

Syrian Kurdish Forces Retake Industrial Zone in Kobani

TEHRAN - In a series of attacks on the ISIL positions in the Syrian border town of Kobani, Kurdish forces managed to retake the city's industrial zone from the Takfiri militants and build a defense line, media report said. Fighters belonging to People's Protection Units (YPG) attacked the zone that lies in the Northern part of the town on Friday and expelled the militants who had been positioned there for three months,

Rudaw reported.

Reports coming out of the city on Saturday said dead bodies of the Takfiri militants had laid scattered among the rubble and in the alleys after the confrontations ended.

According to the YPG, 21 ISIL militants were killed in the clashes.

The Kurdish fighters said the aim of Friday's attacks were to get closer to the Mistanur hills outside the city and eventually reclaim it from the militants. (FNA)



Arab League to Discuss Libya Conflict

CAIRO - Arab League ambassadors will meet on Monday to discuss the deepening conflict in Libya, the bloc's deputy secretary general Ahmed Ben Helli said.

The meeting at the Cairo-based League was requested by Libya's internationally recognised government, which is battling Islamist-backed militias, and supported by its two leading regional backers, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates.

"The meeting will be devoted to discussing the dangerous developments that Libya is experiencing, the increase in



violence and acts of terrorism," Ben Helli told reporters on Sunday. These acts "are affecting not only individuals... but

also vital economic infrastructure on which the wealth of the Libyan people depends, particularly oil storage tanks." The Fajr

Libya (Libya Dawn) militia alliance, which controls most of the capital as well as third city Misrata, launched an offensive last month to try to capture the country's main eastern oil export terminals. December 25 rocket fire by its fighters sparked a blaze which raged uncontrolled through seven of the 19 storage tanks at the Al-Sidra terminal for nine days before being extinguished. Industry analysts have said Libya's oil production has dropped to less than 350,000 barrels per day from 800,000 before the fighting erupted on December 13. (AFP)

Salman Raps West Silence on Bahrain Rights Violations

MANAMA - 'Bahrain's Shia opposition leader Sheikh Ali Salman says Western states have adopted a double-standard approach toward the Manama regime's human rights violations to protect their interests in the Persian Gulf region, Press TV reports.

"The West believes in the protection of human rights and democracy, but when it comes to the regimes in the region, such values are ignored and not discussed at a greater level because of these interests they have in the Persian Gulf," Sheikh Salman told Press TV in an exclusive interview just before his arrest on December 28. The top al-Wafaq figure further emphasized the role of some regional Arab countries in the Al Khalifa regime's heavy-handed crackdown on popular anti-government protests across the Persian Gulf state. (Press TV)

Iraqi Soldiers Repel ISIL Attacks in Western Iraq



AL-ANBAR - Iraqi security forces, backed by local tribesmen, have managed to repel attacks by Takfiri ISIL militants in the violence-scarred western province of al-Anbar.

The police chief of the Hit district in Anbar, Colonel Salah al-Delimi, said on Sunday that Iraqi troops have deterred ISIL assaults, and killed 30 ISIL militants during intense fighting in the city of Khan al-Baghdadi, situated about 180 kilometers (110 miles) northwest of the capital, Baghdad.

Khan al-Baghdadi is on the verge of a "humanitarian catastrophe," as some 50,000 residents remain blockaded by the ISIL militants.

The area is also suffering from a water shortage as ISIL snipers have prevented water department employees from entering the region to fix a water supply system.

On December 24, ISIL militants attacked Khan al-Baghdadi with mortar shells loaded with chlorine gas.

The Takfiri ISIL militants killed at least 300 Iraqi soldiers in a chlorine gas attack on an army battalion in al-Anbar Province in September.

The ISIL terrorists control some parts of Syria and Iraq. They are engaged in crimes against humanity in the areas under their control. ISIL militants have terrorized and killed people of all communities, including Shias, Sunnis, Kurds, and Christians. (Press TV)

OSCE to Double Observers in Eastern Ukraine to 500

KIEV - The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) aims to increase the number of its observers in Ukraine.

According to OSCE spokesman Michael Bociurkiw on Sunday, the organization will double the number of its observers in violence-stricken eastern Ukraine from 250 to 500.

The situation has become calmer in eastern Ukraine, but the ceasefire is still being violated by both sides, Bociurkiw added.

"One of the cornerstones of the Minsk agreement, namely the withdrawal of heavy weaponry, has not been implemented to any appreciable degree," he stated, referring to the ceasefire deal signed by the representatives of Kiev, Moscow, and self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk republics in the Belarusian capital, Minsk, on September 5.

The OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine was launched to inspect the clashes between the country's military and pro-Russia forces.

The European organization has also intensified its efforts to broker peace talks between Kiev, Moscow, and pro-Russia forces to end the bloody conflict.

