

Assad's Fate Should be Removed from Current Syrian Talks Agenda: Moscow

MOSCOW - A senior Russian diplomat said Monday that discussions about the fate of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad should be removed from the current agenda of peace negotiations.

"Let us now put this topic off and let the Syrian parties determine when and on what basis this issue should be raised again," Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov told the RIA Novosti news agency.

Ryabkov denied that there is any common



stance between Moscow and Washington regarding the fate of Assad. Media reports last week said that Moscow and Washington had reached an agreement on the ouster of Assad.

Russian officials have repeatedly refused to exclude Assad from his country's process of political settlement, saying Syrians themselves should decide the future of their country, while Washington and some of its allies have insisted on Assad's departure. Meanwhile, Ryabkov stressed the significance of coordination with the United States in fighting terrorists in Syria, saying that the two sides are working on a daily basis in specifying and expanding the lists of terrorists. (Xinhua)

European Commission Presents Nuclear Illustrative Program

BRUSSELS - The European Commission on Monday presented the nuclear illustrative program, focusing on investments related to post-Fukushima safety upgrades and to the safe operation of existing nuclear power facilities.

In addition, the program highlights the estimated financing needs related to nuclear power plants' decommissioning and to the management of radioactive waste and spent fuel. It also provides a basis for

discussion and aimed to include all stakeholders, especially civil society, in the discussion on nuclear energy trends and related investments for the period up to 2050, said a press release. While European Union (EU) member states are free to decide their energy mix, the Energy Union Strategy and the European Energy Security Strategy stresses that member states who decide to use nuclear energy in their own energy mix to apply the highest

standards of safety, security, waste management and non-proliferation as well as diversify nuclear fuel supplies. "Based on member states input, the nuclear illustrative program of the Commission provides a useful photograph of the whole life-cycle of nuclear power in Europe: from the front-end of fuel fabrication, to safety upgrades and long-term operations, to the back-end of the cycle, including waste management and decommission-

ing," said Maros Sefcovic, European Commission Vice-President responsible for energy union. "Five years after the accident at Fukushima Dai-ichi, Europe has learnt the lessons. The nuclear illustrative program brings together for the first time an overview of all investment aspects of nuclear energy in a single document," added Miguel Arias Canete, European Commissioner for Climate Action and Energy. (Xinhua)

Ukraine Faces Possible Power Reshuffle, but no Major Political Shifts

KIEV - Ukraine is facing its first major power reshuffle in two years, as both the government and the parliament are moving towards dissolution due to internal differences about the country's future. Although some observers fear a power change may deepen the country's crisis, the situation in general is under control and the possible overhaul is not expected to break the overall balance of power, and thus will not alter the country's political land-

scape. GOVERNMENT DISSOLUTION REMAINS UNCERTAIN Although the parliament failed to oust Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenyuk and his government in a no-confidence motion in February, Yatsenyuk's support shrank in March for a lack of effort to settle the turmoil in the country. The government was also accused of being unable to quickly form a new ruling coalition to keep the state institutions functioning... (More on P4)...(15)

Landmines Still Kill at Least 10 People Every Day Around World: UN Official

GENEVA - Landmines kill at least 10 people every day around the world and 40 percent of these casualties are children, a UN official has said.

Bruno Donat, chief of the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) Geneva office, made the remarks ahead of the 11th International Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action.

The UN official added that in 2015, some 64 square km of land were cleared, which is equivalent to 16,000 football pitches.

The United Nations' In-

ternational Day for Mine Awareness and Assistance in Mine Action is observed on April 4 each year, the aim of which is to raise awareness about landmines and progress toward their eradication.

This year's theme for the commemoration of the day is "Mine action is humanitarian action."

Mine action saves lives and ensures that landmines and explosive hazards in war-torn areas are found and destroyed, making possible the delivery of humanitarian assistance so... (More on P4)...(16)

First 32 Syrians Arrive in Germany under EU-Turkey Migration Deal

BERLIN - Under a migration deal between the European Union (EU) and Turkey, a total of 32 Syrian refugees arrived on two separate airlines on Monday at Hanover Airport, Germany.

The six Syrian families, who had been selected by UN refugee agency UNHCR as particularly needy, were allowed to travel legally on a direct route from Istanbul to Germany.

