

# Obstacles Remain for Syria after U.N. backs Peace Process: Germany

BERLIN - German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said on Saturday that there were still difficulties ahead for Syria despite the United Nations Security Council having approved a resolution endorsing an international road map for a Syria peace process. Speaking at a joint news conference with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Berlin after returning from the U.N. meeting, Steinmeier said: "Neither of us underestimate the difficulties and obstacles that still need to be overcome in defusing



the civil war in Syria." Steinmeier did not elaborate, but obstacles to ending the nearly five-year civil war, where no side is able to secure a clear military victory, in-

clude that major powers are bitterly divided on who may represent the opposition as well as on the future of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The resolution, which Wang said was "very balanced", gives a U.N. blessing to a plan negotiated in Vienna that calls for a ceasefire, talks between the Syrian government and opposition, and a roughly two-year timeline to create a unity government and hold elections. The resolution foresees the first talks beginning in January. (Reuters)

## Russia Ready to use 'more Military Means' in Syria if Need: Putin

MOSCOW - The Russian armed forces have not employed all their capability in Syria and may use "more military means" there if necessary, Russian news agencies quoted President Vladimir Putin as saying on Saturday. "We see how efficiently our pilots and intelligence agents coordinate their efforts with various kinds of forces - the army, navy and aviation, how they use the most modern weapons," Putin was quoted as saying in a speech. "I want to stress



that these are by far not all of our capabilities," he said. "We have more military means. And we will use them - if need be." (Reuters)

## 68 PKK Members Killed in Military Operations in SE Turkey

ANKARA - At least 68 militants of the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) have been killed in ongoing military operations in southeastern Turkey over the last four days, a security official said Saturday. The Turkish security forces had been launching operations in the towns of Cizre and Silopi in Sirnak province in southeastern Turkey over the last four days, the state-run Anatolia news agency quoted the official as saying. The operations also left one

Turkish soldier dead and 22 other Turkish soldiers and police officers wounded, according to the report. The PKK negotiated a cease-fire with Ankara in 2013, but the truce fell apart in the wake of a suicide bomb attack in the border town of Suruc in the southeastern province of Sanliurfa on July 20, in which 33 pro-Kurdish and left-wing activists were killed. Tensions have been running high, especially in southeastern... (More on P4)... (15)

## Nieghbor News

### Iran to Continue Support for Syria: Deputy FM

TEHRAN - A senior official has reaffirmed Iran's support for the Syrian nation and government in their fight against terrorism, stressing that only Syrians can decide the future of their country. "We will continue to support Syria and only the Syrian people will decide at the end of a political process," Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Iran's deputy foreign minister for Arab and African affairs, said. He made the remarks following the third round of international talks on the crisis in Syria in New York on Friday. Amir-Abdollahian said the Iranian delegation, headed by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Za-

rif, managed to block the adoption of a politically-motivated list of Syrian opposition in the meeting. Takfiri terror groups have no place in Syria's future, he said, adding terrorists would not be allowed to participate in national talks among Syrian parties. Tehran will work with Russia, Oman, Egypt, Turkey, Jordan and France to prepare a list of terror groups and the real Syrian opposition, Amir-Abdollahian said. The Iranian official made the remarks after the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution to endorse an international bid to end the nearly five-year-long conflict in Syria. (PressTV)

### Nearly 40pc IDPs have Returned to North Waziristan, Gen. Raheel told

RAWALPINDI - Nearly 40 per cent of the internally displaced persons have so far returned to their homes, Army Chief Genral Raheel Sharif was apprised during his visit to the North Waziristan Agency on Saturday. The army chief was briefed about the progress of ongoing Operation Zarb-i-Azb and the return of IDPs, read a statement issued by Inter-Services Public Relations. Details related to the ongoing rehabilitation work, and its effects on the socio-economic landscape of the area were also shared with the military chief. Gen Raheel expressed satisfaction over the pace

of rehabilitation work and directed all concerned to ensure a dignified return of IDPs - to a better built and rehabilitated area. Giving details, the formation commander said that around 291,827 families were internally displaced due to the Zarb-e-Azb operation. So far, nearly 108,503 families have returned to their homes following the successful culmination of the military operation. The army chief interacted with the tribal elders and recently returned IDPs, and assured them that the army will stay in the area till the completion of resettlement process. (Agencies)

