

Libya Talks Resume, U.N. Plays Down Absence of A Major Player

GENEVA - The United Nations opened a second round of political talks over Libya in Geneva on Monday and played down the absence of a key faction, saying only the site of the talks was a point of contention. Four years after Muammar Gaddafi's fall, Libya has two rival governments -- one internationally recognized and the other set up by a faction that has taken over Tripoli -- who are locked in a conflict Western powers fear will slide into civil war. The U.N. wants the rival factions to forge a unity government and

end hostilities. The internationally recognized government and some of its opponents are represented at the talks, but the main rival government based in Tripoli has refused to attend. "They don't have a problem with the substance of the talks and they have agreed to participate in the talks. They are asking for the talks to be back in Libya and this is something where the other participants agree," U.N. Special Representative Bernardino Leon, who is chairing the talks, told Reuters. "I am hopeful that they will be involved - they are following, they

are very interested in what we are discussing, and I hope that they will join if we can go back to Libya at some point." Mohammad Shoaib, first vice president of the Libyan parliament, said it would be possible to move the talks to Libya "if we find a peaceful place". Leon wants a ceasefire to underpin the political talks and plans to talk to leaders of armed groups later this week in Geneva. Some factions had declared partial ceasefires before the first round of talks, but sporadic clashes have continued. At the opening of a first



round of talks two weeks ago, he said the violence seemed to have subsided and he hoped that was a response to his call for support. But this weekend there were clashes in Benghazi

and near Sabha, the main city in the south, and a deputy foreign minister was kidnapped from his hotel by gunmen. A source involved in the Geneva talks said the deputy minister, Has-

san al-Saghir, had been released, and pointed to a unilateral ceasefire by Tuareg forces in the southwestern town of Ubari as the latest sign of faith in the U.N. process. (Reuters)

Obama, New Saudi King to Discuss Yemen, IS: White House

NEW DELHI - U.S. President Barack Obama and new Saudi Arabia King Salman are expected to discuss shared concerns about the turmoil in Yemen and the fight against Islamic State militants during their first formal meeting in Riyadh on Tuesday, the White House said. Cutting short a visit to India, Obama is leading a U.S. delegation to the Saudi capital to offer condolences after the death of King Abdullah, Salman's brother and a close ally of the United States. "Principally, this is to mark this transition in leadership and to pay respects to the family and the people of Saudi Arabia," Obama's deputy national security adviser, Ben Rhodes, said on

Monday. "But I'm sure that while we're there, they'll touch on some of the leading issues where we cooperate very closely with Saudi Arabia," Rhodes told reporters in New Delhi. The tense regional security situation means Washington needs Saudi Arabia as much as ever, even though its domestic oil boom means it no longer relies as heavily on oil supplies from the world's leading oil exporter. Saudi Arabia has backed the U.S.-led coalition fighting Islamic State militants in Iraq and Syria. The two countries are also concerned about Yemen, where the country's U.S.-backed government collapsed last week. "I

think they'll touch on those issues, and there will be a chance for us to make sure that we're in good alignment going forward where we have overlapping interests," Rhodes said. "I think you saw the king send a signal that he's committed to continuity in terms of Saudi Arabia's approach to those issues," he said. The White House has "very good relations" with King Salman's two designated heirs, Crown Prince Muqrin and Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, Rhodes said. Obama has said the United States will continue to target militants involved with al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP) in Yemen. (Reuters)

Greek Leftist Tsipras Sworn in As PM to Fight Bailout Terms

ATHENS - Greek left-wing leader Alexis Tsipras was sworn in on Monday as the prime minister of a new hard-line, anti-bailout government determined to face down international lenders and end nearly five years of tough economic measures. The decisive victory by Tsipras' Syriza in Sunday's snap election reignites fears of new financial troubles in the country that set off the regional crisis in 2009. It is also the first time a member of the 19-nation euro zone will be led by parties rejecting German-backed austerity. Tsipras' success is also likely to empower Europe's fringe parties, including other anti-austerity movements across the region's economical-



ly-depressed south. The trouncing of the conservatives represents a defeat of Europe's middle-ground political guard, which has dallied on a growth-versus-budget discipline debate for five years while voters suffered. "We have an uphill road ahead," Tsipras told President Karolos Papoulias just before being sworn in as prime minister in a ceremony that eschewed the traditional oath on a Bible and blessing with basil and wa-

ter. Tsipras met Greece's Archbishop Ieronymos to say he planned to take a non-religious oath. Within hours of victory on a campaign of "Hope is coming!", the 40-year-old Tsipras sealed a coalition deal with the small Independent Greeks party which also opposes Greece's EU/IMF aid program though the two parties are at odds on many social issues like illegal immigration. Syriza won 149 seats in the 300-seat parliament, leaving it... (More on P4)... (29)

