

OIC Session Urges United Stance to Resolve Problems of Islamic World

ISTANBUL - The statements accusing all Muslims after the Paris attacks is neither acceptable, nor contributing to the counter-terrorism efforts, said the representatives of Muslim countries here on Monday. "No one can accuse all the Muslims due to the names of the terrorists, the symbols they use, the statements they make," said Turkey's parliament speaker Cemil Cicek at the 10th session of the Parliamentary Union of the Organization of Islamic Coop-



eration (OIC) Member States. Cemil Cicek called on politicians, intel-

would blame any religion. During the meeting, the participants appealed the Islamic countries to cooperate against increasing Islamophobic incidents and terrorism around the world. "As the parliamentary union of the OIC member states, it is important to adopt a united stance and to resolve the common problems of the Islamic world," Cicek remarked. In that context he drew attentions to the importance of dialogue between religions,

between civilizations and asked the same sensibility to be expressed for any terrorist attacks around the globe like in Nigeria, Pakistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and Lebanon. In Tuesday's session Pakistan proposed a resolution against publication of controversial caricatures by a French magazine Charlie Hebdo. According to Pakistani media "Dawn," the resolution wrote, the freedom of expression should not be misused as a means to attack or hurt public

sentiments and religious beliefs. "In this regard it is against Article 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Clause 2 of Article 10 of the European Union's Convention on Human Rights," it added. The three-day conference will mainly address the regional developments, terrorism and the Western anti-Prophet press campaigns. Based in Tehran, capital of Iran, the Parliamentary Union of the OIC was established in 1999. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

Iran, Russia Agree to Speed Up Defensive Cooperation: DM

TEHRAN - Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan announced endorsement of an agreement with Russia to enhance and accelerate defensive cooperation between the two countries. "We agreed to accelerate our cooperation in defensive and military technologies," Dehqan said in a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart General Sergey Shoigu in Tehran on Tuesday.

"The conditions ruling the region and the international issues showed that a powerful Russia in cooperation with an independent and powerful Iran can leave durable impacts on regional peace and security," he added.

Dehqan underlined that the two countries' leaders are firmly determined to widen and enhance mutual cooperation in all fields. During the press conference, the Russian minister described cooperation between Iran and Russia as a major contributor to the establishment of global and regional security and stability, and said in his meeting

with General Dehqan, the two sides decided to strengthen practical dimensions of military cooperation between Tehran and Russia.

"In these negotiations, we discussed security in the region, the Middle-East and Afghanistan and our viewpoints were close or similar to each other," he added.

"We also exchanged views on the importance of coordination in fighting international terrorism and drug trafficking and underscored the importance of mutual cooperation, considering the regional conditions," Shoigu said.

Shoigu arrived in Tehran on Monday night for a two-day visit at the invitation of his Iranian counterpart. Also today, General Dehqan and General Shoigu signed an agreement to broaden their defensive cooperation and also resolve the problem with the delivery of Russia's S300 missile defense systems to Iran. The two sides also agreed to broaden their defense cooperation and joint campaign against terrorism and extremism. (FNA)

New Round of Peace Talks on Ukraine Set: Germany

BERLIN - A new round of peace talks on the conflict in eastern Ukraine will be held in Berlin on Wednesday evening with the foreign ministers of Russia, Ukraine, Germany and France taking part, a spokeswoman for the Foreign Ministry in Berlin said. A ministry spokeswoman confirmed a report to appear in the Sueddeutsche Zeitung daily. It said that this time Ukraine and Russia had requested the meeting. They are eager to discuss ways to defuse a recent upturn in violence in the region, it said. After a similar meet-



ing of foreign ministers in Berlin last Monday, the contact group of the four countries called off plans to hold a summit on the conflict because of a lack of progress in implementing the Minsk agreement.

The war between Ukrainian forces and

pro-Russian rebels broke out soon after Russia annexed Crimea last year, creating the worst crisis in East-West relations since the Cold War. Western governments accuse Russia of backing the rebels, including by sending in troops, a charge it denies. (Reuters)

Japan PM Demands Release of Japanese Hostages Held By IS

JERUSALEM - Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe demanded the release of two Japanese hostages held by the Islamic State (IS) militants on Tuesday at a press conference in Jerusalem. "I strongly demand that they (the hostages) not be harmed and that they be immediately released," Abe told reporters in Jerusalem on Tuesday. "Their lives are the top priority," he added. He also called the kidnapping "unacceptable" and said the international community should not give in to terror. "The international community needs to respond firmly and cooper-

ate without caving into terrorism," Abe said. Abe also referred in his statements to the terror attacks in Paris in the past two weeks in which 17 people were killed, saying he "denounces any act of terror" and that Japan would "fight against terrorism along with the international community." The Japanese prime minister did not respond to whether Japanese authorities are planning to pay the ransom, simply saying Japan will "make utmost efforts to save the lives (of the hostages)." The Japanese prime minister also said he would

send a deputy foreign minister, Yashuhide Nakayama, to Jordan in order to try to figure out a solution for the hostages crisis. Abe arrived in Israel on Sunday with a delegation of officials and business leaders in order to boost the economic cooperation with Israel. Earlier on Tuesday, the IS group demanded in a video footage 200 million U.S. dollars in ransom in order to release the two Japanese captives. The press conference in Jerusalem marked the end of Abe's visit in Israel, the first visit made by a Japanese prime minister since 2006. (Xinhua)

