

# Putin Tells Obama, wants Dialogue Based on Equality and Respect

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin called for dialogue based on equal treatment and mutual respect with the United States on Saturday in a congratulatory message to President Barack Obama marking U.S. Independence Day. Putin said U.S.-Russian relations remained important for solving global crises. The two countries have disagreements over the conflict in Ukraine, defense matters and democracy. "In his message of congratulations, the Russian President noted that, despite the differences between the two countries, Russian-American relations remain the most important factor



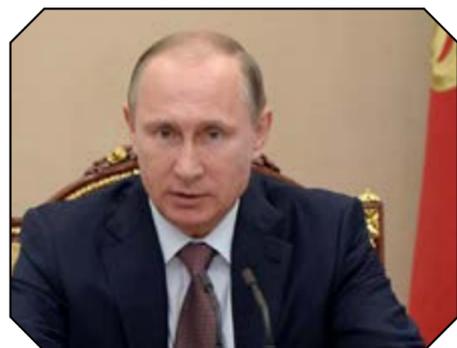
of international stability and security," the Kremlin said in a statement. Putin expressed confidence that Russia and the United States could find solutions to the most complicated international issues and meet global threats and challenges together if they based their relationship on the principles of equality and respect for each other's interests, the Kremlin added. The statement did not provide further details and did not mention Western sanctions imposed over Russia's role in the Ukraine crisis and Moscow's annexation of Crimea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. (Reuters)

## 36 Militants Killed in Air Raids in Egypt's Sinai

ARISH, Egypt - At least 36 militants were killed and tens of others injured during overnight military air raids that lasted until Saturday early morning in Egypt's North Sinai province bordering the Palestinian Gaza Strip and Israel, a security source in the peninsula told Xinhua. "The military airstrikes targeted hideouts of militants south of Sheikh Zuweid and Rafah cities of North Sinai," the source added, noting the militants belong to Sinai-based, al-Qaida-inspired Ansar Bayt al-Maqdis (ABM) group. The raids came a few hours ahead of President Abdel-

Fattah al-Sisi's visit to the restive province in military uniform, where he reassured that the situation in Sinai is now "stable." On Wednesday, dozens of self-proclaimed Islamist militants launched massive attacks against several military checkpoints in North Sinai. The military spokesman said later on in a statement that the confrontations left 100 militants and 17 army men killed. In total, over 205 militants were killed in security raids in North Sinai since Wednesday's deadly attacks and clashes, according to the security source. (Xinhua)

## Russia Mulls New Selective Sanctions Against Western Nations



MOSCOW - Russia will consider new selective retaliatory measures against some specific Western countries, the nation's security chief said Friday, pointing at Finland as a possible target. The tough statement appears to herald a new round in spiraling Russia-West confrontation over Ukraine. It followed a session of Russia's Security Council chaired by President Vladimir Putin, who vowed to firmly resist Western pressure and ordered to draft a new response. Russia may, for example, revise favorable conditions for Finnish timber traders in response to Helsinki's refusal to issue

a visa to the Russian lower house speaker, the council's secretary, Nikolai Patrushev said. He added in televised remarks that Russia wouldn't necessarily make the move, but wants to consider this and other retaliatory measures. Finland has denied entry to the State Duma speaker, Sergei Naryshkin, because he was on the EU sanctions list. Naryshkin planned to lead a delegation to next week's session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and Moscow responded to the Finnish move by boycotting the meeting. (AP)

## Cuba Highlights Role of UN Charter, Int'l Law in Ties with U.S.

HAVANA - Cuban official daily Granma on Friday stressed the role of the Charter of the United Nations and international law, especially the Vienna Conventions on Diplomatic and Consular Relations, in normalizing the Cuba-U.S. relations. The daily said the two sides should abide by these documents to avoid repeating previous mistakes in their turbulent history. Cuban President Raul Castro has continually reiterated that these documents are an indispensable set of guidelines and references for guiding the bilateral ties, said Gran-

ma. The principles stress the defense of sovereign equality, the settlement of disputes by peaceful means, refraining from threat to use or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state and non-intervention in matters of domestic jurisdiction, said the newspaper. Cuba and the United States announced Wednesday that they would restore their diplomatic relations and reopen their respective embassies in Washington D.C., capital of the United States, and in Havana, capital of Cuba, on July 20. (Xinhua)

