

UN Chief Calls for more Efforts to End Violence in Syria

UNITED NATIONS - The international community should be shamed by the continued suffering of the Syrian people, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon said in a statement issued here Tuesday, the third anniversary of an agreement aimed at finding a political solution to end the conflict in the Middle East country. "It should shame us all that, three years since the adoption of the Geneva Communiqué on resolving the cataclysmic conflict in Syria, the suffering of the Syrian people continues to plumb new depths," Ban said. On June 30, 2012, the



secretaries-general of the League of Arab States, na, France, Russia, the United States, Turkey, Iraq, Kuwait and Qatar, United Nations and the foreign ministers of China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom, the

and a high representative from the European Union, met in Geneva, Switzerland, to create a road map for peace in Syria. The conflict, which started in March 2011, has left more than 220,000 Syrians dead, while almost half of the country's population have been forced to flee their homes since three years ago, according to Ban. Syria is now the most unstable region in the world, declared Ban, saying it is "increasingly controlled by a patchwork of Syrian and non-state actors, including Daesh and the Al Nusra Front." (Xinhua)

Concert Staged at UN, Calling Attention to Climate Change

UNITED NATIONS - An array of international musicians staged a concert at the UN headquarters on Tuesday night, intending to use the power of music to raise awareness about the devastating effects of climate change. "The Transformative Power of Music" concert, hosted by UN General Assembly President Sam Kutesa in support of the UN "2015: Time for Global Action" campaign, gathered 140



performers from across five continents playing a wide range of musical repertoires. "Let us not forget that from the dawn of hu-

manity to the present day music has been a common element present in all cultures," said Kutesa. An a cappella version of Amazing Grace, performed by a children's choir from Africa singing the lyrics "I once was lost, but now am found; Was blind, but now I see," led the audience chorus. The UN General Assembly high-level event on climate change concluded on Monday, at which UN Secretary-General... (More on P4)... (23)

S. Arabia Sentences 57 Terrorist Suspects in Last 3 Months

RIYADH - Saudi courts have sentenced 57 suspects in terrorism and incitement cases in the last three months, Al Eqtisadiya reported on Wednesday. The verdicts vary from capital punishment, fines, travel ban and imprisonment from six months to 20 years. The suspects were charged of joining fighting in Iraq and Syria, sheltering fugitives

or providing financial support. Among the suspects, 95 percent of them are Saudis. The sentences were part of a campaign against terrorism and extremism. In May, a suicide bomber blew himself up at a mosque's parking lot, leaving four people dead, including the bomber himself. The Islamic State (IS) claimed responsibility for the blast. (Xinhua)

Russia-US Ties Alive and well at Iran Nuclear Talks

VIENNA - Russia-U.S. relations are at a post-Cold War low just about everywhere, except at the Iran nuclear talks. Despite a chill over the Ukraine crisis that has spread to almost every element of their relationship, Moscow and Washington continue to find common cause on one of the most pressing issues on the global agenda —

a deal to prevent Iran from being able to make nuclear weapons. Officials on both sides credit the other with pragmatic proposals and good faith that transcends their broader differences. For the U.S., failure to get an agreement carries the unappealing risk of involvement in a new Middle East conflict, nor does President Barack Obama

want to lose out on a key plank of his foreign-policy legacy. The Obama administration has said it could strike Iran's nuclear facilities militarily should diplomatic attempts to curb its nuclear activities fail. Israel is even more upfront about threatening to launch air attacks, a move that could draw the U.S. into the fray. (AP)

Obama says 'I will Walk Away' from Bad Iran Deal

WASHINGTON - US President Barack Obama warned Tuesday he will "walk away" from a bad nuclear deal with Iran, as Tehran and six world powers gave themselves until July 7 to reach an agreement. Insisting there must be a "strong, rigorous verification mechanism" for monitoring Iran's nuclear sites, Obama

sent a fresh warning to Iran's leaders and negotiators. Obama said his instructions to negotiators in Vienna had been "extremely clear" -- that a deal must block Iran from getting a nuclear weapon. He said there had been "a lot of talk" from Iranian negotiators questioning the terms of a

framework agreement reached in Switzerland in April. "If they cannot, that's going to be a problem because I've said from the start, I will walk away from the negotiations if, in fact it's a bad deal," he told a joint press conference with visiting Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff. (AFP)

