G7 Foreign Ministers Gather in Hiroshima to Discuss Nuclear, Maritime Issues

HIROSHIMA - In a city obliterated by a U.S. atom bomb more than 70 years ago, Japan kicked off a gathering of foreign ministers from the Group of Seven (G7) advanced economies with a call to end nuclear weapons.

Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida, who presides over the two-day annual meeting this year, said on Sunday that ministers will also discuss anti-terrorism steps, maritime security and issues related to North Korea, Ukraine and the Middle East.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry is set to join his counterparts from Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy and Japan on Monday to visit an atomic bomb museum and lay flowers at a cenotaph for nuclear bomb victims, becoming the first in his post to do so.

The move could possibly pave the way for a never-before visit to Hiroshima by a U.S. president when Barack Obama attends the annual meeting of G7 leaders in Japan next month.

During World War II, a U.S. warplane dropped a nuclear bomb on Hiroshima on Aug. 6, 1945, reducing the city to ashes and killing 140,000 people by the end of that year.

Three days later, the United States dropped an atomic bomb on Nagasaki. *...(More on P4)...(18)*

Syrian Gov't "Ready to Talk with Constructive Opposition": Russian Lawmaker

MOSCOW - The Syrian government has shown readiness to "participate in a dialogue with any constructive opposition" for a political solution to the country's lingering crisis, a Russian lawmaker visiting Damascus said Sunday.

"The Syrian government and the Syrian people are highly interested in negotiations on a settlement on the basis of the preservation of statehood, sovereignty and independence, and are ready to talk with any constructive opposition, which acts based on these principle," Alexander Yushcheko was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency.

The latest round of Syrian peace talks, which started on March 14, wrapped up in Geneva with a 12-point paper delivered to both sides for further consideration. The next round of negotiations is expected to kick off in Geneva on April 13, four days behind the original schedule.

More than 270,000 people have been reportedly killed in Syria and millions have fled their homes since the conflict broke out in March 2011. (Xinhua)

Syrian Army Thwarts Massive Rebel Attack in Aleppo

DAMASCUS - The Syrian army has thwarted a large-scale offensive by several rebel groups on areas in the northern province of Aleppo, a military source told Xinhua on Sunday.

Several rebel groups launched a major attack on government-controlled areas in the southern countryside of Aleppo on Saturday night, a Syrian military source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.

He said the attack and ensued battles continued till dawn Sunday, adding that the Syrian forces succeeded in repelling the attack after inflicting hefty losses among the assailants.

The source denied reports circulated on some Arab TVs about the militants' control of several towns in southern Aleppo.

Meanwhile, the oppositional Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said that battles are still incessant between the Syrian army backed by Hezbollah against other militant groups, including the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front, in several areas in southern Aleppo.

The UK-based watchdog group said the Syrian forces managed to repel the attacks and advance against *...(More on P4)...(19)*

Saudi King Visits Turkey to Boost Ties, Coordinate Regional Polices

ANKARA - The King of Saudi Arabia Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud is expected to pay an official visit to Turkey on April 11-13 to discuss a range of issues from bilateral to global matters.

"In meetings to be held within the framework of the visit, in addition to bilateral relations, both regional and global issues will be dealt with," said the statement released by Turkish president's office. The visit, the first after the King was crowned in January 2015, comes on the eve of another round of peace talks on Syria in Geneva this week.

Both Turkey and Saudi Arabia remain staunchly opposed to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, and support rebel factions that have been fighting a five-year battle to oust the Damascus government.

"Turkey and Saudi Arabia are regional heavyweights that pursue by and large similar policies albeit with *...(More on P4)...(20)*

Ukrainian PM to Resign, Paves Way for Gov't Dissolution

KIEV - Ukrainian Prime Minister ArsenyYatsenyuk on Sunday announced that he will tender his resignation to parliament on Tuesday. "I decided to resign from the post of the Prime Minister of Ukraine", he said in the program "10 minutes with the Prime Minister", aired on Ukrainian TV channels. If the parliament accepts the resignation, the government will be subsequently dissolved. (Xinhua)

New Clashes between Migrants, Macedonian Police at Border with Greece

SKOPJE - Macedonian police used tear gas Sunday to stop several hundred migrants from the border camp Idomeni in neighboring Greece to cross illegally onto Macedonian territory.

