

US Won't Block Foreign Business Deals under Nuke Deal: Kerry

NEW YORK - The Obama administration is trying to address Iranian complaints that U.S. financial regulations are denying Iran the sanctions relief it deserves under last year's landmark nuclear deal. Meeting with Iran's foreign minister on Friday, Secretary of State John Kerry said the United States would not stand in the way of foreign banks or firms doing business with Iranian companies that are no longer subject to U.S. sanctions. Kerry also said the administration was willing to further clarify what transactions



are now permitted with Iran and urged financial institutions to seek answers from U.S. officials if they have questions. They should not assume,

he said, that was once prohibited is still prohibited. Nor, he added, should

they assume that transactions with Iran that remain illegal for U.S. companies

are illegal for foreign firms. Kerry's remarks, which came at the start of his second meeting this week with Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, were an attempt to resolve confusion about what is permitted under the nuclear deal in which Iran agreed to curb its atomic program in exchange for billions in sanctions relief. Iran, as well as foreign banks and governments, have been clamoring for clarity, but it was not clear that Kerry's remarks would provide it. (AP)

Merkel, Obama Say EU-U.S. Free Trade Deal would Benefit Both Sides

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel and U.S. President Barack Obama said on Saturday they favored sealing a U.S.-European free trade agreement as it would fuel growth on both sides of the Atlantic. Merkel is expected to discuss the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) with Obama when he visits a trade show in Hanover on Sunday and Monday. Support for TTIP has plunged in both their

countries, however. Tens of thousands of protesters marched in Hanover on Saturday to express their opposition to the deal. Police said 35,000 people took part in the demonstration, while organizers said more than double that number had attended. Protesters held placards reading "Stop TTIP" and "For a fair world trade." "The Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership is one of the best ways to promote growth and



create jobs," Obama told the mass-selling newspaper Bild in an interview. Merkel said in her weekly

podcast that wrapping up a deal would be a "win-win situation." ... (More on P4)... (20)

UNHCR Calls on EU Members to Strengthen Asylum System

SKOPJE - UNHCR representative to Macedonia Mohammad Arif told Xinhua in a recent interview that he does not think the asylum system in European Union (EU) countries is functioning very well, calling on governments to have a working and efficient asylum system. "If you don't have strong, efficient, working asylum system it is very dangerous, because you may be giving protection to people who are not qualified for protection and they are

taking the place of those who are genuine asylum seekers," said Arif. Arif noted that in Greece there are now more than 55,000 refugees, or migrants and refugees. "How many of them have really been processed? UNHCR has been saying all this time, since the crisis started, that the EU member states' asylum system needs to be reviewed, should be strengthened. Because it is not strong now," he said. ... (More on P4)... (21)

Merkel Begins Turkey Trip with Visit to Refugee Camp

NIZIP - German Chancellor Angela Merkel visited a refugee camp on the Turkish-Syrian border Saturday, kicking off a high-stakes visit aimed at boosting a month-old migrant deal plagued by moral and legal concerns. Merkel, who was accompanied by European Council head Donald Tusk and European Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans, headed to the Nizip 2 camp near Gaziantep after touching down in the country's south-east. "Welcome to Turkey, the

country that hosts the most refugees in the world," read a huge banner hanging over the entrance to the camp, which hosts some 5,000 people in row upon row of white and beige prefabricated houses. The aim of the visit is to promote the six-billion-euro (\$6.7 billion) deal to return migrants arriving on Greek shores to Turkey, which has come under fire from rights groups, the UN refugee agency and some EU leaders. The funds are aimed at ... (More on P4)... (22)

Kurdish, Syrian Govt. Forces Declare Truce in Qamishli Area: Statement

BEIRUT - Regional Kurdish security forces and Syrian government forces have declared a ceasefire in northeastern Syria, the Kurdish side said, calming a three-day outbreak of violence which killed more than 26 people. The Kurdish Asayish forces said in a statement that the accord took effect at 3:30 p.m. (1230 GMT) on Friday and a Reuters witness said the truce was holding on Saturday. The witness and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based



group tracking the five-year-old war in Syria, said it did not appear that Asayish forces had withdrawn since the start of the truce from any recently-gained territory. During the fighting, Asayish forces seized

control of a number of government-controlled positions in the city of Qamishli, in Hasaka province, as well as its main prison. A Syrian Kurdish official has said this was the second biggest outbreak of

fighting between President Bashar al-Assad's government and regional Kurdish forces since Syria's civil war began in 2011. Qamishli, near the Turkish border, is mostly controlled ... (More on P4)... (23)