Syria's Assad May Be Left with Rump State: Israel

TEL AVIV - A senior Israeli defense official said President Bashar al-Assad controlled just a fifth of Syria and may end up in charge of a rump state dominated by his minority Alawite sect. Israel and its neighbor Syria are long-term enemies, but the remarks by Amos Gilad, strategic adviser to Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon, reflect concerns by states across the region that Syria is undergoing a de facto partition after four years of civil war. "Syria is gone. Syria is dying. The funeral will be declared in due time. This Bashar Assad, he will be remembered in history textbooks as the

one who lost Syria," Gilad told an intelligence conference organized by the Israel Defense journal on Monday. "Until now he has lost 75 percent of Syria... He is, practically, governor of 20 percent of Syria. And his future, if I may predict it, is shrinking all of the time. And maybe we will have him as the president of 'Alawistan,'" Gilad added. Since March, Assad has steadily lost territory in the northwest, south and central Syria to an array of groups including Islamic State, the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front, and rebels who profess a more moderate vision for Syria. (Reuters)

Israel Shuts Egypt Crossing after Deadly IS Attacks in Sinai

JERUSALEM - Israel on Wednesday shut down two border crossings into Egypt and the adjacent Gaza Strip, following deadly attacks by the Islamic State (IS) in Egypt's northern Sinai desert. The Israeli Defense Ministry said in a statement that it ordered the temporary closing of the Nitzana terminal, severing the main commercial goods transportation route between Israel and Egypt, along with Kerem Shalom, a terminal used

for delivering goods into Gaza. The Taba terminal, used by travelers headed to the battle-free area of southern Sinai, was still open in the afternoon however. The Defense Ministry said that the military is closely monitoring the border area in light of the recent events. "The security threat and alert level was raised along the border with Egypt and Israeli Air Force planes are circulating in the area," it said. (Xinhua)

German Finmin says No Basis for New Deal with Greece

BERLIN - German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schäuble said on Wednesday that the situation had changed after Tuesday midnight and there was no basis now for a new deal with Greece. Schäuble confirmed that Athens had submitted a new proposal to its creditors, but said the latest offer displayed no further

clarity on what Greece wanted. The minister added in a press conference in Berlin that the situation had changed after Tuesday midnight when the second bailout program for Greece expired. "Today we are in a totally different situation. At the moment there is no basis for serious actions," he said. (Xinhua)

Militants Attack Egyptian Army Checkpoints in Sinai, Kill 50



EL-ARISH, Egypt - Islamic militants on Wednesday unleashed a wave of simultaneous attacks, including suicide car bombings, on Egyptian army checkpoints in the restive northern Sinai Peninsula, killing at least 50 soldiers, security and military officials said. The coordinated morning assaults in Sinai came a day after Egypt's president pledged to step up the battle against Islamic militants and two days after the country's state prosecutor was assassinated in the capital,

Cairo. The attacks set off fierce fighting between the army and the militants that continued into Wednesday afternoon — the fiercest clashes in decades in the peninsula. The scope and intensity of the attacks underscored the resilience and advanced planning by the militants who have for years battled Egyptian security forces in northern Sinai but intensified their insurgency over the past two years just as the government threw more resources into the drawn-out fight. (AP)

Video Shows Syria Rebel Group Executing 18 IS Fighters

BEIRUT - A Syrian rebel group operating around Damascus has executed 18 alleged members of the Islamic State group in a video mimicking the extremist organization's own productions. The video, which emerged overnight, shows fighters from Jaysh al-Islam (Army of Islam) wearing the orange prison clothes that IS victims often sport. The IS prisoners however are wearing black clothes and chained together wearing ankle and hand shackles with metal balls attached. The nearly 20-minute

production mimics many aspects of IS's own execution videos, with similar sound effects and visuals. Jaysh al-Islam fighters in the video say the IS forces are being executed in part as revenge for the deaths of at least three of the rebel group's members who were beheaded by IS. The rebel group also refers to a major battle it fought with IS in February. It accuses IS of being allied with President Bashar al-Assad's regime against its fighters and those of other Islamist rebel groups. (AFP)