U.S. Official Holds Talk with Impeached Former Thai PM

BANGKOK - A visiting high-level official of the United States government held talks on Monday with former Thai premier Yingluck Shinawatra, following her impeachment by legislators last Friday. Daniel Russel, assistant secretary of state for East Asia and Pacific Affairs, met with Yingluck at the residence of the U.S. ambassador for about 30 minutes to discuss the event in which a total of 190 members of the National Legislative Assembly voted to impeach the former lady leader, rendering her banned from politics for five years. She was ruled by the non-elected lawmakers, all of

whom were handpicked by Thai Prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha, guilty of corruption charges involving a rice subsidy program implemented by her government. Accompanying Yingluck during the informal talk with Russel were former Thai foreign minister Surapong Tovichakchaikul and Yingluck's former secretary Suranand Vejajiva. Details of the talk were not available to disclose at the moment. Then, the U.S. assistant secretary of state left the residence of the U.S. envoy, who is yet to be named by Washington, for the headquarters of the Democrat Party to meet

with former premier Abhisit Vejjajiva. Abhisit, a cousin of Suranand's, led opposition legislators in 2013's censure debate against Yingluck's Pheu Thai (For Thais) Party-led government over the populist rice program which they had alleged to have been largely prone to corruption involving high-level government officials. Finally, Russel visited the headquarters of the foreign ministry to meet with Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Thanasak Patimaprakorn. Meanwhile, Prayut described the talk between Russel and Yingluck as a "..." (More on P4)... (30)

Rebels Advance in Ukraine, Moscow Faces Sanctions Threats

KIEV/ST PETERSBURG - Russian-backed rebels pushed forward on Monday with a new offensive that has brought all-out war back to eastern Ukraine after a five-month ceasefire, bringing U.S. and European threats of tighter Western financial sanctions against Moscow.

Washington and Brussels are both considering new measures after accusing Russia of openly supporting the latest rebel advance in Ukraine with money, arms and troops on the ground. Ambassadors of NATO countries and Ukraine were due to meet in Brussels to discuss a response to the fighting, their first such emergency meeting since August. Moscow denies playing a military role, and Russian President Vladimir Putin accused Kiev of prolonging the conflict by refusing to talk to the rebels. He also said a "foreign NATO legion" was fighting alongside Ukrainian forces. The government in Kiev said it had ordered a state of emergency across the two rebel-dominated



provinces and placed all Ukrainian territory on high alert. Its military said seven Ukrainian soldiers had been killed and 24 wounded in intensified clashes in the past 24 hours, with heavy fighting at Debaltsevo, a small town the rebels have vowed to seize to safeguard their main strongholds. Violence in eastern Ukraine is at by far its worst since a ceasefire was agreed last September. Casualties have mounted, including in the major port of Mariupol where Kiev says 30 civilians were killed in rebel shelling on Saturday. After months during which the truce was punctured by small-scale skirmishes on the front line, rebels fighting for territory the Kremlin calls "New Russia" said

last week they were left with no choice but to launch an advance. Their main aim, they say, is to push back government forces that had been shelling rebel-held cities. The Kiev government sees the rebel advance as a repudiation of the ceasefire, restarting a war in which 5,000 people have been killed. Kiev and NATO believe thousands of Russian troops are in eastern Ukraine fighting on the rebels' behalf with advanced weapons, despite Moscow's denials. "Rebels are constantly attacking Ukrainian government positions across the conflict zone with artillery, mortars, grenade launchers, tanks," Kiev military spokesman Volodymyr Polyovoy said at a televised briefing. (Reuters)

Iraqi Forces Liberate Diyala Province

DIYALA - Iraq's armed forces backed by volunteers have completely liberated the eastern province of Diyala from the occupation of ISIL Takfiri terrorists, a senior military officer says. Staff Lieutenant General Abdulmir al-Zaidi announced the liberation of Diyala from the ISIL militants on Monday and said the Iraqi forces had managed to retake all populated areas from the terrorist group. "Iraqi forces are in complete control of all the cities and districts and subdistricts of Diyala Province," he added. The general said 58 members of Iraqi forces lost their lives and 248 were wounded in the battle while "more than 50" militants of the ISIL terrorist group were killed. Diyala Province, located north of the capital Baghdad, was partly controlled by the terrorists for months. The liberation comes a day after the army announced mop-up operations in Muqadadiyah, which was the terrorists' last stronghold in the province. On Friday, Iraqi army made fresh gains against the ISIL Takfiri militants after launching major operations against the terrorists on several battle fronts in the western province of Anbar as well as Salahuddin Province in the north. (Press TV)

Abe Vows to Use All Available Means to Free Remaining Hostage

TOKYO - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe reiterated his assurance Monday that Japan would use all available means to secure the safe release of Kenji Goto, a war journalist, still held captive by the Islamic State (IS) militants, following the likely killing of Haruna Yukawa, a security contractor, on Saturday.

In a meeting of his Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) lawmakers earlier in the day, Abe said that Japan would cooperate with the necessary countries in a bid to win Goto's release. "We will use all possible means to win his release by seeking cooperation with other countries," the prime minister said, echoing the words of his top spokesman, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga, who told an earlier news conference that Japan would use "every channel available" to secure Goto's safe release. Monday's pledges follow a video released by IS purportedly showing Goto holding the decapitated corpse of Yukawa. The government here has confirmed that the video was "highly likely" to be credible. An accompanying soundtrack, believed to be Goto's voice, pleads

in English for his life and begs for the release of an Iraqi woman, Sajida al-Rishawi, who is being held on death row in a Jordanian prison for her part in the terror attacks on three hotels in Amman in 2005. The Islamic State militant group's Internet radio service Al-Bayan said Sunday in Arabic that the group has killed one of the two Japanese hostages as per a previous warning issued to Japan.