Houthis Take Yemen Presidential Palace: Sources

SANAA - Houthi fighters entered Yemen's presidential palace after a brief clash with the compound's security guards, witnesses and security sources told Reuters, a day after some of the worst battles in the capital in years. Guards at the presidential palace housing the main office of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi said they handed over the compound to Houthi fighters after a brief clash. Witnesses said there was a brief clash between a Houthi



force and palace guards. Witnesses also said they saw the Houthis seize armored vehicles that had been guarding the entrance to the palace. The Houthis on Monday fought artillery battles with the army near the presidential palace,

in some of the most intense fighting in Sanaa in years, and surrounded the prime minister's residence. Nine people were killed and 90 wounded before a ceasefire came into force on Monday evening. (Reuters)

Egypt's El-Sissi Says Protest Rights Secondary to Stability

CAIRO - Egypt's President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi said Tuesday that those questioning his government about human rights and freedom of expression are ignoring the fact that his country of 90 million lacks development, investment and desperately needed stability. Speaking during celebrations of national Police Day Tuesday, el-Sissi said he respects human rights but that his country - with a massive segment of Egyptians living in poverty - is facing exceptional circumstances and some violations are inevitable. El-Sissi focused in particular on critics of a controversial protest law passed by the government last year which punishes all unauthorized demonstrations with up to five years in prison and hefty fines. These critics says the law aims to quell all forms of dissent amid an intense government crackdown against Islamists and other dissidents - including secular activists who led the 2011 uprising that ousted longtime autocrat Hosni Mubarak. They also point to the irony that el-Sissi wouldn't be president if not for massive 2013 demonstrations

against Islamist President Mohammed Morsi, that prompted el-Sissi - then the defense minister - to oust Morsi. El-Sissi's government has repeatedly dismissed those criticisms, saying the law doesn't ban demonstrations but rather regulates them. On Tuesday, and only days before the Jan. 25 anniversary of the uprising against Mubarak, el-Sissi repeated his depiction of protests as a force for distraction and instability. "Ninety million want to eat, drink, live and be reassured for their future," he told a room packed with police officers and public figures. "I am not saying protests are rejected, never. But I am saying that we gave the issue of the protest such a space... But those 90 million want to eat."

He said tourism, one of Egypt's top foreign revenue sources, has collapsed after years of turmoil, costing the country billions of dollars. "Who will compensate that? Be careful when you are demanding your rights, be careful. Don't take us down with you. Don't take us down with you," he yelled. AP

UN Urges African Forces to Fight Boko Haram Terrorists



TEHRAN - The UN Security Council has urged central African countries to boost plans for a multinational force to fight Boko Haram Takfiri group, which has seized control over an alarming amount of territory in Nigeria and stepped up cross-border raids in neighboring Cameroon, media report said. The council issued a 13-point statement on Monday strongly condemning attacks by Boko Haram terrorists, in particular those involving children used as suicide bombers, and demanded an end to the violence, Aljazeera reported. On the eve of a key meeting in Niger of regional leaders, the 15-member council urged Nigeria's neighbors to advance planning for the deployment of a multinational task force to drive out Boko Haram. Chad is set to contribute a sizeable contingent to the force along with Cameroon, Niger, Nigeria and Benin. (FNA)

IMF Lowers Global Growth Forecasts with Marked Divergence

BEIJING - The International Monetary Fund (IMF) on Tuesday lowered its global growth forecasts for the next two years with marked divergence among major economies. The IMF predicted that the global economy would grow by 3.5 percent and 3.7 percent in 2015 and 2016. These rates are both downward revisions of 0.3 percentage point relative to its October 2014 World Economic Outlook (WEO). "The revisions reflect a reassessment of prospects in China, Russia, the euro area, and Japan as well as weaker activity in some major oil exporters because of the sharp drop in oil prices. The United States is the only major economy for which growth projections have been raised," the IMF said in its updated WEO report.

"The global economy in 2015 is projected to grow faster than 2014, but less rapidly as we expected in October," Gian Maria Milesi-Ferretti, deputy director of IMF's Research Department, said in an interview with Xinhua in Beijing. The Washington-based IMF forecast the world economy to expand 3.3 percent in 2014. The IMF also predicted the U.S. economy would grow by 3.6 percent in 2015 and 3.3 percent in 2016, up 0.5 percentage point and 0.3 percentage point from previous forecasts. The world economy is going through "strong and complex cross currents," Olivier Blanchard, IMF's chief economist, said at a press conference in Beijing. (Xinhua)