The migrants threw stones at the police forces. Three Macedonian police officers were reportedly injured in the clashes and they were transported to the Medical Center in Gevgelija, the Macedonian Ministry of Interior confirmed. Local media reported that some of the migrants are injured as well, but still there is no official confirmation to this information.

"There was an attempt to break the fence at the border this morning. The migrants were violent, they threw stones and other objects," the Macedonian Ministry of Interior reported.

"They damaged the fence on three places trying to enter Macedonian territory by force. The police intervened and used chemical devices -- tear gas to stop them," the Ministry added. Because of this incident, the presence of the police and military security forces at the border was additionally increased. The Macedonian-Greek border has been closed since February in accordance to the EU plan *...(More on P4)...(21)*

Sporadic Clashes Hit Yemen Ahead of Midnight Ceasefire

MARIB - Sporadic fighting gripped parts of Yemen on Sunday, hours before a UN-brokered ceasefire aimed at laying the groundwork for upcoming peace talks was due to take effect.

Chaos has ruled the Arabian Peninsular country since Iran-backed Huthi rebels overran the capital Sanaa in September 2014 and later advanced to other regions, prompting a Saudi-led military campaign in support of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi from March last year.

It is hoped that the new ceasefire, due to start at midnight (2100 GMT), can be the cornerstone of a long-lasting peace deal negotiated between Yemen's warring parties from April 18 in Kuwait.

Fighting raged on Sunday in regions surrounding Sanaa, while the rebel-held city itself, which has been *...(More on P4)...(22)*

Islamic State Launches Syria Offensive, Captures 2 Villages

BEIRUT - Syrian activists say the Islamic State group has launched a major offensive along the Turkish border, seizing two villages near a border town captured by Western-backed rebels two days ago.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, which relies on activists inside the country, says IS militants seized Sheikh Reeh and al-Bal on Sunday.

The activist-run Azaz Media Center, based in a northern town of the same name, says the extremists exploded seven bombs around Marea and other villages and towns, calling it the fiercest IS offensive in a year. The IS-linked Aamaq News Agency *...(More on P4)...(23)*

Cameron Releases Tax Records to Calm Panama Papers Storm

LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron took the unusual step on Sunday of publishing his tax records to try to end days of questions about his personal wealth raised by the mention of his late father's offshore fund in the Panama Papers.

Cameron's initial reluctance to admit that he had benefited from the fund caused a furore, compounding his problems when he faces a huge political fight to persuade Britons to vote to stay in the European Union in a June 23 referendum.

The EU issue has split his *...(More on P4)...(26)*

Spain Sacks Ambassador to Belgium

MADRID - Spanish Ambassador to Belgium Ignacio Jesus Matellanes Martinez has been sacked from his position, the Spanish Foreign Ministry confirmed on Sunday. The sacking comes after an internal investigation carried out at the Spanish Embassy in Brussels in early March which highlighted some "very serious abnormalities" in the working of the embassy, highlighting the "absenteeism" of the ambassador.

Matellanas Martinez was also accused of having controlled his subordinates "through fear, threats and confrontation", which were denounced by embassy staff. These denouncements led to the inspection and the subsequent report drawn up by an Under-Secretary at the Ministry, which advised the embassy "does not appear to fulfil the appropriate functions", putting this down to the Matellanas' "method of management", which had left the office "paralyzed and deactivated by absenteeism and the negative attitude *...(More on P4)...(24)*

Sixth S-400 Missile System to be Delivered to Russian Air Force by Year End

MOSCOW - The sixth set of the sophisticated S-400 missile defense system is expected to be delivered to Russia's Aerospace Force by the end of this year, the TASS news agency reported on Sunday.

