

Iran Demands End to U.N. Missile Sanctions, West Refuses: Envoys

VIENNA - A dispute over U.N. sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile program and a broader arms embargo were among issues holding up a nuclear deal between Tehran and six world powers on Monday, the day before their latest self-imposed deadline.

"The Iranians want the ballistic missile sanctions lifted. They say there is no reason to connect it with the nuclear issue, a view that is difficult to accept," one Western official told Reuters. "There's no appetite for that on our



part." Iranian and other Western officials confirmed this view. The foreign ministers of the six powers - Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United

States - met with Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Mohamed Zarif on Monday to try to strike a deal with Iran by Tuesday night.

"The Western side insists that not only should it (Iran's ballistic missile program) remain under sanctions, but that Iran should suspend its program as well," an Iranian official said.

"But Iran is insisting on its rights and says all the sanctions, including on the ballistic missiles, should be lifted when the U.N. sanctions are lifted." (Reuters)

Coalition Intensifies Airstrikes in Yemen as UN Envoy Brokers Ceasefire

SANAA - The Saudi-led coalition launched airstrikes overnight on military targets of the Houthi group in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa as the UN envoy arrived in the country to broker a ceasefire, officials and witnesses said on Monday.

The airstrike was one of the most intense since the campaign began three months ago, according to local residents.

The air raids began early Sunday night and lasted until Monday dawn, which targeted military



sites, Houthi leaders' houses and the headquarters of Houthi-allied General People's Congress party (GPC) led by

former President Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Witnesses said the GPC headquarters in southern Sanaa was completely

destroyed by warplanes. Houses of several senior GPC officials and military commanders of the Yemeni army were also bombed in the overnight strikes.

The house of Houthi leader Khaled al-Anduly in al-Jeraf neighborhood in Sanaa was also hit by the missiles, according to witnesses. Residents said the explosions rocked the whole city and damaged civilians houses. There is no report of casualties but residents said many civilians were injured. (Xinhua)

Yemen Government Raises Prospect of Truce, Air Strikes Kill 30

DUBAI/ADEN - Yemen's exiled government said on Monday it expects a deal shortly on a humanitarian ceasefire that would run through the Muslim Eid al-Fitr holiday later this month, as air strikes by Saudi-led warplanes killed at least 30 people.

The United Nations has been pushing for a halt to fighting and air raids that have killed nearly 3,000 people in Yemen since March when a Saudi-led coalition intervened against Houthi forces in a bid to restore President

Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi.

The government, exiled in Riyadh, said talks were focusing on carrying out an April U.N. resolution calling for the Iranian-allied Houthis to quit cities seized since September and for aid supplies to be sent to stricken Yemeni civilians.

"We are now in consultations for guarantees to ensure the success of the truce," Hadi spokesman Rajeh Badi told Reuters. "The mechanism we pre ... (More on P4)...(23)

France Calls on Greece to Come Up with Serious Proposals After "No" Vote

PARIS - French Finance Minister Michel Sapin on Monday asked anti-austerity Greek government to come up with serious and strong proposals to reach a crucial deal as the "No" vote "does not fix anything".

"It's up to the Greek government to make proposals now. The vote does not fix anything automatically. It's a refusal

of an attitude," Sapin said.

Speaking to the local broadcaster Europe 1, Sapin acknowledged "the thread of dialogue is very tenuous", urging Athens "to show that it is serious about negotiation and make serious and solid proposals" in order to bridge differences with its creditors and help the debt-ridden

country to get back again on its feet.

"There is a risk of leaving the euro but there is no automatic exit, in the same way, the vote doesn't mean automatically that Greece stays in the euro. What will determine whether it stays or leaves is the quality of negotiations that will start," the French minister added. (Xinhua)

EU Support to West Africa Reaches 1.1 Bln Euros Till 2020

BRUSSELS - The European Commission on Monday announced a new funding for cooperation with the West African region, which covers a total of 1.15 billion euros (1.27 billion U. S. dollars) until 2020.

According to a Commission press release, the so-called "regional indicative program"

under the 11th European development fund will focus on three areas of cooperation, which are peace and security, regional economic integration and trade, and sustainable development of natural resources and biodiversity. European Commissioner for international cooperation and development, Neven Mimica,

said the signing of the funding agreement was the "ambitious starting point for preparing new, concrete projects," and the new funding doubled the support from the last programming period.