In a video posted to the popular video-hosting site YouTube on Tuesday, an IS militant initially demanded Japan pay 200 million U.S. dollars for the release of both hostages within 72-hours. The amount demanded by the group was the same as that pledged by Abe in a speech given when the Japanese leader was in Cairo as part of a Middle East tour, which was cut short as the hostage crisis evolved. During the speech, Abe said that Japan would support global anti-Islamic State efforts and contribute to the countries involved in the campaign. The prime minister also said Japan would provide support to Iraqi and Syrian refugees. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

China Vows to Back Pakistan's Anti-Terrorism Efforts

BEIJING - China's top political advisor Yu Zhengsheng met with Pakistani Army Chief General Raheel Sharif in Beijing on Monday, vowing to support Pakistan's anti-terrorism efforts. China appreciates and supports Pakistan's efforts in fighting against terrorism and hopes to better bilateral defense and security cooperation, said Yu, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference. China also hopes to beef up coordination with Pakistan in regional affairs in a bid to jointly safeguard regional peace, security and stability, Yu said. Calling the two

countries forever good friends, he said China always gives priority of its foreign policies to developing ties with Pakistan. "We are willing to work closely with Pakistan to upgrade our strategic coordination, deepen all-round cooperation, and step up the building of China-Pakistan economic corridor," Yu said. Raheel Sharif, during his speech, said Pakistan considers relations with China as a cornerstone of its foreign policy. The Pakistani armed forces will continue to facilitate cooperation with China and firmly support China's efforts to safeguard its core interests, he said. (Xinhua)

China, Turkey Vow Cooperation on Counterterrorism

BEIJING - China and Turkey on Monday vowed joint efforts in the fight against terrorism. During a meeting with Mehmet Celalettin Leke-siz, chief of the Turkish National Police, Chinese Minister of Public Security Guo Shengkun said terrorist cells like the East Turkistan Islamic Movement had had a serious effect on social stability and the safety of the people of both nations. He called on the two sides to enhance pragmatic cooperation on

anti-terrorism and combating organized human smuggling. He also suggested the two sides make full use of their cooperative platforms, including a joint working group, to improve bilateral cooperation, to jointly safeguard the security and stability of both countries and the region. Mehmet said Turkey firmly opposed any form of terrorism and was willing to work with China on counter-terrorism efforts. (Xinhua)

N. Talks End in Deal if Powers Stop Seeking Baseless Excuses: Iranian Speaker

TEHRAN - Iranian Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani underlined that the nuclear talks between Tehran and the world powers will yield a final agreement if the western powers stop seeking excuses. "The Islamic Republic of Iran will continue the negotiations similar to the past by maintaining its logical principles and criteria," Larijani said in a meeting with Croatia's First Deputy Prime Minister Vesna Pusic in Tehran on Sunday night. "If there no baseless excuse is sought, attainment of an agreement can be expected," he added. Pusic, for his part, expressed the hope that Iran's nuclear issue will be settled fairly and in line with the establishment of peace and stability in the world, and said, "Croatia as a new member of the EU is ready to cooperate in bringing progress to

the talks." On Saturday, Larijani underlined that US President Barack Obama should account for any possible failure in the nuclear talks between Tehran and the world powers. "The issues between the US administration and the congress and their internal problems are not related to us," Larijani said, addressing a forum in Tehran. His remarks came after the US congress (mostly grabbed by the Republicans) threatened the Obama administration that it will impose new sanctions against Iran, an issue which has been described as a red-line by Tehran in the interim nuclear agreement reached with the world powers in November 2013. "If the negotiations do not end in results, Obama should account for rocking the boat," he said. (FNA)

WB, Switzerland Help Tajikistan to Improve Access to Finance

DUSHANBE - The World Bank (WB) Group, with support of the government of Switzerland, is helping Tajikistan to improve access to finance for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to stimulate growth. As part of these efforts, the World Bank Group's Finance and Markets Global Practice and Tajikistan's National Bank (NBT) held a conference in the Tajik capital last Thursday to discuss the developing progress already made by Tajikistan in easing access to credit, the World Bank office in Tajikistan said. "To continue the reform process, we need to prepare draft amendments to the existing legislation to speed up the development of effective

credit information sharing and the pledge of movable property. We also need to develop effective mechanisms for financing, and improve the access of small and medium businesses to various sources of funding," said Abdujabbor Shirinov, the NBT chairman. "The financial sector reform is a key to sustained economic growth and offers opportunities beyond the sector to drive broader economic growth in Tajikistan. We will continue providing our knowledge and first-hand experience to help improve access to financial services in the country," said Fabrizio Fraboni, Senior Expert of Global Credit Reporting Team at the World Bank Group. (TCA)