

Russia, China Sticking to Multi-Polar World Order

BEIJING - Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that China and Russia are committed to the promotion of a multi-polar world order through mutual cooperation.

"Multi-polarity is a main global trend. Our countries share an opinion that the formation of a just and rational multi-polar world order will meet the interests of lasting peace and stability on Earth," he said in an interview with Interfax before his visit to Russia on Monday.

The Chinese minister added that a multi-polar world order could lead to the "development of all



countries and offers them a broader chance."

Moscow and Beijing have been working together to "promote the idea of

multi-polarity for years," Wang said, stressing that the two nations are joining efforts so that a broad range of developing coun-

tries and emerging markets could achieve a higher place and role in global affairs. He also pointed to the necessity of boosting

the UN's role and authority in global affairs and implementing reforms in the world body.

"We want the United Na-

tions to bear main responsibility for global peace and security," Wang said, noting, "As to the UN reform, China and Russia think it is necessary to give the vote and decision-making rights at the United Nations to a broader range of developing states, for instance, small and medium-sized countries." Furthermore, Wang stated that China and Russia are cooperating with countries in Africa, the Asia Pacific region and Latin America, and enjoy good relations with regional organizations launched by the developing states. (Press TV)

Neighbor News

Turkmen FM, ICRC Delegation for Central Asia Discuss Cooperation

BISHKEK - Head of the Regional Delegation of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Central Asia, Jacques-Luc Willets was received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan.

During the meeting the sides discussed the current state and issues on diversification of Turkmenistan's cooperation with the ICRC in accordance with the approved plan of cooperation between the Government of Turkmenistan and the International Committee of the Red Cross 2015.

The parties exchanged views on the issues of the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Government

of Turkmenistan and the International Committee of the Red Cross. Parties also paid attention to the process of implementation of international humanitarian law into national legislation. After discussing productivity of the joint work, the sides marked the great achievements of Turkmenistan in the humanitarian sphere, as well as in systemizing visits to the penitentiary establishments. By noting the importance of positive neutrality of Turkmenistan, representatives of the organization expressed a great desire to join the upcoming events to be held in honour of the 20th anniversary of the Neutrality of Turkmenistan. (AKIpress)

Opposition Demands Clarity on Pakistan's Role in Yemen Conflict

ISLAMABAD - Lawmakers are partaking in a joint session of Parliament to discuss Pakistan's role in the escalating conflict in Yemen, a gathering that also marks the return of the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) to the House after a seven-month boycott.

Earlier, Pakistan's National Assembly Speaker Sardar Ayaz Sadiq adjourned the joint session until 5pm after opposition leaders protested the prime minister's absence from what is dubbed as a critical debate on foreign policy. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has joined the proceedings after his engagements with newly-elected Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena, who arrived on an official three-day visit to the country on Sunday.

According to an official

statement from the PM House, Nawaz also held a meeting with senior civil and military officials including the army chief Raheel Sharif, Defence Minister Khawaja Asif, Finance Minister Ishaq Dar and foreign policy advisor to the PM Sartaj Aziz.

Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif last week called for a joint session of Parliament as opposition leaders pushed for an All Parties Conference to debate whether Pakistan will accede to Saudi Arabia's request for ground and air military assistance to counter the Houthi insurgency in Yemen. The government has repeatedly said it has not yet committed sending troops to the conflict area but that it would confront any threat to Saudi Arabia's "territorial integrity". (Monitoring Desk)

Iran Willing to Work with Pakistan on Yemen: Minister

TEHRAN - Iran's interior minister has expressed the Islamic Republic's willingness to resolve regional issues, particularly the crisis in Yemen, in cooperation with Pakistan.

"We are willing to have necessary cooperation with Pakistan in the settlement of regional issues, particularly issues of Yemen," Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said in a Sunday ceremony marking Pakistan's National Day in Tehran, attended by representatives from different countries.

Saudi Arabia's air campaign against Yemen started on March 26 without a UN mandate in a bid to restore power to the country's fugitive former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a

close ally of Riyadh. Rahmani Fazli said that the question of Yemen is an internal issue which should be addressed through political channels.

Saudi Arabia has called on Pakistan to join the Kingdom in its aerial assault against Yemen. The administration of Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has supported the aggression, but has refrained from joining the airstrikes. The Iranian minister further described Iran and Pakistan as two friendly neighboring countries with cultural, religious and historical commonalities, calling for the promotion of political, economic and cultural relations between the two Muslim states. (Press TV)

Chinese Warship Evacuates 38 Chinese Citizens, 45 Sri Lankans from Yemen

AL-HODAYDA, Yemen - A Chinese warship carrying 38 Chinese nationals and 45 Sri Lankans left Yemen's western port of al-Hodayda on Monday for Djibouti. It was the last group of Chinese nationals who sought to be evacuated from Yemen. On March 29, Chinese naval vessel Linyi frigate, docked at the Aden port, took with it 122 Chinese nationals. One day later, another navy ship, Weifang missile frigate, evacuated a total of 449 Chinese citizens from Yemen's western port of al-Hodayda and left for Djibouti.