The previous regional program (2008-2013) for West Africa had a budget of 595 million euros. (Xinhua)

Tensions with Russia Could Prompt NATO Strategy Rethink

BRUSSELS - NATO is preparing for a long standoff with Russia, reluctantly accepting that the Ukraine conflict has fundamentally transformed Europe's security landscape and that it may have to abandon hope of a constructive relationship with Moscow.

Some NATO allies, anxious to avoid a new Cold War or being dragged into an expensive arms race, had hoped the crisis in relations caused by President Vladimir Putin's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region last year would blow over quickly, just as a chill over Russia's 2008 war with Georgia did.

But realization is dawning at NATO headquarters that that is not going to

happen and that relations with Russia have entered a new frosty period that could last a long time, possibly requiring a formal change in the alliance's doctrine. Both sides have escalated their rhetoric over eastern Ukraine, where the U.S.-dominated, 28-nation alliance accuses Russia of sending in troops to back pro-Russian separatists - charges denied by Moscow. The tension has prompted debate about whether it is time to rewrite NATO's master strategy document, designed at a time when there were high hopes that the enmity of the Cold War years could be set aside and Russia and NATO could work together. (Reuters)

Migrant Boats also Carrying IS Fighters: EU Official

BRUSSELS - The European Union's top prosecutor said Monday she has been told that smugglers' boats bringing migrants across the Mediterranean to Europe are also carrying Islamic State group fighters.

Michele Coninx, head of the EU's judicial cooperation agency Eurojust, told reporters she received the information as part of the organization's efforts to help EU nations jointly respond to illegal immigration, terrorism and cybercrime. Coninx said the agency's

coordination efforts are ongoing and she couldn't divulge what information EU nations had provided. She told The Associated Press it isn't yet clear what problem the reported infiltration of Islamic militants may pose for European law enforcement. But she said groups like Islamic State are also using proceeds from people trafficking to fund terrorism.

Eurojust, she said, is one of several EU agencies mobilized to shut down traffickers' operations. (AP)

China Urges Efforts to Boost China-Russia Economic, Trade Cooperation

IRKUTSK, Russia - Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang on Monday asked for efforts to boost China-Russia economic and trade cooperation.

Wang made the appeal at a meeting with Russian Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin in the southern Siberian city of Irkutsk.

Wang said the two sides should work together to optimize the bilateral trade structure. Building on trade in energy and resources sectors, the two countries should explore new areas such as civil aviation materials, space technology and nuclear

energy equipment, said Wang.

He asked to further improve trade facilitation in order to create favorable conditions for bilateral trade, to find ways of reducing costs by innovating trade models and encouraging cross-border e-commerce. Wang also asked to enhance cooperation in finance. The two countries should expand trade settlement in their own currencies and the currency swap scheme, and strengthen financial and insurance support for trade with an aim to boost trade with investment, he said. (Xinhua)

Iran Pushes for end to Arms Embargo in Nuke Deal



VIENNA - A day before the new deadline for a nuclear accord, Iran pushed Monday to lift the U.N. arms embargo on the country as a parallel deal - a demand that the United States opposes as it seeks to limit Tehran's Mideast clout.

Speaking on the eve of a belated target date for a complete agreement, a senior Iranian official said his country and the six world powers it is negotiating with are also working on a U.N. resolution that endorses any future nuclear deal. Lifting the arms embargo would be separate from a long-term accord that foresees limits on Iran's nuclear

programs in exchange for relief from crippling sanctions on the Islamic Republic. But Iran also sees existing U.N. resolutions imposed on Iran's nuclear program and the accompanying sanctions as unjust and illegal. It has insisted that those resolutions be lifted since the start of international negotiations nearly a decade ago to limit its nuclear-arms making capability. After world powers and Iran reached a framework pact in April, the U.S. said "important restrictions on conventional arms and ballistic missiles" would be incorporated in any new U.N. guidelines for Iran. (AP)