The two mainly Russian-speaking regions of Donetsk and Lugansk in eastern Ukraine have been the scene of deadly clashes between pro-Russia protesters and the Ukrainian army since Kiev's military operation started in mid-April in a bid to crush the protests.

Violence intensified in May after the two flash-point regions held local referendums in which their residents voted overwhelmingly in favor of independence from Ukraine and joining the Russian Federation. (Press TV)

Australian PM in Iraq for IS Group Talks: State TV

BAGHDAD - Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott visited Baghdad on Sunday for talks on aiding Iraq in its fight against the Islamic State jihadist group, state television reported.

Australia is part of a US-led coalition carrying out air strikes against IS in Iraq and has deployed special forces troops to assist in training the army.

"Abbott arrived in Baghdad on an official visit to discuss bilateral cooperation between the two countries and... strengthening support and supplying the security forces to con-

front (IS) terrorist gangs," the television said, citing "government sources." It did not provide further details on the visit.

IS spearheaded an offensive that swept through much of Iraq's Sunni Arab heartland in June. The group's rapid expansion and brutality in areas it controls in Iraq and neighbouring Syria eventually sparked an international campaign against it. Dozens of Australians are fighting for Islamic militant groups overseas, raising fears that they could return home and carry out attacks. (AFP)

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Nuclear Talks A Matter of Heart: Iran's President

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Sunday that ongoing nuclear negotiations with world powers are a matter of "heart," not just centrifuges ahead of talks next week in Geneva.

Speaking to an economic conference in Tehran, Rouhani both countered hard-line critics worried Iran will give up too much while also attempting to signal his administration remains open to negotiation with the six-nation group leading the talks. If "we are ready to stop some types of enrichment which we do not need at this time, does it mean we have compromised our princi-

ples and cause?" Rouhani asked. He responded: "Our cause is not linked to a centrifuge. It is connected to our heart and to our willpower."

On Jan. 15, Iranian negotiators will meet in Geneva with officials from the U.S., Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany, hoping to hammer details out of a final deal. Iran reached an interim, one-year deal with world powers in November 2013 to freeze its nuclear program in exchange for the easing of some sanctions. Negotiators later agreed to extend talks until June 30, with hopes of reaching a rough deal in March. (AP)

Action against TTP, its Supporters Launched



ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan said on Saturday that action had been launched against the outlawed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), its supporters and sympathisers.

Speaking at a press conference, he said it had been decided in the National Action Plan that TTP operatives, their supporters, masterminds and financiers would be identified across the country. The federal intelligence agencies would cooperate with provinces to accomplish the task, he added.

Chaudhry Nisar said there were around 60 banned outfits, but all were not involved in terrorism. Some were operating under new names and some quietly oper-

ating with the same old names, he added.

The minister said funds of banned organisations would be blocked and legal action would be initiated against them. If they remain adamant, their cases would also be referred to military courts. He said the banned outfits would not be allowed to collect donations and sacrificial hides and their bank accounts would be seized. They would also not be allowed to use social media for anti-state propaganda, he added.

Chaudhry Nisar said over 100 terrorists had been killed in over 400 intelligence-based operations across the country during the past three months. Over 250 had been arrested and investigation was in progress. (Monitoring Desk)

China Launches Website on Military Weaponry Procurement

BEIJING - A website on military weapon procurement was officially launched on Sunday.

Under the General Armament Department of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), weain.mil.cn provides information on the country's weapon and armament needs, relevant policies, procurement notices, enterprise lists and technology. Private enterprises, military armament-purchasing departments and military industry groups as well as personnel can register on the website for consultation and further information. According to the PLA General Armament Department, the new platform was established

to cement military and civilian integration and aims to accelerate steps in armament procurement system reform, break procurement barriers, improve competitiveness and promote efficiency.

Since 2014, a series of policies have been issued to improve military and civilian integration, market access, information exchange, supervision, and security. In May, 2014, the first "military and civilian integration forum" released around 200 items on weapon procurement, which attracted more than 100 private enterprises and scores of cooperation agreements were subsequently signed. (Xinhua)

Russia to Take Used Nuclear Fuel Out of Uzbekistan

MOSCOW - Russia will soon take the highly enriched used nuclear fuel out of Uzbekistan, a representative of the Uzbek government told Trend.

The used nuclear fuel, also called the spent nuclear fuel, is a nuclear fuel that was irradiated in a nuclear reactor.

The source told Trend that an intergovernmental agreement was signed by Uzbekistan and Russia in April 2014, stipulating the return of the Russian-made highly enriched used nuclear fuel to Russia for its further processing.

The nuclear fuel will be taken out of the Uzbek research reactor IIN-ZM

as an UO2SO4 solution. The highly enriched used nuclear fuel will be taken to Russia for temporary storage and its subsequent processing.