Security Forces Launch Anti-Terror Offensive in Southern Yemen

ADEN - Yemeni security forces newly trained by the Saudi-led Arab coalition launched an anti-terror offensive to flush out al-Qaida militants from the southern province of Abyan on Saturday, a provincial security source told Xinhua. The troops and allied pro-government tribal militias, known as Southern Resistance, supported by UAE armored vehicles advanced into the al-Qaida-held city of Zinjibar, Abyan's provincial capital, after intense clashes with al-Qaida militants there, the security source said on condition of anonymity. A high-ranking commander of the Special Security Forces in



Abyan told Xinhua that the UAE-backed security forces "made significant progress against al-Qaida key hideouts in Abyan, and several areas surrounding Zinjibar were totally cleansed from the terrorists." He said that the all-out military operation against al-Qaida mil-

itants will continue during the upcoming hours until liberating Zinjibar, Abyan's provincial capital, and all the surrounding cities from the terrorists. So far, the troops have made slow progress due to large number of roadside bombs ... (More on P4)... (25)

Any Peace Plan must Respect Syria Interests: Velayati

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official has rejected as "unacceptable" any peace plan that would run contrary to Syria's national interests, reaffirming Tehran's support for the legitimate government of President Bashar al-Assad. On Saturday, Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior advisor to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, said Iran would keep up support for Syria's "territorial integrity, independence as well as the legitimate government of President

Bashar al-Assad," which has been elected by Syrian people. Velayati, who was speaking in a meeting with Syrian Ambassador to Tehran Adnan Hassan Mahmood, further said any peace initiative that fails to meet the interests of Syrians would not be accepted. The Iranian official praised the recent parliamentary elections in the violence-hit country, saying the polls showed the Damascus government attaches ... (More on P4)... (24)

Palestinian, Israeli Delegates Trade Barbs At U.N. Climate Summit

UNITED NATIONS - The Palestinian president and Israel's ambassador to the United Nations traded barbs on Friday during a signing ceremony for the Paris climate accord, in the latest example of continuing Israeli-Palestinian tensions. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who signed the agreement on behalf of the Palestinians, took advantage of the presence of some 60 world leaders at the U.N. General Assembly to criticize Israel. "The Israeli occupation is destroying the climate in Palestine, and the Israeli settlements are destroy-

ing the environment in Palestine," Abbas told the 193-nation assembly. "Please help us in putting an end to the occupation and to settlements." Israeli Ambassador Danny Danon responded sharply when he addressed the ceremony, in which 175 states signed and 15 ratified the Paris accord. "Instead of spreading hatred here at the U.N., President Abbas should act to stop Palestinian terror," he said after signing the treaty. "This climate summit is supposed to be a demonstration of global unity ... (More on P4)... (28)

At Least 25 Killed As Violence Spikes in Syria

BEIRUT - Syrian government strikes hit opposition-held areas near the capital and in the country's largest city, Aleppo, killing at least 25 Saturday while rebels fired mortars into Damascus, in a rare occurrence since the teetering cease-fire took effect in late February. Western officials, including the U.N. envoy leading negotiations with Syria's warring factions, have warned that a cease-fire was in danger of total collapse due to escalating violence and the walk-out by the Saudi-backed opposition group from the talks Monday. The opposition accuses the government of wrecking the talks with ongoing attacks while the government says it is only targeting terrorist groups who are not part of the cease-fire agreement. The U.N. envoy Staffan de Mistura said the talks will continue until Wednesday as planned, but said the two sides are "extremely polarized," casting doubt on the ability to salvage the talks aimed at finding a political solution to the five-year conflict. The violence on Saturday appeared set to only ... (More on P4)... (29)