As Beijing has been busy taking its own nationals away from a ramping-up crisis, it has also been trying to lend a helping hand to citizens of other countries whose lives were also threatened. On Thursday and at the request of 10 countries, the Linyi frigate returned to Aden port to evacuate 225 of their citizens, including 176 from Pakistan, 29 from Ethiopia, five from Singapore, four from Poland, three from Italy, three from Germany, two from Britain, one from Canada, one from Ireland and one from Yemen. (Xinhua)

Military Action against Iran Still Possible: Israel Official

JERUSALEM - A senior Israeli government minister on Monday said taking military action against Iran's nuclear program is still an option - despite last week's framework deal between world powers and the Islamic Republic.

The comments made by Yuval Steinitz, Israel's minister for strategic affairs, reflected the sense of alarm in Israel over last week's deal, which offers Iran relief from economic sanctions in exchange for scaling back its suspect nuclear program. Israeli leaders believe the framework leaves too much of Iran's nuclear infrastructure intact and would allow the country to develop the means to produce a nuclear weapon.

Steinitz, a confidant of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's, said the government would spend the coming months lobbying the world powers negotiating with Iran to strengthen the language in the deal as they hammer out a final agreement. While stressing that Israel prefers a diplomatic solution, he said the "military option" still exists.

"It was on the table. It's still on the table. It's going to remain on the table," Steinitz told reporters. "Israel should be able to defend itself, by itself, against any threat. And it's our right and duty to decide how to defend ourselves, especially if our national security and even very existence is under threat."

Israel considers a nuclear-armed Iran to be a threat to its existence, pointing to years of Iranian calls for Israel's destruction, its support for anti-Israeli militant groups and its development of long-range ballistic missiles that could be armed with nuclear warheads. Israel, itself widely believed to be a nuclear power, also says a nuclear-armed Iran would set off an arms race in the world's most volatile region. The framework agreement was announced on Thursday in Lausanne, Switzerland, by U.S.-led world powers and Iran after years of negotiations. The deal aims to cut significantly into Iran's bomb-making technology while giving Tehran relief from international sanctions. The commitments, if implemented, would substantially pare down Iranian nuclear assets for a decade and restrict others for an additional five years. Iran would also be subject to intrusive international inspections. (AP)

Saudi Cabinet 'Welcomes' Iran's Framework Nuclear Deal

RIYADH - Saudi Arabia's Cabinet said it welcomes the framework agreement between major world powers and Iran on its nuclear program.

The Council of Ministers said in a statement issued after Monday's weekly cabinet session that it hopes a final agreement would be reached, leading to greater regional security and stability.

King Salman expressed similar sentiments Thursday in a phone conversation with President Barack Obama, according to the official Saudi Press Agency.

In a reference to the kingdom's regional rival Iran, the Cabinet said stability and security require non-interference in the internal affairs of Arab countries. The statement added that the kingdom seeks a Middle East free of all weapons of mass destruction - a clear reference to Israel, which is overwhelmingly considered to possess nuclear arms but declines to confirm it. (AP)

Pentagon Chief Heads East as US Tries to Maintain Asia Focus

WASHINGTON - Islamic extremists grab parts of Iraq and Syria. Yemen slides into civil war. Iran's nuclear program strains U.S. relations with Israel. Ukraine fights Russian-backed separatists.

At a time of crisis across the Middle East and beyond, the Obama administration is trying to keep its focus on a widely advertised shift to Asia.

The administration has pursued the strategy since 2011, arguing that no region is more important to the United States' long-term interests, particularly as the rise of China brings concern in other Asian capitals.

Defense Secretary Ash Carter will visit Japan and South Korea this week, part of a series

of planned trips to the region during his first year as Pentagon chief. He will visit India and attend an international security conference in Singapore in May, and he may visit China later in the year.

"We also see great opportunities: Among them, to shift the great weight of the Department of Defense, both intellectual and physical, that has been devoted to Iraq and Afghanistan, to the Asia-Pacific region, where America will continue to play its seven-decade-old pivotal stabilizing role into the future," Carter said then.

His Tokyo visit beginning Tuesday is meant in part to smooth the way for Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's visit to Washington in late

April. That trip will coincide with a historic reworking of the guidelines that govern U.S.-Japan defense cooperation in a way intended to give Japan's self-defense forces a more active role in Asian security.

Japan's post-World War II constitution limits the country's use of force, but Abe last year approved a reinterpretation of the constitution, and his government has proposed legislation to enable defense changes. A strategic goal shared by Tokyo and Washington is for Japan to participate in what is known as collective self-defense, meaning that it could come to the aid of an ally under attack even if that did not entail a direct attack on Japan or its own military. (AP)

Massive Storms in Bangladesh Leave 35 People Dead

BOGRA - Massive storms have hit various parts of Bangladesh, leaving dozens of people killed and causing huge devastation across a large area in northwestern districts of the country.