## Int'l Community Calls for Pause in Fighting as Battles Continue in Yemen

SANAA - The Saudi-led coalition forces continued airstrikes on military targets in Yemen's capital of Sanaa on Saturday, as the international community was calling for an immediate halt in the battles. Local residents said the airstrikes began midnight Friday and lasted till Saturday dawn, which hit several military sites and air defense bases in Sanaa. The airstrikes hit an ammunition depot in



Saref area in northern Sanaa, triggering series of powerful explosions that shook the residential neighborhoods for more

than two hours. The overnight strikes also targeted three locations, including a school used by Houthi fighters in al-

Jeraf residential quarter on the road to the Sanaa international airport, according to witnesses. Houthi-controlled state-run Saba news agency reported that six people were killed in the fresh air raids. The Arab coalition also pounded Houthi militias in the southern port city of Aden and Red Sea port of al-Hodayda, as well as Taiz, Shabwa, Marib, al-Jouf and Saada provinces. (Xinhua)

## Syrian Army, Hezbollah Tighten Siege on Rebel-Held City Near Lebanon

DAMASCUS - The Syrian army, backed by the Lebanese Hezbollah, tightened the siege on the rebels in the rebel-held city of Zabadani, close to the Lebanese borders, the Syrian official TV said Saturday. The military forces inflicted hefty losses on the rebels in Zabadani, where the Syrian forces and Hezbollah launched a major offensive earlier Saturday to drive out the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front

and likeminded groups from that key city near the Lebanese borders. The wide-scale offensive on Zabadani, in the western part of the rugged Qalamoun region, came after the Syrian forces and allied fighters tightened the siege on the rebels there, the TV said. The battle aimed at clearing the city and the entire region of Qalamoun of the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front and its allied militants, who used the city as a con-

duit to smuggle militants and weapons from Lebanon into the western countryside of Damascus. Winning the battle by the Syrian forces and Hezbollah would shield the Lebanese borders of the threat of the Nusra Front, amid reports that most of the blasts that targeted Lebanon recently were planned by the rebels in Syria and the cars were booby-trapped in Qalamoun. (Xinhua)

## Fierce Clashes Rage in Iraq

BAGHDAD - Iraqi security forces on Saturday continued clashes with the Islamic State (IS) militants in north and west of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, security sources said.

In Salahudin province, fierce clashes continued between the IS militants and the security forces backed by militias, known as Hashd Shaabi, or popular mobilization, in the northern part of the town of Baiji, as the extremist militants are still fighting in some pockets of resistance, a provincial security source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. In one of the battles in the town, the troops and allied militias clashed



in the afternoon with IS militants in Naft neighborhood in northern Baiji, leaving 18 IS militants killed, the source said without giving further details. The security forces and al-

lied militias, covered by Iraqi and U.S.-led coalition aircraft, cleared on Tuesday most of the town after days of heavy clashes with the extremist militants. (Xinhua)

## Syrian Forces Kill 20 Rebels Amid Shelling Targeting Damascus

DAMASCUS - The Syrian forces killed 20 rebels east of the capital Damascus on Saturday, as part of flaring battles in that part of the city, according to the state news agency SANA. Rebel commanders were among those killed in the east Eastern Ghouta countryside of Damascus, said SANA, spelling no further details. Meanwhile, sources familiar with the situation told Xinhua that the rebels in the Damascus' eastern neighborhood of Jobar launched on Saturday a major offensive toward the nearby district of Zablatani, which is under the government control, prompting the Syrian force to respond with heavy fire power. The sound of battles reverberated through different parts of Damascus as tens of exploding bullets were seen falling on ... (More on P4)... (21)

## Russia Warns of Sabotage of Minsk Agreements, Peace Progress in Ukraine

MOSCOW - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Friday warned that the Minsk agreements should not be violated by any country, nor should the peace progress in Ukraine be undermined. "The Minsk agreements are just the package that cannot be violated," Lavrov stressed, warning "western colleagues" that any act of sabotage would be "unacceptable."

He urged western coun-

tries to exert more actively their influence over the Kiev authorities for the peaceful settlement of the prolonged Ukraine crisis. During his meeting with his Luxembourg counterpart Jean Asselborn, Lavrov suggested every relevant parties of the Ukraine crisis get together again for a new round of negotiations, taking into account new developments and realities. (Xinhua)

## Iran Atomic Bomb Probe May be Completed in 2015: IAEA

VIENNA - A long-delayed investigation into whether Iran has sought to develop nuclear weapons could be completed by the end of the year with Tehran's help, the head of the UN atomic watchdog said Saturday. Following his talks in Tehran earlier this week, UN watchdog chief Yukiya Amano said "progress was made on the way forward, but more work is needed."

