

OIC Vows to Defeat Terrorism, Extremism

ISTANBUL - Foreign ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) pledged here on Tuesday to defeat terrorism and extremism.

"We will continue to fight against force of darkness and extremism that misrepresent the real teaching of Islam, which is based on tolerance," Egyptian Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry said in his opening speech at a meeting with his counterparts from other OIC



member states. In his view, the Islamic world is in need of moderation and an integrated strategy for an effective struggle against terrorism and

among civilizations and religions to overcome the challenges facing the region. "We hope we will win despite all of the sacrifices we gave," he added.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said an action plan that will draw a road map for the OIC over the next 10 years will be adopted at the OIC leaders' summit slated for Thursday and Friday.

"I believe that the Islamic ... (More on P4)...(20)

Washington's M.E Mistakes Result from Disrespect for International Law: Moscow

MOSCOW - A Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman has slammed the United States for disrespecting international law, which has led to "mistakes" by Washington in the Middle East and adjacent regions. "The problem is in the absence of the legal basis for actions," said Maria Zakharova on her Facebook page on Monday, commenting on the recent statement of U.S. President Barack Obama

who confessed that his worst mistake during the presidency was a lack of planning for the aftermath of the toppling of former Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi in 2011.

The United States, firstly, violated international law and varnished its actions by information campaigns. A few years later, when the luster fades and ceases to dazzle the eye, everybody will see the ruins of another state, while Washington

calls it a mistake, and labels some other countries as aggressors, Zakharova said. "Probably failing to plan for the day after what I think was the right thing to do in intervening in Libya," Obama said in an interview with the Fox News TV channel aired on Sunday.

As the Arab Spring revolts spread to Libya, the United Nations Security Council approved in March 2011 the establishment of a no-

fly zone to protect civilians from air attacks.

In the months that followed, the U.S.-led NATO forces started their military campaigns in Libya, providing support to Libyan rebel forces.

Zakharova said the United States had acted in the same manner in Afghanistan and Iraq as it did in Libya, adding that Moscow was witnessing a similar scheme in Syria. (Xinhua)

Obama Needs to be More Sincere in Acknowledging "Worst Mistake"

BEIJING - U.S. President Barack Obama has finally admitted his "worst mistake" during his presidency was made in the Libya military assault. His courage is admirable; however, his manner needs to be more sincere. In a Fox News interview on Sunday, asked to name the "worst mistake" of his presidency, Obama said "probably failing to plan for the day after what I think was the right thing to do in intervening in Libya." One day after the interview, White House spokesman Josh Earnest

said "The right decision was made at the beginning to prevent significant loss of life," referring to the seven-month military assault. First of all, it is obvious that the president has a completely wrong view of military force, which has caused, in Libya's case, a large number of casualties, a collapsed economy, political chaos in the country and a spillover effect in the region.

The Nobel Peace Prize winner, who was awarded in 2009 for his "extraordinary efforts to strengthen ... (More on P4)...(21)

Dutch Vote Against EU-Ukraine Treaty: Final Result

AMSTERDAM - Dutch voters rejected the Ukraine-EU treaty by a large margin in a non-binding referendum held last week, according to the final results published by the country's Election Commission on Tuesday. In all 61 percent of voters said "no" to the treaty, compared to 38.2 percent who said "yes" in the April 6 referendum, the commission said.

Around 4.1 million voters cast ballots, or 32.3 percent of those eligible, and above the 30 percent threshold needed for the referen-

dum's results to be valid. The government is due to debate with parliament over what to do about the vote on Wednesday. Prime Minister Mark Rutte has told voters the Netherlands will not now ratify the treaty in its current form, but there is a long road ahead before it can be modified.