The first 16 refugees arrived at noon at the Friedland shelter near the German city of Goettingen, and then they will be res-



tled in cities and towns in the German state of Lower Saxony. The asylum-seekers were received by police as well as staff of German Federal Agency for Tech-

nical Relief and the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF). The migration deal between EU and Turkey stipulates all refugees

and migrants who reach Greece from Turkey illegally March 20 onwards can be returned forcibly to Turkey. Meanwhile, EU will... (More on P4)...(17)

Jordan Says to Increase Cooperation with Iraq

AMMAN - Jordanian Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour on Monday stressed on the strategic ties with Iraq, saying there is a large room for increased collaboration in various areas.

At a meeting with a delegation of Iraqi officials and businessmen, the Jordanian prime minister said Jordan's ties with Iraq are solid and built on respect. "Jordan has been always keen to strengthen its ties with Iraq. We support Iraq and its people in their choices," said Ensour.

The prime minister said Jordan does not interfere in the affairs of its neighboring countries, calling for increased cooperation between the two sides. He said the Jordanian government is willing to increase incentives for Iraqi businessmen to help boost trade between the two countries.

Iraqi lawmakers and officials during the meeting hailed ties with Jordan in various areas, stressing on the importance of following up on recommendations resulting from the meetings of the Jordanian-Iraqi business council that was held in Amman on... (More on P4)...(19)

Russian Sappers Defuse over 120 Bombs Near Syria's Palmyra



MOSCOW - Russian sappers have defused more than 120 bombs and cleared 1.1 km of roads in the outskirts of the Syrian historic city of Palmyra, the Russian Defense Ministry said Monday.

With the help of mine-sweeping equipment and mine detection

dogs, Russian sappers have discovered and extracted improvised explosive devices installed on roads, intersections, roadside buildings and critical infrastructure, the ministry said in a statement.

Two groups of sappers have been deployed in

the weekend to the outskirts of Palmyra, recently liberated by the Syrian army.

Russian President Vladimir Putin and Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu ordered the deployment following the pullout of most Russian troops and specialists from Syria. (Xinhua)

Situation in Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict Zone Remains Tense: Armenia

YEREVAN - The situation on the contact line of the Nagorno-Karabakh region remains tense, the press service of the Armenian Defense Ministry said on Monday. "Being unable to break the resistance of the Armenian side, the Azerbaijani troops attempted to use heavy military vehicles, combat aircraft, including heavy flamethrower system and unmanned aerial vehicle," Armenian Defense Ministry spokesman Artsrun Hovannisian wrote on Facebook... (More on P4)...(20)

Somali Security Forces Arrest 8 Al-Shabaab Suspects

MOGADISHU - At least eight suspects of the militant group Al-Shabaab were arrested over the weekend in the Somali capital Mogadishu. The National Intelligence and Security Agency (NISA) spokesman Abdikamil Mo'allim Shukri said security forces conducted target operations at special areas including garages in Hodan, Kahda, Wadajir and Yakshid districts in Benadir region after recent terrorist attacks and arrested the suspects. "We recovered weapons... (More on P4)...(21)

Al-Bashir Says Sudan does Not Need Foreign Aid Organizations

NYALA - Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir on Monday said Khartoum does not need aid organizations or what he called "the remnants of food tables that they present." "We say to the World Food Program and others that we don't need you. Find somewhere else with your aid," said al-Bashir when addressing a mass rally at Nyala, the capital city of South Darfur State.

"Take your aid to needy and poor people other than us. Sudan, with its bounties, does not need you. We are the one who aid others,

and it is not likely for the organizations to bring us the remnants of food tables from America and others," he noted.

Hundreds of foreign organizations are operating in the Darfur region that has been suffering from a civil war since 2003, where the conflict has displaced nearly two million people along with thousands of refugees to neighboring Chad.

The UN and other international organizations earlier complained about "significant restrictions" ... (More on P4)...(18)

Kremlin Dimisses Reports Linking Putin to Offshore Deals

MOSCOW - The Kremlin on Monday dismissed reports linking friends and relatives of Russian President Vladimir Putin to offshore deals worth billions of U.S. dollars.

