

# US, Russia to Continue Talk on Syria Ceasefire: U.S. State Department

WASHINGTON - U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry spoke on phone with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov on Thursday about continuing the discussion of a ceasefire in Syria, the U.S. State Department said.

"Secretary Kerry spoke by phone today with Foreign Minister Lavrov about the situation on the ground in Aleppo," said State Department spokeswoman Elizabeth Trudeau here at the daily briefing, referring to a key battleground in Syria's civil war.

"They agreed to continue discussions about establishing a framework for a



cease-fire that will allow the delivery of aid, of desperately needed humanitarian aid, as well as the safe departure of those who wish to leave the city," said Trudeau.

According to the spokeswoman, though Lavrov announced "technical discussions" in Geneva over the last weekend, the specific nature of the follow-on discussions were still being worked out.

Moscow and Washington have resumed consultations recently on the Syrian settlement after the U.S. suspended dialogue with Russia early October. (Xinhua)

## Iraqi Troops Enter another IS-Held Neighborhood in Mosul

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi army says troops have entered another neighborhood held by the Islamic State group in the south-eastern part of Mosul. The commander of a joint operations center that oversees the Mosul campaign, Lt. Gen. Abdul-Amir Yarellah, says that soldiers from the 9th Division took over the hospital building in the al-Salam neighborhood on Tuesday.

He did not provide more details but said the troops "continue clearing" the

neighborhood from IS militants. Iraqi forces, backed by the U.S.-led international coalition, launched a campaign in October to retake Mosul, the country's second largest city and IS's last major urban bastion in Iraq.

Most gains have been made by special forces operating in the section of Mosul east of the Tigris River, while other forces are advancing on the city from other directions. (AP)

## Spanish Parliament to Consider Sending More Military to Iraq

MADRID - Spain's parliament will decide whether to send an extra 125 soldiers to assist in the fight against Islamic State in Iraq, where they have provided training to local troops, the Defense Ministry said on Friday.

The additional troops would put the total number of Spanish forces in Iraq at 425, and would lend further logistical support in bomb detection. Spanish troops would not be taking part in any ground operations. Spain's parliament agreed unanimously to

send 300 military personnel in 2014, when Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy's conservative People's Party (PP) had a majority in parliament.

He is now at the helm of a minority government, meaning he will need support from opposition lawmakers in a highly fragmented lower house, though the second-place Socialist party voted in favor of sending troops two years ago. It was not immediately clear when parliament would vote on the matter. (Reuters)

## Civil Conflicts, Unpredictable Weather Blamed for Poor Food Insecurity in 2016: UN Agency

UNITED NATIONS - Civil conflict and weather-related shocks have severely stressed food security in 2016, increasing the number of countries in need of food assistance, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) said in a report issued Thursday. The new edition of the Crop Prospects and Food Situation report highlighted 39 countries that are in need of external assistance for food. While the outlook for glob-

al cereal supplies is improving due to generally favorable growing conditions for crops, the legacy of recent droughts persists, as do the negative effects of a spate of conflicts. Agricultural forecasts suggest robust grain harvests are on the horizon, but hunger will likely intensify in some regions during the lean seasons before the new crops have matured. In Southern Africa, where El Nino effects sharply curtailed food production in



2016, the number of people requiring outside assistance from January through March 2017 is expected to significantly increase compared to the same period a year ago. Child stunting rates are "significantly high" in the most troubled areas, notably Madagascar, Malawi and Mozambique, the report noted. (Xinhua)

## US Senate Sends Defense Policy Bill Against Closing Guantanamo Bay Facility

WASHINGTON - The U.S. senate on Thursday passed an annual defense policy bill which restricts on transferring detainees out of the Guantanamo Bay facility and sends it to the lame-duck President Barack Obama who has been trying to close it for years. The wide-ranging National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) was passed by senators in a 92-7 vote on Thursday, one week after the House of Representatives approved it in a 375-34 vote. However, it remains unclear if Obama will sign

it. The outgoing president has been often criticized by some defense hawks for his efforts to downsize the Pentagon. The White House has frequently threatened to veto previous version of the bill, but only followed through in 2015, according to local media reports. The bill for the fiscal year of 2017 would authorize a total of 618.7 billion dollars in spending, including



more than 67 billion dollars for a war fund known as the overseas contingency operations (OCO) account, said a Politico news report. The bill includes a troop pay raise of 2.1 percent, though Obama has only requested for a 1.6 percent pay ... (More on P4)...(22)