"With the cooperation from Iran I think we can issue a report by the end of the year on the ... clarification of the issues related to possible military dimensions," Amano told reporters before heading into talks with global powers in Vienna. His comments could mark a breakthrough in one of the thorniest issues still blocking an agreement

with Iranian leaders after almost two years of intense negotiations. Both Iran and the United States have said that the talks are in the endgame, as they inch towards a deal. But Iran has long denied accusations that it has sought to develop a nuclear bomb and has so far refused to give UN inspectors access to sensitive military sites to verify its claims. (AFP)

## Neighbour News

### Chinese, Russian Premiers agree to Work for Fruitful Regular Meeting

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and his Russian counterpart, Dmitry Medvedev, had a telephone conversation on Friday afternoon about their next regular meeting. Speaking highly of bilateral ties, Medvedev said he is looking forward to visiting China and attending the 20th regular meeting of Russian and Chinese heads of government by the end of this year and hopes for positive

outcomes from the gathering. Li, for his part, said that China and Russia are each other's biggest neighbor and that the prime ministers' regular meeting mechanism has been fruitful. China, he added, stands ready to work with Russia to make good preparations for the upcoming meeting in order to achieve new progress in the development of bilateral relations and co-operation. (Xinhua)

### Iran Talks in Endgame, Inching Close to Nuclear Deal

VIENNA - After months of intense negotiations, global powers and Iran launched into a key weekend of talks Saturday amid signs they may be within sight of a historic nuclear deal to end a 13-year standoff. While all sides remained cautious, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the world had "never been closer" to reaching an unprecedented accord with his country aimed at blocking Iran's pathways to developing nuclear arms. In signs of a possible breakthrough on one of the thorniest issues

still blocking a deal, the IAEA announced Saturday that it may be able to complete a probe into whether Iran has ever sought nuclear weapons by the end of the year. In a rare move, Zarif also offered the promise of greater cooperation to tackle other global problems, such as the rise of the Islamic State group, should the deal be sealed. Global powers are trying to draw the curtain on almost two years of roller-coaster negotiations, which gathered fresh impetus after President Hassan Rouhani took power in late 2013. (AFP)

### Pakistan Military in Final Push to Flush out Militants in N. Waziristan

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani ground forces are advancing in rugged mountains of North Waziristan tribal region where the Taliban militants are believed to have taken shelter after they fled major towns in the aftermath of the major offensive. The Taliban and some other armed groups had been in control of major towns, including Miranshah and Mir Ali, until the military launched the much-anticipated operation in June last year. As most of the militants have been killed but the remnants either moved to inaccessible and difficult terrains. Hundreds of troops, backed by fighter jets

and gunships, are now battling the fleeing militants in high peaks that is seen as a final major push to clear the remaining nearly 5 percent areas of the militants. The militants are taking advantage of some of the dense forest areas in mountains including Shawal Valley. However, the ground troops are now going after the Taliban fighters even there. The Army Chief, General Raheel Sharif, visited forward most locations in North Waziristan on Friday where the formation commander briefed him about progress of the future plans to clear the remaining ... (More on P4)... (22)

### Turkmenistan Intends to Introduce Innovations in Oil and Gas Processing

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan's oil and gas complex which possesses unused resources is the priority sector of the country, Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov said during his two-day state visit to Georgia. "Our purpose is to create innovative facilities in oil and gas processing," Neutral Turkmenistan newspaper quoted Berdimuhamedov as saying. Great work is currently underway in the country to fulfill this task: the foundations of a number of plants have

been laid, according to the head of state. Moreover, Berdimuhamedov invited Georgia to participate in the projects in this sphere. Turkmenistan is one of the key players in the gas market of the Caspian Sea region and Central Asia. The country ranks fourth for the natural gas reserve in the world, according to BP report. In recent years, by actively developing the oil and gas processing, Turkmenistan has started pursuing the policy of economic diversification. (Trend News)

### Prime Minister of India to Visit Uzbekistan

DUSHANBE - At the invitation of President of Uzbekistan Islam Karimov on July 6-7, 2015 the Prime Minister of India Narendra Modian to pay an official visit to our country.

During the meetings and talks at the highest level they will discuss state and prospects of Uzbek-Indian relations, topical issues of regional and international ... (More on P4)... (23)