Officials on Monday confirmed that 35 people have been killed after powerful storms swept some districts in north and west Bangladesh the previous night, making many people homeless as thousands of houses were flattened.

Most of the victims were recovered from the villages in the northern district of Bogra, where 19 people were killed and around 100 were injured.

"They died mostly after they were hit by falling trees or collapsed houses and walls," said the government administrator of the district, Shafiqur Reza Biswas, adding that rescuers and emergency relief groups have already been dispatched to thousands of villages affected by Thousands of trees were uprooted as strong winds damaged houses and cut power supplies for several hours. (Agencies)

Yemen Rebels Advance in Battleground Aden

SANAA - Yemeni rebels made new gains in the battleground southern city Aden Sunday as a Saudi-led coalition trying to halt their advance faced growing calls for a humanitarian pause in air strikes.

The Red Cross has appealed for an immediate truce to allow families to seek water, food and medical assistance, describing the situation as "dire".

Russia presented a draft resolution to the UN Security Council on Saturday calling for a humanitarian pause in the Saudi-led air war against the Houthi Shiite rebels, now in its 11th day. The coalition

kept up its night-time raids against rebel positions and arms depots, particularly around the capital Sanaa and Saada, the northern stronghold of the Iran-backed rebels.

In the main southern city Aden, the rebels advanced into the central port district of Mualla, capturing the provincial government headquarters, a local official said.

Mualla is defended by "popular committees" militiamen loyal to President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who has fled to neighbouring Saudi Arabia. The rebels bombarded residential areas, setting fire to several buildings and dam-

aging others, witnesses said. At least five civilians were killed and 14 wounded in the latest clashes, according to the city's health department director Al-Kheder Lassouar.

"There are children among the wounded," he said. Residents said dozens of families had fled their homes in Aden, the heart of which sits on an extinct volcano jutting out into the sea. Coalition spokesman General Ahmed Assiri accused the rebels of "terrorising" civilians. Assiri also said that the Red Cross had been due to send a plane Sunday to Sanaa carrying humanitarian aid but had delayed the flight. (AFP)

Italy Rescues 1,500 Migrants in Mediterranean

ROME - The Italian coastguard has rescued some 1,500 migrants in the southern Mediterranean in just one day amid a surge in the number of people crossing the sea.

In a statement released on Sunday, the coastguard said the migrants aboard five boats were saved from the sea on Saturday in separate operations involving one navy ship and two coastguard vessels.

The ships were dispatched to help after receiving satellite telephone distress calls from three migrant boats off the Libyan coast. Two more boats were also found to be in trouble nearby.

In a separate incident on Saturday, an Icelandic navy ship brought 318 migrants to the Sicilian port of Pozzallo after rescuing them off Libya.

About 170,000 migrants entered the European Union through Italy last year, with most of them departing from Libya, according to latest reports. Officials say the number of arrivals in January and February 2015 increased by 43 percent compared to the figures recorded during the first two months of 2014.

Mare Nostrum reportedly saved the lives of over 100,000 migrants in more than a year, with a monthly cost of about 9 million euros (10.27 million dollars). The new scheme has a monthly budget about a third of the previous one, with its maritime patrols generally restricted to territorial waters of the bloc's 28 member states. (Agencies)

Iran Actively Taking Action to Stop Yemen War: Official

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official says the Islamic Republic is actively taking action to stop Saudi Arabia's military assault against Yemen by focusing on political solutions and dispatching humanitarian aid.

"A humanitarian catastrophe is unfolding in Yemen, and the siege of the country as well as a blockade on humanitarian aid supplies... has no justification." Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said on Sunday. He said the promotion of terrorism and Muslims' diminishing power are the fallout from Saudi Arabia's "strategic mistake" of invading Yemen, which will simply strengthen the Israeli regime in the region.

The Iranian official further advised the Al Saud regime to take a lesson from the fate of the US military interference in the region and immediately halt its military aggression against Yemen. He said that enemies



of Islam are seeking to turn Saudi Arabia into a new Libya by engaging Riyadh in a war against Yemen in order to undermine Muslim countries. Those contributing to the military attack on Yemen will be held responsible for regional insecurity, said the Iranian diplomat. Earlier on Sunday, Iranian lawmakers strongly deplored Saudi Arabia's military aggression against Yemen, warning that the adverse consequences of the ongoing war on Sana'a will undoubtedly backfire on Riyadh.

"The Al Saud regime should know that the fire rekindled [in Yemen] will engulf it and

will impose heavy costs on the Muslim world," a group of 262 legislators said in a statement.

Saudi Arabia's air campaign against Yemen started on March 26 without a UN mandate in a bid to restore power to the country's fugitive former president, Abd Rabbuh Mansur Hadi, a close ally of Riyadh.

However, Ansarullah fighters say Hadi lost his legitimacy as president of Yemen after he in February fled the capital to Aden, where he sought to set up a rival base. Hadi stepped down in January and refused to reconsider the decision despite calls by Houthi revolutionaries. (Press TV)