Greek PM Returns to Talks on Debt Deal

ATHENS - Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras returns to the table of negotiations with creditors to clinch a new debt deal and avert a looming default and a possible Grexit with the support of opposition parties, according to

an official declaration released on Monday. A day after Greek voters said a resounding "NO" to the lenders' June 25 "harsh and unsustainable" offer in a landmark referendum the two-partite coalition ... (More on P4)...(24)

Neighbour News

IAEA Delegation Arrives in Tehran to Discuss Mutual Cooperation

TEHRAN - A delegation of the UN nuclear watchdog arrived in Iran's capital of Tehran on Monday to discuss the details of a recent cooperation agreement between Iran and the UN body to settle the remaining outstanding issues over Tehran's disputed nuclear program, an Iranian atomic spokesman was quoted as saying by state IRIB TV.

The five-member delegation of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) will discuss the implementation of the timetable for cooperation with the officials of Iranian Atomic Energy Organization (IAEO) and Iran's Supreme National Security Council, IAEA spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi said.

Following the meeting with Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and head of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani in Tehran on Thursday, the IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano said that he has "a better understanding on some ways forward" over enhancing the transparency of Iran's controversial nuclear activities.

Amano visited Iran in the context of IAEA's continued engagement with Iran and the P5+1 countries -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States plus Germany -- as they work toward a Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. (Xinhua)

Chinese, Russian Presidents to Meet



BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin will meet for the second time this year when Xi visits Russia for two international summits this week.

The seventh BRICS summit is scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday and the 15th meeting of the Council of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Heads of State for Thursday and Friday in Ufa, capital of

Russia's Bashkortostan Republic.

Xi and Putin will discuss coordinating the two countries' plans to increase regional trade and infrastructure, bilateral cooperation within multilateral frameworks including the BRICS and SCO, and coordination and cooperation on global and regional issues. Vice Foreign Minister Cheng Guoping told a press briefing on Monday morning. Cheng ... (More on P4)...(25)

Pakistan PM to Attend SCO Summit in Russia

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif will lead the Pakistan delegation to the Meeting of the Heads of States Council of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in Ufa, Russia, on July 9-10, officials said Monday.

The Prime Minister will also hold important bilateral meetings on the sidelines of the SCO Summit, the Foreign Ministry said.

"As an Observer State

of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, Pakistan has been making substantive contribution to regional peace, security and development," a Foreign Ministry statement said.

At the invitation of the Russian president, the prime minister will also attend the Outreach meeting in Ufa of the leaders of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) countries, SCO Member and Observer States, Eurasian Economic Union Members, and Turkmenistan. (Xinhua)

CSTO Forces, Tajik Reservists to Jointly Fight Taliban, IS Militants

DUSHANBE - The Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) forces and the reservists in Tajik southern regions will jointly combat the Taliban and the Islamic State (IS) militants, a Tajik expert said Monday.

The volatile situation in northern Afghanistan could negatively affect Tajikistan and Central Asia as a whole, Hudoberdi Holiqazarov, director of Tajikistan's Center for Strategic Studies, told a press conference. Holiqazarov said a number of communities in the Af-

ghan northern provinces of Badakhshan and Takhar have been taken by the Taliban.

"At the beginning of 2014, there were 800 Taliban militants in the Afghan northern provinces, but now the armed men have reached 8,000," Holiqazarov said. He also said Afghanistan has also been infiltrated by IS militants. "The IS allocated 700 million U.S. dollars to create its arm in Afghanistan. These negative factors could change the situation in Tajikistan and Central Asia." (Xinhua)

Suicide Bomber Kills Six at Church in Nigeria

BAUCHI, Nigeria - A suicide bomber killed six people at a church in northeast Nigeria on Sunday at the end of a week in which suspected Boko Haram insurgents killed more than 200 people.

The spate of bloodletting prompted renewed international outrage and French President Francois Hollande said he was ready to hold a summit with regional leaders to coordinate the fight against Boko Haram.

The blast in Potiskum in Yobe state on Sunday

came after an attack on the capital of neighbouring Borno state on Friday, deadly raids in three towns during the week and suicide bombings along a highway. President Muhammadu Buhari said the murder of up to 150 Kukawa residents near Lake Chad on Wednesday by Boko Haram was a "heinous atrocity". Several people who attended burials there, including a senior government official, said 147 bodies, including 22 children, had been interred. (Reuters)