The delivery of one more regimental set of the S-400 Triumph air defense missile system to an air defense unit of the Aerospace Forces in the Moscow region is planned to take place by the end of this year, TASS said, quoting a release from the Russian Defense Ministry.

Four sets of the air defense system are currently on combat duty to defend the airspace of Moscow and the Central Industrial District, and another set has been delivered to the Aerospace Forces. The S-400 Triumf is a *...(More on P4)...(25)*

Nieghbor News

China to Deepen SOE Reform in 2016

BEIJING - China will continue to propel its ongoing reform on torpid state-owned enterprises (SOE) this year as part of the efforts to restructure the economy, according to a recent government meeting.

The government will work to eliminate barriers to the supply-side structural reform, stimulate the morale and creativity of entrepreneurs and employees, and improve state-owned asset supervision, said a statement issued on Sunday after the conference chaired by Vice Premier Ma Kai on Friday.

The meeting also agreed to establish mechanisms that encourage innovation and allow progress through trials and errors.

Given a continued economic slowdown, China is promoting an overhaul on SOEs to revitalize the public sector of the economy, piloting mixed-ownership reform, liberalizing industries to private capital and encouraging mergers and acquisitions.

The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission chose two SOEs to pilot reforms covering payment distribution, investment of state-owned capital, mergers and reorganization in February. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Opposition Leader Calls on PM to Resign

PARIS - The Latest on the publication by a coalition of media outlets of an investigation into offshore financial dealings by the rich and famous. Pakistani opposition leader Imran Khan has called on Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to resign, saying documents leaked from a Panama-based law firm indicate his sons own several offshore companies. Khan warned Sunday he will stage a rally outside Sharif's residence in the eastern city of Lahore if the prime minister does not quit. He attached no date to the ultimatum.

Information Minister Pervaiz Rashid rejected Khan's demand, saying Sharif will not quit over "baseless allegations."

Khan, a former cricket star, is the leader of Pakistan Tahrik-e-Insaf, which made a strong showing in the 2013 elections.

Last week, Sharif announced the establishment of an independent judicial commission to probe whether his family illegally owns offshore companies and property, as indicated in the so-called Panama Papers. (AP)

Turkmenistan, EU Cooperate in Combating Drugs

ASHGABAT - A meeting with a delegation of the Central Asia Drug Action Programme (CADAP), headed by project manager Ernest Robello was held in the Turkmen foreign ministry, the ministry said April 7.

CADAP is funded by the European Union (EU).

The sides stressed the high level of Turkmenistan-EU cooperation within the CADAP program.

Stressing the positive results of the joint work, the sides expressed their commitment to the further development of cooperation while working out new integrated approaches and national strategies to reduce the demand for drugs.

While expressing interest in carrying out joint activity and exchanging experience between the specialists of the Central Asian countries and the EU, the two sides emphasized the positive results in Turkmenistan in the fight against tobacco and drugs, the statement said.

CADAP promotes the development of effective, comprehensive drug policies, based on scientific evidence and EU best practice.(Agencies)

Iran Keen on Joining Indian Refinery Projects: Minister

TEHRAN - Iranian Oil Minister BijanNamdar-Zangeneh said that Tehran mulls joining refinery projects in India, Iran's Petro-Energy Information Network (SHANA) reported on Sunday.

"Indian companies are skilled in petroleum engineering and meet international standards in their work; therefore, Iranian companies may take this opportunity to boost their cooperation with their Indian partners," Zangeneh was quoted as saying. Iran is in need of petroleum industry machinery and equipment, he said, adding that the Indian and Iranian companies can join hands to build the equipment for domestic use or to export them to the regional markets. "There is a good market in the Central Asia and in the Persian Gulf region for the export of these kinds of equipment," he said.

Further, Iran has to take some measures to enhance its crude exports to India by attending in the country's refinery projects, said Zangeneh in an address to Iran-India business conference at Tehran Chamber of Commerce on Saturday, according to the report.

He expressed the hope that the grounds for long-term cooperation between Tehran and New Delhi in energy projects will be provided in the near future. (Xinhua)