U.S. Appoints New Envoy to Close Guantanamo Detention Camp

WASHINGTON - The Obama administration on Tuesday appointed a new special envoy to lead U.S. President Barack Obama's long-standing promise to close the internationally denounced detention center at Guantanamo Bay in Cuba. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said on Tuesday that the appointment of Lee Wolosky, a former National Security Council director under former President Bill Clinton and President George W. Bush, as the U.S. State Department's Special Envoy for Guantanamo Closure was aimed at phasing out the Guanta-

namo detention camp in a "timely manner". The appointment of Wolosky came six months after the previous envoy Cliff Sloan resigned last December amid friction between the State Department and the Pentagon over delays in prisoner releases. The position of the special envoy had been vacant for six months. Though pledging to shutter the controversial Guantanamo detention camp shortly after he took office in 2009, Obama's effort to close the detention camp, infamous for torturing... (More on P4)... (24)

Neighbour News

Li's Visit Opens New Chapter in China-EU Economic Ties

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang's visit to the European Union has resulted in a hoard of new trade deals, which are expected to establish the highest level of bilateral economic and trade cooperation to date. During Li's visit, the two economic giants expressed interest in linking the European Fund for Strategic Investments (EFSI), known as the Juncker Plan, with the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and an international production capacity cooperation plan championed by Premier Li.

The premier proposed combining China's comparative advantages in production capacity and equipment manufacturing with the advanced technology of European economies. He called on the two sides to join hands in exploring third-party markets. With both China and Europe facing the task of maintaining steady economic growth and optimizing their eco-

nomomic structure, analysts believe integration of their development strategies will boost the growth of both sides and provide new opportunities for China-EU economic ties. Zhao Junjie, a research fellow at the Institute of European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said connecting Chinese and EU development strategies has become one of the highlights of Li's Europe visit. "The integration of development strategies is expected to inject fresh impetus into China-EU economic ties, helping them achieve win-win cooperation and form a community of interests," he said. The Belt and Road Initiative - namely the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road - was proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013 with the aim to revive the ancient trade routes between Asia and Europe, break infrastructure bottlenecks and boost efficient allocation of resources. (Xinhua)

Pakistan PM Visits Heat Wave-Hit Karachi

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif flew to the port city of Karachi on Wednesday, where heat waves have killed 1,250 people over the past ten days. Sharif presided over a meeting of senior officials on the "recent intense heat wave in Karachi and the resulting casualties," the PM office said. The prime minister was informed that the heat wave hit Karachi on June 19 and more than 65,000

patients were reported in Karachi hospitals during this period, out of which about 1,250 lost their lives. "Most of those who lost their lives were homeless people, including beggars, whose dehydration was aggravated due to fasting in extreme weather," an official said at the meeting. Hundreds of people were still being treated in at least four government-owned and private hospitals, the provincial health departments said. (Xinhua)

Nuclear Talks Are 'Making Progress': Zarif



VIENNA - Nuclear talks between Iran and six world powers have been making progress and will continue to do so, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif told reporters on Wednesday. "We have made progress and we will make progress," he said after a one-on-one meeting with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry. "We

will use every opportunity to make progress." He said Tuesday's decision by the six powers and Iran to extend the terms of an interim nuclear deal until July 7 after they missed a June 30 deadline for a long-term accord did not mean there was a new deadline. "We did not set any deadline. We will continue," he said. (Reuters)

Uzbekistan and Russia Discuss Military Cooperation

BISHKEK - Russian Deputy Defence Minister Anatoly Antonov met with Deputy Defence Minister of Uzbekistan Nurmuhammad Mullabayev in St. Petersburg. The meeting took place prior to the SCO Defense Ministers Meeting, which was held on June 30. The two defense ministers discussed the state and prospects of military and military-technical cooperation

between Russia and Uzbekistan. The sides noted the traditionally friendly character of interaction and the absence of barriers for its intensification. Antonov stressed the importance of finding new forms and directions of military contacts aimed at improving the national security of both countries. The sides agreed to further enhance military ties. (AKIpress)