## Cameron Cornered on EU Migrants as Referendum Looms

LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron is rolling over his EU renegotiation bid into 2016, as member nations seek a deal on the contentious issue of welfare handouts for migrants. Cameron hinted after a Brussels summit on Friday that he wants to hold Britain's long-awaited in-out referendum on membership of the European Union next year. Press reports Saturday suggested that Cameron was eyeing a June/July referendum,

which would follow British local elections in May. It looks like Cameron will however have to give ground on his demands on curbing welfare payments for citizens from other EU countries arriving in Britain, in the face of opposition from a string of other European leaders who see his proposals as discriminatory. French President Francois Hollande warned Cameron that the plan was "unacceptable". While... (More on P4)... (16)

## Yemen Negotiators to Form Ceasefire Committee as U.N. Peace talks Resume

DOHA - Yemeni negotiators taking part in U.N.-sponsored peace talks agreed on Saturday to form a committee to oversee a fragile ceasefire after fresh fighting imperiled their efforts to end Yemen's civil war, sources close to the talks told Reuters. They said the committee would be headed by a Lebanese army general and consist of representatives from the Saudi-backed government of Yemen's President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi and from the rival Houthis movement, which

is allied to Iran. Both sides arrived at a hotel in the Swiss city of Biel on Saturday to attend a fifth day of talks aimed at halting the eight-month conflict in the Arab world's poorest nation, which has killed thousands of people and caused widespread destruction and a major humanitarian crisis. A supposed one-week truce came under strain on Friday when troops loyal to Hadi seized an important northwestern city and a military base from Houthis who still control the capital Sanaa, residents



and tribal sources said. Planes and gunboats from a Saudi-led military coalition also bombed targets in northern Yemen, residents said. The United Nations Special Envoy for Yemen voiced deep concern at "numerous reports of violations of the cessation of hostilities", a U.N. statement said on Friday. Yemen, which was swept by mass Arab Spring-inspired protests in 2011, ... (More on P4)... (17)

## Air Strike that Killed Iraqi Soldiers Appears to have been by U.S. Plane: Carter

BAGHDAD - A U.S. aircraft appears to have mistakenly carried out an air strike that killed Iraqi security forces near the city of Fallujah, U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter said on Saturday. The Iraqi Minister of Defence Khaled al-Obeidi said earlier that nine soldiers died in the strike on Friday. The U.S. military is leading an international coalition that is waging an air offensive on Islamic State in Iraq and Syria, where the militant group control large swaths of territory. Obeidi told a news conference that the strike occurred when coalition air forces were covering the advance of Iraqi ground troops near Fallujah because the Iraqi army helicopters were not... (More on P4)... (18)

## Iraq Launches Probe in Killing 9 Soldiers in Coalition Friendly Fire

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi Defense Minister Khalid al-Obeidi on Saturday said the Iraqi authority launched a probe a day after the killing of nine Iraqi soldiers mistakenly, when U.S.-led coalition warplanes struck their positions near the Islamic State-held city of Fallujah. "The defense ministry has formed a committee to investigate the bombardment by international coalition aircraft on the army forces while they were advancing near the city of Fallujah, Obeidi told a news conference. "The international warplanes were providing support to the Iraqi ground forces because the Iraqi army helicopters were not able to fly due to the bad weather," Obeidi said. The incident occurred on Friday when Iraqi security forces and allied paramilitary... (More on P4)... (20)

## Germany and Austria Working Together on EU Asylum Law

BERLIN - Germany and Austria are working on a proposal for a common European asylum law, Germany's refugee crisis coordinator said in an interview with German magazine Focus. Hundreds of thousands of migrants fleeing war and poverty in Syria, Afghanistan and elsewhere have arrived in Germany this year, with many entering from neighboring Austria. Peter Altmaier, who Chancellor Angela Merkel tasked with overseeing the government's handling of the refugee crisis, said in an interview published on Saturday that he was working closely with Josef Ostermayer, an Austrian minister involved



in policy on the migration crisis. "We're talking about what such a system could look like," said Altmaier, who is also Merkel's chief of staff. He said they would soon approach other countries such as France and the Netherlands, adding that there was more willingness to talk about the issue now than there had been for years. So-called "hotspots" play a key role in the German-Austrian idea for an EU asylum law. These centers, which screen migrants arriving... (More on P4)... (19)

