

EU Summit Kicks off as Leaders Split over Greek Debt Issue

BRUSSELS - The leaders of 19 eurozone member countries are gathering on Sunday to discuss Greece's bailout program as the ongoing finance ministers' meeting has come into a deadlock due to lacking of trust.

The crucial Euro summit along with Eurogroup meeting this weekend was widely seen as "the last try" for Greece to avert bankruptcy and exit from the European common currency zone. Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras upon arrival for the summit told



reporters outside the European Council building that he was there "for an honest compromise."

"I'm here for an honest compromise," he said, stressing "we can reach an agreement tonight if all parties want it."

German Chancellor Angela Merkel told reporters that it is unlikely a deal will be yielded from the crucial summit. "No agreement at any cost," she said, adding that "We have not received a unanimous notification from Eurogroup." (Xinhua)

Iran, Powers Near to Historic Deal; U.S. says Tough Issues Remain

VIENNA - After more than two weeks of marathon negotiations, Iran and six world powers were close to nailing down an historic nuclear deal that would bring sanctions relief in exchange for curbs on Tehran's atomic program, diplomats said on Sunday.

But Iranian and Western officials said it was unlikely they would be able to finalize an agree-

ment on Sunday, saying the earliest an agreement could be ready was more likely Monday.

"We are working hard, but a deal tonight is simply logistically impossible," Alireza Miryousefi, a spokesman for the Iranian delegation, said on Twitter. "This is a 100-page document, after all."

A Western official said Tehran and Washington would need time to con-

sult their capitals once an agreement was reached.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry cautioned that some difficult issues remained on the 16th day of ministerial negotiations between Iran, the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and China. "I think we're getting to some real decisions," Kerry told reporters in the Austrian capital. "So I will say, because we have a few

tough things to do, I remain hopeful. Hopeful." Several diplomats said an agreement that would end more than a year and a half of negotiations was so close that it could come as early as on Sunday. In a sign that something might be in the works, both Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi were also due to join the talks on Sunday. (Reuters)

Iran Deal will be 'Hard Sell' in Congress: McConnell

WASHINGTON - Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and other congressional leaders expressed doubts Sunday about a historic agreement with Iran to address that country's nuclear program, predicting President Barack Obama could face hurdles in Congress if negotiators reach a final deal. McConnell spoke minutes after diplomats said on Sunday that

negotiators at the Iran nuclear talks were expected to reach a provisional agreement to curb the country's atomic program in return for tens of billions of dollars in sanctions relief. Secretary of State John Kerry has been leading the U.S. delegation in the talks in Vienna, which aim to impose long-term, verifiable limits on Tehran's nuclear programs. "This ... (More on P4)...(15)

Russia Considering Direct Fuel Deliveries to Help Greece: Minister

MOSCOW - Russia is considering direct deliveries of fuel to Greece to help prop up its economy, Energy Minister Alexander Novak said Sunday, quoted by Russian news agencies. "Russia intends to support the revival of Greece's economy by broadening cooperation in the energy sector," Novak told journalists, quoted by RIA Novosti news agency. "Accordingly we are studying the possibility of organising direct deliveries of en-



ergy resources to Greece, starting shortly." Novak said that the energy ministry expected "to come to an agreement within a few weeks," but did not specify what type of fuel

Russia would supply. Greece's left-wing leadership has made a show of drawing closer to Moscow in recent months as the spat with its inter... (More on P4)...(16)

Turkey Ex-President Urges 'More Realistic' Foreign Policy

ISTANBUL - Turkey's former president Abdullah Gul has called for the country to pursue a "more realistic" foreign policy, in one of his most significant political interventions since leaving office, reports said Sunday.

Gul, president from 2007-2014, made the thinly-veiled attack on the government's foreign policy late Saturday at a fast-breaking dinner for the holy month of Ramadan also



Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Gul co-founded the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) with Erdogan. But tensions between the two men have been an open

over the presidency to Erdogan in August 2014. "To be frank, I think it would be beneficial to review our policies in the Mid ... (More on P4)...(17)

Iran Urges U.S. to Seize Time for Nuclear Deal: Official

TEHRAN - The United States should seize the opportunity for a nuclear deal with Iran, otherwise Iran is ready to expand its nuclear program, Iranian Students' News Agency quoted an Iranian official as saying on Sunday. "The United States can not threaten Iran with military attacks or increase sanctions against Tehran, and they have no choice but negotiations," said Mohsen Rezaei, the secretary of Iran's Expediency Discernment Council and the former commander of Iran's Revolution Guards Corps. The U.S. has geared the ongoing nuclear talks to Iran's missile capability and asked Iran to limit its missiles' ranges to 300 km, which means to disarm Iran in the face of Israeli threats, he said.