The treaty on closer EU-Ukraine economic, political and defense ties has already been ratified by all other European Union countries and Ukraine itself. (Reuters)

India, U.S. to Sign Pact for Access to Each Other's Military Bases

NEW DELHI - India Tuesday said that it will soon sign a logistics supply pact with the United States, putting to rest all the speculation over the much-awaited agreement. "Both India and the U.S. will sign the agreement in the coming months," Indian Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar said in Delhi, after holding talks with visiting U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter.

The logistics supply agreement will give India



and U.S. armed forces access to each other's bases, and both the countries have been harping on it for nearly a decade. "Both India and the U.S. have

agreed in principle on the logistical agreement," Carter said about the pact in a joint media meet with Parrikar. He also said that both the countries would

soon ink another agreement on sharing of information on commercial shipping, which is going to bolster security on the seas. (Xinhua)

Assad "Positive" about Political Settlement in Geneva Talks: Russian Lawmaker

MOSCOW - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad is upbeat about the possibility of reaching a peaceful solution to the country's lingering crisis, a Russian lawmaker visiting Damascus said Tuesday. "Syrian President Bashar al-Assad positively assesses the possibility of a peaceful settlement of the situation Syria within the framework of the Geneva dialogue," Sergey Gavrilov was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency. Syrian Foreign Minister

Walid al-Moallem on Monday reiterated his government's readiness to attend the upcoming round of Geneva peace talks on Syria, saying the government is committed to attending the peace talks without preconditions. He also stressed on the Syrians' right to determine their future without foreign interference. The latest round of Syrian peace talks, which started on March 14, was 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 Wednesday, four days behind the original schedule.

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

Freedoms Not Curbed by Migrant Politics: Merkel

BERLIN - Germany's desire to resolve the migrant crisis won't change its commitment to free speech, Chancellor Angela Merkel said Tuesday, after Turkey sought the prosecution of a German comedian for a crude poem about the Turkish president. Ankara has demanded to have comedian Jan Boehmermann prosecuted for insulting a foreign head of state, a move that Merkel's government

would have to approve under German law. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan also has filed a criminal complaint against Boehmermann under a separate law, alleging slander. Turkey's sharp response to satire directed at Erdogan has put Merkel, who has championed cooperation with Ankara to stem the migrant flow to Europe, in an awkward position. Merkel said Turkey's ... (More on P4)...(22)

G7 Should Not Complicate South China Sea Issue

BEIJING - A statement on the South China Sea issued after the Hiroshima G7 foreign ministers' meeting on Monday appears to be yet another move by outsiders to fuel militarization of the region. "We express our strong opposition to any intimidating, coercive or provocative unilateral actions

that could alter the status quo and increase tensions," the statement said, without mentioning any nation involved or specifying precisely which tensions are matters of concern. Curiously, neither Japan nor any other G7 member is a party to the disputes. The statement ... (More on P4)...(23)

Russia Delivers S-300 Missile Systems to Iran: Russian Deputy PM

MOSCOW - Russia has started deliveries of S-300 missile systems to Iran, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin said Monday. "We are acting in strict compliance with the contract," Rogozin told Russian radio station EkhoMo-

skvy. He said that Russia has already sent the first batch of S-300 systems to Iran. "I cannot say what exactly has been supplied but the supply was conducted by a logistics route elaborated by Russian and Iranian specialists," he added. ... (More on P4)...(25)

Neighbor News

Iran Flexes Muscles with Large-Scale Military Drills

TEHRAN - Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) began on Tuesday large-scale military drills in the southeastern part of the country, Press TV reported. Code-named the Great Prophet, the drills started in Sistan-and-Baluchestan province, the report said, adding that the IRGC has deployed 10 reconnaissance drones. The war game also involves IRGC's newly-founded ground force airborne unit, Tasnim news agency reported. On Tuesday, the unit's helicopters took part in a heliborne operation to deploy combat forces to the rear of the hypothetical enemy's

front. The combat choppers also hit targets with rockets. Moreover, IRGC's special forces took part in the drills on Tuesday. The forces practiced a hostage rescue mission, with ground troops using T-72 tanks and BMP-2 personnel carriers to launch an attack against the mock enemy.

