the one paid daily by Ukrainians on the frontline, warning "we would have to pay a greater price" if Russian President Vladimir Putin were to achieve Moscow's goals in Ukraine.

The Nato chief has in the past week ramped up calls for alliance members to back Ukraine in its fight against Russia's invasion.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, who visited Kyiv on Friday, also spoke of a need to prepare for a



Fiery farewell: Soldiers holding flares while attending the funeral of activist and soldier Roman Ratushnyi in Kyiv. Ratushnyi died in a battle near Izium, where Russian and Ukrainian troops are fighting. — AP

long war.

This meant ensuring "Ukraine receives weapons, equipment, ammunition and training more rapidly than the invader", Johnson wrote in an opinion piece in

London's *Sunday Times*.

"Time is the vital factor," he wrote. "Everything will depend on whether Ukraine can strengthen its ability to defend faster than Russia can renew its capacity to attack."

Ukraine received a significant boost on Friday when the European Commission recommended it for candidate status, a decision EU nations are expected to endorse at a summit this week. — Agencies