"There are no details, all are based on allegations and speculation," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said, demanding "professional results of the work of the journalistic community."

The International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) on Sunday published some 11.5 million documents leaked from a Panamanian law

firm. It alleged offshore links of prominent figures in many countries, including transactions by people associated with Putin, which was worth 2 billion dollars.

Peskov claimed the main aim of the publication, though mentioning other countries and their leaders, obviously targeted Putin, "especially in the context of upcoming parliamentary election and long-term prospects of presidential election in two years."

An earlier report published on Thursday alleged that a Putin associate had ben... (More on P4)...(22)

Neighbor News

Harsh Iran Reply Awaits Any Terror Move: Rafsanjani

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official says the Islamic Republic stands ready to deliver a crushing response to any terrorist group daring to carry out the slightest of moves against the country. Chairman of Iran's Expediency Council Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani on Monday stressed the importance of maintaining national security to counter the potential infiltration of terrorists. "Iran enjoys very gifted and prepared forces to fight terrorists and they should rest assured that the slightest move against Iran will evoke the strongest of responses," Rafsanjani said. He described countering terrorism as

an important issue for humanity at the current juncture, adding that uprooting terrorism is no mean feat considering the widespread presence of terrorists across the globe. Rafsanjani dubbed as "imperative" a military campaign against terrorists, adding, however, that world leaders must draw up plans for their annihilation. The Iranian official said terrorism represents a major threat for the region in the future, adding, "The countries that had created these groups for certain purposes, are gripped by their crimes and openly express their concern." (PressTV)

China-U.S. Nuclear Security Cooperation Energizes New Type of Major-Country Ties

BEIJING - The fourth and last Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), which concluded over the weekend in Washington, called to the attention the unfinished cause of strengthening the global architecture of nuclear security.

The Nuclear Security Center of Excellence (COE), jointly built by China and the United States in Beijing, has been an important result of cooperation between China and the United States in this regard.

The COE, inaugurated on March 18, is the largest, most advanced and most comprehensively equipped facility for nuclear security exchanges and training in the Asia-Pacific region capable of training 2,000 people a year.

The center, which opened about a month

after Beijing and Washington conducted their first nuclear security dialogue, marks the latest major achievement the two sides have scored not only in the lead-up to the NSS, but also in their overall nuclear security cooperation, an area that has become a new bright spot in bilateral engagement and an illustrative footnote to the new type of major-country relations between China and the United States.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said on Friday during the NSS in Washington that his country will build a network for capacity building on nuclear security, by using the existing platforms, such as the COE, to carry out training of nuclear security professionals, exercises and exchanges regarding nuclear security technologies. (Xinhua)

'We have Done Nothing Wrong', PM Nawaz Sharif's Family Reacts to Leak

ISLAMABAD - After the Sharif family was named in the Panama Papers - one of the biggest leaks in history - Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's son, Hussain Nawaz Sharif, told Geo that his family had done "nothing wrong" as they defended their ownership of offshore companies. The Panama Papers leak, comprising 11.5 million documents from Panama-based law firm Mossack Fonseca, shows how some of the world's most powerful people have secreted away their

money in offshore jurisdictions.

Among those named are three of Nawaz's four children - Maryam, who has been tipped to be his political successor; Hasan and Hussain, with the records showing they owned London real estate through offshore companies administered by the firm.

"Those apartments are ours and those offshore companies are also ours," Hussain said in comments aired by the channel Monday. (Agencies)

Indian PM Returns Home from Three-Nation Tour of Belgium, U.S., KSA

NEW DELHI - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi returned home early Monday morning after a three-nation tour of Belgium, the U.S. and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). His first stop was Brussels where he took part in the India-EU Summit and held talks with Belgian Prime Minister Charles Michel on March 30. From Belgium, Modi flew to the U.S. where he attended the Nuclear Security Summit in Washington, along with U.S. President Barack Obama

and other world leaders, on March 31 and April 1. During the last leg of his tour, the Indian prime minister went to Riyadh and held wide-ranging talks with Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, while both countries signed several pacts. "Thank you Saudi Arabia. Joined several programs during my visit, which will deepen economic & people-to-people ties between our nations," Modi tweeted Sunday night before departing from Riyadh. (Xinhua)