Syrian Army Repels Terrorists' Attack on Strategic Military Airport

TEHRAN - The Syrian army continued its advances in different parts of Idlib province in the Northwestern parts of the country, and thwarted an attack by the Takfiri terrorists on Abu Zohour military airport. The terrorists were pushed back from the surrounding areas of Abu Zohour military airport as they were trying to launch a fresh wave of offensive on army positions at the airport in the Eastern parts of the city of Saraqeb in Idlib countryside. Abu Zohour Airport located in the Northern parts of Idlib countryside is Syria's second largest military airport which is located in an area of 8 square kilometers and can accommodate 22 helicopters and Mig fighter jets. Abu Zohour Airport is located 50 kilometers to the East of the city of Idlib and 63 kilometers from Khan Sheikhou and 40 kilometers from Ma'aret al-Nauman. In early 2014, the Syrian army regained full control over the Abu Zohour airport by destroying the militants' positions in there and its surrounding

areas. Also in the past 24 hours, the Syrian army struck a major blow at the armed groups in other parts of Idlib province, killing and injuring a large number of Takfiri militants. The army troops stormed the hideouts of the militants in the areas Talab and Tall Salmo in Idlib countryside, claiming the lives of scores of them. Elsewhere, the militants suffered major losses in the towns of al-Misherfe and al-Rastan in Homs, as the army gained ground in the central province. Meantime, a fighter from the North Caucasus, who has fought with the foreign-backed militants in the Syrian war, was killed in his native Kabardino-Balkaria in the capital Nalchik. He was reportedly caught during a counter-terrorism operation in the Southwest of the city. Holed up in a house, the militant shot at members of a special police force, refusing to give himself up, before being "neutralized." Intelligence indicates he was being trained by a Takfiri group as a bomber, among other things. (FNA)

Iraqi Troops Repulse ISIL Attack in Ramadi: Official:

TEHRAN - The Iraqi army repelled an attack by the ISIL Takfiri group in the city of Ramadi, Anbar province, and claimed the lives of dozens of terrorists, a senior army official said. An Iraqi commander, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the army troops pushed back an ISIL offensive in the district of Sakkar near Nikhaib, as the terrorists attempted to creep into the city. The source added that the militants suffered heavy casualties during the clashes. Since June 2014, Northern, Western and Central

provinces of Iraq have been the scene of insurgency posed by the ISIL terrorists who attacked army bases in summer and occupied vast areas in Nineveh, Anbar and Salahuddin provinces, including Mosul, Tikrit and Fallujah. Army soldiers and populace forces, form both Shiite and Sunni tribes, as well as Kurdish Pishmarga decided to grow united against the new wave of militancy in the country. Army officials had previously announced that insurgency in the country will be eradicated by the current yearend. (FNA)

Freedom of Expression Should Not Be Misused: Tasneem Aslam

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan strongly condemns the blasphemous cartoons published in the French weekly magazine Charlie Hebdo, Pakistani Foreign Office (FO) Spokesperson Tasneem Aslam said in a statement on Tuesday. "Echoing the sentiments of the people of Pakistan, the president and the prime minister have strongly condemned the

publication, which has caused great offence to Muslims by hurting their sentiments and religious sensibilities all over the world," said Aslam. She further said that the National Assembly and the Senate's Foreign Relations Committee have passed resolutions condemning the cartoons which hurt the core belief of all Muslims. (Monitoring Desk)

China Welcomes DPRK-U.S. Dialogue

BEIJING - China on Tuesday said it welcomed the dialogue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the United States on Monday in Singapore, calling for an early resumption of the six-party talks on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Launched in 2003, the six-party talks involves China, the DPRK, the United States, the ROK, Japan and Russia. China supports the DPRK and the United States in bettering bilateral ties, said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying at a daily press briefing. "We welcome increased mutual understanding and trust through dialogue and contact, which jointly work for the stability of the Korean Peninsula and forge ahead the process of the denuclearization," said Hua. China hopes relevant dia-

logue and contacts will create conditions for the early resumption of the six-party talks, she added. DPRK's chief nuclear negotiator Ri Yong Ho held an unofficial meeting with former U.S. senior officials and experts including former U.S. special representative for DPRK policy Stephen Bosworth on the current situation on the Korean Peninsula Monday in Singapore. The closed-door meeting came after the United States rejected the proposal by the DPRK that it stands ready to suspend its nuclear tests if the United States suspends its annual joint military exercises with the Republic of Korea (ROK). The United States has obviously downplayed the importance of the meeting, with its embassy in Singapore saying that the U.S. government was not involved. (Xinhua)

The Somoni Lost 11.2 Percent of Its Value: Officials

DUSHANBE - In a report released at a news conference in Dushanbe, Abdujabbor Shirinov, the head of the National Bank of Tajikistan (NBT), revealed that the national currency, the somoni, last year lost 11.2 percent of its value against the dollar. "In 2014, Tajik central bank allocated 137 million U.S. dollars and 984 million somoni to prop up the national currency against the dollar," Shirinov said. He attributed the fall in the value of the somoni

to "the tense geopolitical situations in the region and slow economic growth in the countries, which are major trading partners of Tajikistan." According to him, fluctuations in Tajikistan's currency market will continue until the international crude oil prices stabilize and the economic situation in Russia stabilizes accordingly. "Some international experts forecast that the crude oil prices will stabilize during the first half-year of 2015," Shirinov said. (Asia-Plus)