## Missile Tests our Legitimate Right: Iran

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has defended Iran's right to carry out missile tests, saying none of Iranian missiles are capable of carrying nuclear warheads. "It's our legitimate defense. These are not missiles that are designed to be capable of carrying nuclear warheads and, therefore, it is within our right to self-defense," Zarif told The New Yorker in an interview published on Friday. Iran successfully test-fired its precision-guided

long-range Emad missile on October 11 but it sparked an uproar among U.S. politicians who accused Iran of violating a nuclear accord. In a letter to President Barack Obama on Thursday, a number of Republican senators called on the government not to lift sanctions against Iran as required by the July nuclear agreement. "It is a mistake to treat Iran's ballistic missile program as separate from Iran's nuclear program," the 35 senators wrote. (PressTV)

## Keen to Lift Sanctions, Iran to Ship Enriched Uranium to Russia within Days

DUBAI - Iran will export most of its enriched uranium to Russia in the coming days as it rushes to implement a nuclear deal and secure relief from international sanctions, Tehran's nuclear chief was quoted as saying on Saturday. Drastically reducing its stock of enriched uranium, which can be used in nuclear weapons, was at the heart of the deal Iran reached in July with a group of six world powers. Under its terms, Iran must cut its stockpile to around 300 kg (660 lb) and mothball most of the centrifuges that produce the enriched fuel. It must also remove the core of a heavy water reactor at Arak so it cannot be used to produce plutonium, another potential bomb-making source. Once the United Nations verifies those steps, international sanctions will be lifted, giving Iran access to global markets for the first time in years and opening a lifeline for its ailing economy. "In the next few days around nine tonnes of Iran's enriched uranium will be exported to Russia," nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA. That is roughly the amount that Iran must export to bring its stock down to the required level. He said the enriched uranium would be taken out of Iran on board a Russian ship. Iran has already received a shipment of yellowcake, an unenriched uranium compound, from Russia in exchange for the stockpile. President Hassan Rouhani's government is aiming to get sanctions lifted by the end of... (More on P4)... (21)

## Azerbaijani Energy Minister to Visit Turkmenistan's new Gas Pipeline

ASHGABAT - Azerbaijani Energy Minister Natig Aliyevon Wednesday will pay a working visit to Turkmenistan, the press office of the Azerbaijan Energy Ministry has reported Saturday. The goal of the visit is Aliyev's participation at the opening ceremony of the East-West gas pipeline in Balkan district of Turkmenistan, which connects big fields on the east of the country with the western regions and the Caspian Sea coast. The visit will take place at the invitation of Turkmenistan's Minister of Oil & Gas Industry and Mineral Resources

Magomednur Khalilov. In his invitation Minister Khalilov evaluated highly the current level of cooperation between the two countries in the energy field and added that the East-West gas pipeline project will play an important role in the diversification of Turkmen gas transportation to the international markets, safeguarding energy safety and expanding multilateral cooperation in the energy field. The Turkmen Minister also said that the gas pipeline will serve joint interests of Turkmenistan and its partners on a long-term basis. (Agencies)

## US Flight Near Islands "Serious Military Provocation": Chinese Defense Ministry

BEIJING - China on Saturday said the flight of two B-52 strategic bombers over the area near the Nansha Islands was a serious military provocation and such actions must be prevented. The two U.S. bombers flew into the airspace near an island and reef of the Nansha Islands early on Dec. 10. Military personnel on the island and reef went on high alert and warned the aircraft to leave, according to the Ministry of National Defense. The United States has continuously sent military ships and planes to make a show of force and create tensions in the waters and airspace, according to the ministry. Such actions have severely threatened the

safety of Chinese personnel and facilities as well as peace and stability of the region, it said. The actions by the U.S. side were a serious military provocation, creating complex conditions in the South China Sea and even militarization in the region, it said. The ministry demanded the United States immediately adopt measures to prevent such dangerous actions in order to prevent damaging relations between the two militaries and countries. The Chinese armed forces will take whatever measures necessary to safeguard China's national sovereignty and security as well as peace and stability of the region, according to the ministry. (Xinhua)