## UN Rights Chief Urges Israel to Reconsider Bill to Legalise Outposts

GENEVA - United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein on Thursday urged Israel to reconsider a bill that might legalize its outposts in the occupied West Bank. The passing of the bill would further deprive the Palestinians of their land and their livelihoods, the high commissioner said. He stressed that if adopted, the bill would allow the retroactive "legalization" of so-called Israeli outposts constructed on privately-



owned Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank. The Bill was approved by the Knesset, or the Israeli parliament, at the first of three readings on Wednesday.

"In enabling the use of land privately-owned by Palestinians for Israeli settlements without the ... (More on P4)...(23)

## Around 150 Migrants Scale Frontier to Enter Spanish Enclave of Ceuta

MADRID - Around 150 migrants of sub-Saharan origin crossed the border fence that separates the Spanish enclave of Ceuta from Morocco in the early hours of Friday morning, the Spanish Civil Guard confirmed. The incident happened at approximately 6:15 a.m. local time (0515 GMT) when the migrants managed to force their way through one of the doors in the fence and enter Spanish territory. Upon entering Ceuta, the migrants separated into small groups and ran through the streets of the town, with many making their way to the neighborhood known as "El Principe", which is made up of a labyrinth of small streets and has a mainly Muslim population. ... (More on P4)...(24)

## OSCE Urges Negotiated Settlement of Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

HAMBURG, Germany - The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) on Thursday called on leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to meet at the earliest opportunity to negotiate a peaceful settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The OSCE, the world's largest regional organization on security-related issues, delivered the message through a joint statement by the heads of delegation of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chair countries - Foreign Minister of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov, Secretary of State of the United States John Kerry, and Foreign Minister of France Jean-Marc Ayrault. The troika countries said in the statement that they "remain fully committed to a negotiated settlement of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict," noting that there is no military solution to the conflict. "We appeal to the sides to confirm their commitment to the peaceful resolution of the conflict as the only way to bring real reconciliation to the peoples of the region," the statement said. "We also urge them to adhere strictly to the 1994/95 ceasefire agreements that make up the foundation of the cessation of hostilities in the conflict zone," it added. "We would like to reiterate our call to the leaders of Armenia and Azerbaijan to demonstrate flexibility and to return to the negotiation table with the firm aim of moving toward a sustainable peace on the basis of the current working proposals," the statement said. (Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### Chinese Official Meets U.S. National Security Advisor, FBI Chief

WASHINGTON - Chinese State Councilor and Minister of Public Security Guo Shengkun on Thursday met separately with U.S. National Security Advisor Susan Rice and FBI Director James Comey. During his meeting with Rice, Guo said Sino-U.S. relations are at a crucial juncture and that it is in the interests of both countries for bilateral ties to transit steadily and continue to develop.

Guo said the China-U.S. high-level dialogue on cybercrime and related issues, which was held Wednesday in Washington for the third time, has played an important role in promoting mutual trust, dissolving difference and accomplishing win-win cooperation between the two countries. Guo said the Chinese government is willing to work with the U.S. government to push forward ... (More on P4)...(27)

### Musharraf Given One Month to Surrender

ISLAMABAD - A Pakistani anti-terrorism court (ATC) here on Thursday gave one-month's deadline to former president Pervez Musharraf to surrender in the judges' detention case. The court warned that the former military ruler would be declared a proclaimed offender if he failed to comply with the deadline. After directing the counsel for Gen Musharraf to produce his client before the court, ATC Judge Sohail Ikram adjourned the proceedings to January 13. On November 22, the

judge had asked Advocate Akhtar Shah to argue how he can represent Musharraf even after he was declared a proclaimed offender in a high treason case by the special court. The lawyer replied that doctors checked his client after every two months and the security situation was not favourable for him in the country. He claimed that under Article 10-A of the Constitution, which ensures fair trial, he can represent Musharraf even in his absence. (Monitoring Desk)