Turkish Warplanes Hit PKK Targets in Iraq

ANKARA - Turkish warplanes bombed targets of the banned Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq on Saturday, said a Turkish military statement. Four F-16 and six F-4 2020 fighter jets struck the PKK targets in Sinath-Haftanin and Metina regions in northern Iraq during the Turkish military operation against the PKK on early Saturday, said the statement issued by the General Staff of the Turkish Armed Forces. Another two F-16 fighter jets bombed the PKK targets in Metina region in northern ... (More on P4)... (26)

S. African President Calls for Unity Among Ruling Party

JOHANNESBURG - South African President Jacob Zuma on Saturday called for unity among the ruling African National Party (ANC) as the party is geared up for the local elections. "All of us as volunteers of the ANC must honour our fallen comrades by marching together in unity. We must unite as we mobilise our communities to renew their contract with the ANC at the polling stations," Zuma said. Zuma was speaking at a funeral in ... (More on P4)... (27)

Neighbor News

Xi Calls for Improved Religious Work

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping has called on authorities to stick to the Communist Party of China (CPC)'s religious policies and improve religious work. Addressing a conference on religions that concluded on Saturday, Xi said religious affairs carry "special importance" in the work of the CPC and the central government, and that the CPC's religious policies and theories had been proven right through past practices. He promised to fully implement the Party's policy of religious freedom, manage religious affairs in line

with laws, retain the principle of religious independence and self-administration, and help religions adapt to the socialist society. Authorities should work to unite religious and non-religious people, and guide those religious to love their country, protect the unification of their motherland and serve the overall interests of the Chinese nation. Religious groups, meanwhile, must adhere to the leadership of the CPC, and support the socialist system and socialism with Chinese characteristics, Xi said. (Xinhua)

Pak Opposition Steps up Pressure over Panama Leaks

LAHORE - Political coordination has gained momentum in Pakistan to discuss various investigation options as the Panama leaks issue continues to haunt Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and his family. The Pakistani Opposition Leader in the National Assembly, Khursheed Shah, telephoned Jamaat-i-Islami chief Sirajul Haq and Tehreek-i-Insaf's Shah Mehmood Qureshi on Friday to discuss with them several options to investigate the scandal involving the offshore accounts of the Sharif family and other Paki-

stanis. The Jamaat chief suggested that while the government was writing a letter to the Supreme Court chief justice to set up an inquiry commission, opposition parties should also send a similar request to the Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) to urge him not to turn down the government's request. The chief justice should also be requested not only to probe the Panama leaks scandal, but also help bring back the looted money from abroad and announce exemplary punishment for those responsible for the offence. (Agencies)

Iran Confirms Sale of 32 Metric Tons of Heavy Water to U.S.

TEHRAN - Senior Iranian nuclear negotiator Abbas Araqchi confirmed that Iran will sell heavy water to the United States, semi-official ISNA news agency reported on Saturday. The Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) and a U.S. company have signed an agreement on Friday to sell 32 metric tons of heavy water produced in its Arak Reactor, Araqchi said on the sidelines of a joint commission meeting between Iran and the P5+1 group, namely Britain,

China, France, Russia, the United States, and Germany. The agreement, signed following three months of negotiations, is worth 8.6 million U.S. dollars and will be delivered to the American side next week, according to the report. The transaction of the heavy water is a part of the nuclear agreement signed last July between Iran and the P5+1 group. Iran has also agreed to ship its supply of enriched uranium to Russia. (Xinhua)

Tajikistan and Belarus Set to Jointly Develop Cooperation with third Countries



BISHKEK - Tajikistan and Belarus will jointly develop cooperation with third countries. The agreement was reached at the meeting between Tajik Foreign Minister Sirodjidin Aslov and his Belarusian counterpart Vladimir Makei in New York, BelTA reports. The sides agreed to use the potential and contacts of the two countries to develop cooperation with third countries. Makei and Aslov stressed the importance of open and engaged cooperation among all states against

international terrorism. They also emphasized mutual interest in sustainable defense of national interests with respect to interests of neighbors and international partners. The parties continued the discussion of the international situation in the Eurasian region and exchanged opinions on the ways of positive influence, including through initiative steps of Belarus and Tajikistan, on the processes raising concerns in the international community. (AKIpress)