"This shows that the U.S. officials want to impose a war on Iran in the future... they are making mistakes and sending suspicious signals to (ongoing nuclear) negotiation table," he was quoted as saying.

Rezaei hailed what he called "prudence, bravery and resistance" of Iranian negotiating team in the talks, urging the U.S. officials "to seize the opportunity of President Hassan Rouhani's smiling gestures" to settle Iran's nuclear issue diplomatically. If the United States fails to reach an agreement with Iran for a nuclear deal and poses irrelevant demands in the nuclear talks, Iran is ready to increase the number of its uranium enrichment centrifuges to 100,000, according to the report. (Xinhua)

Kurdish Militants to Attack Dam Sites

ANKARA - Kurdish militants will attack Turkey's dam construction sites in the mainly Kurdish southeast, the group said in a statement late on Saturday, another blow to a fragile peace process meant to end a three-decade insurgency.

The Union of Kurdistan Communities (KCK), the Kurdish militants' umbrella political group, on Saturday issued a statement saying that Turkey's construction of military outposts, dams and roads for military purposes had violated the ceasefire.

"The Turkish state took advantage of the ceasefire conditions not for a demo-

cratic political resolution but to gain an advantageous position in preparation of war by building dozens of guard posts, roads for military purposes and dams in order for a cultural genocide," the statement said.

The Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) launched a separatist armed struggle in 1984 before moderating its goal to improving the rights of Turkey's roughly 12 million Kurds. President Tayyip Erdogan, who has boosted Kurdish cultural rights during more than a decade in power, began peace talks with Ocalan in 2012, risking nationalist wrath. (Reuters)

Blast Damages Citadel Wall in Syria's UNESCO-Listed Aleppo



BEIRUT - A bomb explosion Sunday in a tunnel near Aleppo Citadel in Syria damaged a wall of the fortress that is part of the UNESCO-listed Old City, state media and a monitor reported.

The blast partly destroyed the wall of the monumental 13th century citadel that overlooks the Old City, said the official SANA news agency and the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. "A powerful explosion

was heard after midnight Saturday. It was caused by the blowing up of a tunnel in the Old City near the Aleppo Citadel," the Observatory said.

"The blast caused the collapse of part of the wall of the citadel," said Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman. The Observatory said the rebels dug the tunnel "but it was the regime which blew it up to prevent them from reaching an army position". (AFP)

Saudi-Led Airstrikes Kill 15 in Yemen Despite Truce

SANAA - The Saudi-led coalition forces bombed Houthi targets in several provinces in Yemen on Sunday, killing at least 15 people, despite a U.N.-brokered truce, sources said.

The fresh airstrikes against Houthi fighters in the capital Sanaa killed at least 12 people Sunday dawn, medics told Xinhua, as several others were receiving treatment in hospital. The airstrikes also destroyed a conference hall used by the Shiite Houthi group and damaged several civilian houses. In neighbouring Amran province, the warplanes hit a cement

factory on Sunday, killing three people and wounding 10 others, the state-run Saba news agency reported. Meanwhile, the coalition also carried out air raids in the northern Saada province that is the Houthi stronghold and the southern province of Lahj, security sources said. The is no immediate report of casualties.

The U.N.-brokered truce took into effect on 23:59 (2059 GMT) on Friday and will last through the end of Muslim holy month of Ramadan on July 17. However, the warring parties did not abide by the ceasefire deal. (Xinhua)

Libyan Islamist-Backed Parliament Announces Readiness to Return to Peace Talks

TRIPOLI - Libyan Islamist-backed parliament General National Congress (GNC) on Sunday announced it was prepared to return to peace talks after Libyan parties' signing of a UN-brokered political agreement in Morocco. All the delegates attending the UN-brokered negotiations in Skhirat, Morocco on Saturday agreed to form a unity government in Libya, but without the participation of the team from the GNC, who refused to participate in the latest discussions

because of objections to parts of the text. The GNC sent a letter to UN envoy Bernardino Leon after the signing ceremony, indicating that it was prepared to attend a new round of peace talks sponsored by the UN mission in Libya. In the letter, however, the GNC said it would attend to put forward "fundamental and necessary" amendments it had previously proposed Libya has been witnessing a frayed political process after the 2011 turmoil which toppled its leader Muammar Gaddafi. (Xinhua)

Neighbour News

Chinese Envoy Disagrees with Comments on its Security Law

GENEVA - China's envoy to the UN office in Geneva has expressed disagreement with relevant comments by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights on Tuesday on the country's National Security Law.