Russian Federal Assembly's lower house the State Duma and its upper house the Federation Council passed a law on ratification of the mentioned agreement in December 2014. The law was then signed by the Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Currently, Uzbekistan has highly enriched irradiated liquid nuclear fuel in its reactor IIN-ZM of the enterprise FOTON, near the country's capital of Tashkent. (Trend)

UK's Cameron will Move EU Referendum Forward if Possible

LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron said on Sunday he would like to bring forward a planned referendum on Britain's membership of the European Union from 2017 if possible.

Under pressure from Eurosceptic members of his own party and the rise in popularity of the anti-EU UK Independence Party (UKIP), Cameron has pledged to renegotiate Britain's ties with the 28-nation bloc and try to claw back powers to London.

He has said he will hold a referendum in 2017 if his Conservatives win a national election on May 7. "If I think we could do



that earlier I would be delighted. The sooner I can deliver on this commitment of a renegotiation and a referendum ... the better," he told the BBC. Cameron is set to discuss his reform plans, which include restricting EU migrants' access to welfare payments, with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in London

on Wednesday. He has said they will require treaty change but Merkel has made clear she will not allow the EU's rules on workers' freedom of movement to be diluted. UKIP leader Nigel Farage told Sky News that under Cameron's plans the referendum had been "kicked into the long grass" and said his rene-

gotiation looked "highly improbable".

The May election looked set to be one of the most closely fought in modern British history. While the Conservatives are narrowly trailing the opposition Labour party in most opinion polls, many analysts predict neither will win a majority, possibly resulting in another coalition of two or more parties.

Cameron, whose center-right Conservatives have governed Britain in coalition with the center-left Liberal Democrats since 2010, traded blows with Labour on Sunday over the economy and health-care. (Reuters)

Over 15 Killed in Boko Haram Attack on Cameroon Bus: Official



TEHRAN - At least 15 people were killed in an attack by Boko Haram Takfiri terrorists on a bus in Northern Cameroon, a senior local security official said.

"Boko Haram elements attacked a bus that was transporting many passengers from Kousseri to Maroua and killed 25 persons on the spot," said a senior officer in the military's BIR rapid reaction unit deployed in the region, Reuters reported. The officer, who asked not to be named, said another 10 people had been severely injured and taken to Maroua hospital and he feared the death toll would rise. Maroua is the capital of the Far North region, which has seen the worst of the spillover of Nigeria's conflict. Late last month, Cameroon had to call on its air force to help troops dislodge Boko Haram terrorists who briefly occupied a military camp after hundreds of militants mounted a wave of attacks on five Northern towns. (FNA)

Terrorists Declining in Iraq: Leader's Aide

TEHRAN - Iranian Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's adviser Akbar Velayati expressed pleasure that the Iraqi people and government have succeeded in defeating the terrorist groups, and said the terrorism in Iraq is moving on a downward slope.

"The terrorist groups like the ISIL and others are being defeated in Iraq and this has been done through the efforts of the Iraqi people, specially the popular forces, after the jihad fatwa was issued by Ayatollah Sistani and with the help of the popular and Iranian forces, and the terrorist groups which were once in power are now nearing demise," Velayati told reporters after meeting with Head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Ammar al-Hakim in Tehran on Sunday.

Asked about some remarks on the federalization of Iraq, he said, "The Iraqi people should decide about what is going on in Iraq and their interests."

Yet, he expressed the confidence that none of the Shiite, Sunni and Kurdish groups favors Iraq's weakness "and they support the territorial integrity and growing power of their



country".

In relevant remarks last Tuesday, Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) strongly condemned the crimes committed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant in Iraq, and stressed that the war on ISIL should continue until all the Takfiri terrorists are driven out of entire Iraq.

"Even an inch of Iraq's soil should not be under the occupation of the Takfiri terrorists who have no objective other than (promoting) Islamophobia and destruction of Iraq's human and financial resources," Shamkhani said in a meeting with visiting Iraqi Defense Minister Khalid al-Obeidi in Tehran.

He underlined that the ISIL was in a weak position now, and said, "If some trans-regional countries' arms and financial aids to ISIL are cut, we will soon witness the liberation of all regions which

are currently under the control of the terrorists."

Shamkhani reiterated that Iran had and would always support the restoration of security and tranquility in the regional countries, including Iraq. He pointed to the status quo of Iran-Iraq defense relations, and said, "The expansion of strategic ties between the two countries is not restricted to the defense fields and we will witness broadening of economic cooperation between Iran and Iraq soon." The Iraqi defense minister, for his part, voiced pleasure in his ongoing visit to Iran, and said, "Iran's all-out support for the Iraqi armed forces has played a determining role in the recent victories of the Iraqi army (against ISIL)." Obeidi noted that the recent Iraqi elections had played a valuable role in strengthening the Arab country's armed forces and boosting the morale of Iraqi troops. (FNA)