The three-day drills will also be held in the provinces of Kerman, South Khorasan and Hormozgan in the east and south of Iran, Commander of the IRGC Ground Forces Brigadier General Mohammad Pakpour was quoted as saying by Press TV. (Xinhua)

Russia-China Strategic Partnership at All-Time High: Russian FM

MOSCOW - Relations between Russia and China are at an all-time high, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Tuesday.

"This relationship is constantly deepened and developed for the benefit of our countries and our peoples," said Lavrov in a joint interview with the Chinese, Japanese and Mongolian media. He said that Russia and China are interested in expanding cooperation and aligning the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) with China's Belt and Road Initiative.

"Currently, an agreement on trade and economic cooperation between the EEU and China is being prepared, and a roadmap for priority integration projects is being worked out simultane-

ously," he said. The diplomat also stressed the importance of regional cooperation between the two countries, especially involving Russia's Far East and China's northeastern provinces, and the Volga-Yangtze project.

"The regions along Russia's Volga River and the provinces on the banks of China's Yangtze River have a lot of interesting things to implement in the framework of joint projects," he noted. While Russia and China are experiencing "some negative effects" due to a sluggish global economy, Lavrov said he believed that the decrease in Russia's trade turnover with China and other Far East neighbors was only temporary. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Approves Russia Funded Gas Pipeline Project

ISLAMABAD - Economic Coordination Committee (ECC) of the cabinet also sought legal advice for setting up a special purpose vehicle (SPV) for project execution to deflect adverse impact of sanctions against the Russian company that would build the pipeline.

The pipeline will start from Nawabshah and end at Kasur, near Lahore. It will be owned

by the Russian firm for 25 years.

In October 2015, Moscow and Islamabad signed an intergovernmental agreement on the construction of the pipeline. In December 2014, Rostec announced that its subsidiary, RT Global Resources, would be building oil and LNG pipelines and terminals in Pakistan with total cost of about \$3 billion. (Agencies)

Italy's Foreign Minister in Libya for Talks with Unity Government

TRIPOLI - Italy's foreign minister visited Tripoli on Tuesday to bolster the unity government struggling to end Libya's chaos, in the first visit by a top Western official since 2014. Paolo Gentiloni flew into the capital amid tight security and held talks with Fayez al-Sarraj, named prime minister-designate under a UN-backed power-sharing deal in December. World powers see the unity cabinet as vital to tackling a raging jihadist insurgency and rampant people smuggling in the North African state. "I am delighted to be in #Tripoli for Italy's emergency aid and to support al-Sarraj's Government of National Accord," Gentiloni wrote on Twitter. Sarraj arrived in Tripoli by sea with a naval escort nearly two weeks ago and established his headquarters at a naval base. ... (More on P4)...(24)

Greece Expects First Asylum Decisions under EU Deal in Two Weeks

ATHENS - Greece said authorities would start ruling on asylum applications from hundreds of migrants in the next two weeks, in a major test of a new deal to try to control the flow of people desperate to reach Europe. By the latest count, more than 50,000 people, most from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan, have been stranded in Greece since Balkan countries closed their borders in February to migrants and refugees wanting to cross, mostly on the way to Germany. Many of them are refugees from war, but others are economic migrants.

Asylum applications have been piling up since March, when the European Union and Turkey

signed an agreement intended to close off the main route into Europe, has seen an influx of over a million refugees and migrants since last year.

Under the EU-Turkey deal, those who arrive to Greece from March 20 will be screened, registered and detained in holding centers until their asylum applications are processed. Rejected applicants, and those who do not apply, are returned to Turkey. "The first results of the asylum applications will be ready in about 15 days and the next phase of the implementation of the agreement will begin," government spokeswoman Olga Gerovasili told reporters. (Reuters)