### OPEC States Must Work for Stable Oil Market: Rouhani

TERHAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani says all member states of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) must make joint efforts to stabilize the global oil market and reverse a slump in prices following their landmark supply-cut deal. In a telephone conversation with Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro on Thursday, Rouhani said Tehran and Caracas have held extensive consultations with the purpose of restoring stability to the oil market and lifting crude prices. He pointed to the agree-

ments reached during OPEC meetings in Algiers and Vienna this year, saying all oil-producing countries should work to pave the way for their implementation. OPEC members agreed during their extraordinary meeting in Algiers, Algeria, late in September to limit production in an effort to raise the low crude prices. They decided to cut production by 750,000 barrels a day. Iran, however, has been exempted from the decision because of its exceptional situation of having been under sanctions for a number of years. (Presstv)

### Turkmenistan Becomes Main Supplier of Natural Gas to China

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan became the leader for volumes of gas supply to China in nine months of 2016, said China's General Administration of Customs (GACC). During the period, Turkmenistan supplied 18.32 million tons of gas to China that is by 11.2 percent more than in nine months of 2015, according to GACC.

Revenues from export decreased by 29 percent to \$4.68 billion. Average value of gas, supplied from Turkmenistan to China, decreased by \$145 and was \$255 per ton. Uzbekistan delivered 2.73 million tons of gas to China during the period that is by 2.4 times more than in January-October 2015. Meanwhile, Kazakhstan ... (More on P4)...(28)

### China Completes Power Plant in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE: A Chinese firm has completed a power plant worth \$350 million in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe, the ex-Soviet country said Thursday, indicating Beijing's growing economic dominance in the cash-strapped state. Tebian Electric Apparatus (TBEA) began building the coal-powered plant in 2013 and received the rights to a gold mine in the north of the Central Asian country to offset the cost of the investment. TBEA also built a 325-kilometre, \$400 million elec-

trical transmission line across Tajikistan in 2009. It is one of several Chinese companies active in Tajikistan, where China's Exim Bank holds around half of all foreign debt. Beijing has also invested heavily in minerals and transport links in its neighbour that endured a bitter civil war from 1992 to 1995. The investments are in line with China's "One Road, One Belt" initiative to ramp up Beijing's westerly trade across Eurasia with strategic investments in infrastructure. (Daily Times)

### Turkey Issues Detention Warrants for 87 Scholars in Coup Probe

ISTANBUL - Turkey issued detention warrants Friday for 87 academics over suspected links to a group led by a U.S.-based cleric accused of masterminding a failed coup in July, Turkish media reported. Police launched simultaneous operations in 12 cities to detain the suspects, including professors, associate professors and teaching academicians from Istanbul University, the Haberturk daily said, noting 51 suspects have been held. The leader of a minor political party is also targeted, as his party is believed to be established by those who have supported the group led by ... (More on P4)...(25)

### S. Korea's President Loses Power, Keeps Title, House, Salary

SEOUL, South Korea - South Korean President Park Geun-hye's impeachment Friday has stripped her of power - but not the perks. Even as her prime minister governs in her stead, Park gets to keep living at the presidential Blue House, using her official car and plane, collecting the same monthly salary (about \$15,000 reportedly) and receiving round-the-clock security. She also holds onto the title "President." But with nothing officially to do, it's uncertain how she'll spend her days during the up-to-six months the country's Constitutional Court has to decide whether to accept the impeachment and formally end



her presidency. In 2004, when President Roh Moo-hyun was impeached by lawmakers, he spent his time at the Blue House reading books and newspapers and mountain-climbing with journalists, according to South Korean media. The ... (More on P4)...(26)