Ambassador Wu Hailong, China's Permanent Representative to the UN Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland, said it was a common practice among countries to enact laws on national security.

China disagreed with the High Commissioner's comment that the new security law defined the meaning of national security extremely

broadly, Wu wrote to UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein.

Wu said that under the new circumstances, China was faced with severe challenges in its national security. When it came to protect the national core interests, any government would stand firm and not leave any room for disputes, compromises and interference and China was no exception, he said. The Chinese representative said that China completely disagreed with what the High Commissioner's comments that the law "leaves the door wide open to further restrictions of rights and freedoms of Chinese citizens." (Xinhua)

Iran Nuclear Talks Enter 'Final Phase'

VIENNA - Talks between world powers and Iran on a historic nuclear deal entered Sunday what France described as the "final phase", but Washington warned major issues must still be overcome. Hopes grew that a breakthrough might finally be in sight after a flurry of diplomatic activity ahead of the latest deadline on Monday for an agreement. "I hope we are finally entering the final phase of these marathon negotiations. I believe it," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius told reporters as he returned

to Vienna on the haggles' 16th day. The talks seek to nail down a deal curbing Iran's nuclear activities to make it extremely difficult for Tehran -- which denies any such goal -- to develop the atomic bomb. In return Iran will be granted staggered relief from painful sanctions, although the six powers insist on the option of reimposing the restrictions if Tehran breaches the deal. Despite the air of optimism in the Austrian capital, US and Iranian officials dampened speculation that an agreement was imminent. (AFP)

Pakistan Provides Central Asian Connection for Korean Business

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan is poised to grow as part of the global economy and a safer investment haven, the country's Federal Minister for Commerce Khuram Dasgir Kahn told journalists last week. Khan visited Seoul to expand economic cooperation and elicit Korean investment in Pakistan, building on former Korean Prime Minister Chung Hong-won's visit to Islamabad in April last year. He participated in the first annual meeting of the Pakistan-Korea Joint Trade Commission Wednesday, as both countries seek to launch a full-scale free trade agreement. "Our economy is well positioned to take off,"

Khan stressed, adding that the "extremism and terrorism that has threatened Pakistan for the last 10 years have dwindled markedly." Due to terrorism, many major international airlines did not fly to Pakistan and investors preferred to do business in Dubai or Singapore instead, he said. "But our military and intelligence actions targeting terrorism have strengthened law and order substantially," he argued. "Our government aims to give young people hope through economic growth and employment, so that they stay away from extremism and terrorism." (Monitoring Desk)

Berdymuhamedov Has Sacked Vice PM, Economy Minister, Construction Minister

BISHKEK - Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov made a number of changes in the government positions during the parliament session, reports the State News Agency of Turkmenistan. Minister of Economy and Development Vepa Abdylkhekimov was released from his position. Eldash Sheripov was appointed Minister of Economy and Development. He held the position of Chairman of the Committee on Economic Affairs of the Mejlis (parliament) of Turkmenistan. Minister of

Construction and Architecture Gurburdi Bayrammyradov was dismissed from the position. He was replaced by Chary Atayev, who was the former Deputy Minister of Construction and Architecture. Berdimuhamedov criticized the work of Vice Prime Minister Annamukhmedov Gochev, responsible for financial and economic policy, and sacked him as well. In addition, all the leadership of Akhal province was completely changed, including governor Mammetyyaz Nurmammedov. (AKIpress)

Israeli Leader says World 'Caving' Into Iran at Nuke Talks

JERUSALEM - Israel's leader says Western powers are "caving" into Iran even as the Islamic Republic keeps railing against them.

Responding to the Iranian supreme leader's call to continue the struggle against the United States regardless of the outcome of nuclear talks, Benjamin Netanyahu says Sunday his country will not accept such a reality. Nuclear talks in Vienna

aimed at placing restrictions on Iran's nuclear program in exchange for a lifting of sanctions continue. The talks have already gone past four deadlines.

Iran's state-run Press TV cited Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as calling the U.S. an "excellent example of arrogance." It said Khamenei told Tehran university students to be "prepared to continue the struggle against arrogant powers." (AP)