

Yemeni Crisis Mirrors Regional Unrest in Middle East

CAIRO - The ongoing crisis in conflict-stricken Yemen is reflection of a regional unrest in the Middle East, especially after the forces of fleeing President Abd-Rabbo Mansour Hadi seized strategic southern city of Aden against Shiite Houthi fighters, said Egyptian experts. Yemen has become more like a battlefield for regional and even international powers that seek more influence in the Middle East region through the ongoing conflict hitting the country, including the United States, Saudi



Arabia and Iran.

"Yemen has always been a place of interest for the United

States, and former U.S. President Clinton said openly that Yemen is a matter of a national security for the United States," said Gehad Auda, professor of international relations at Helwan University. The professor told Xinhua that Yemen is highly located due to its control of Bab al-Mandeb Strait that connects between the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden as well as between the continents of Asia and Africa, "therefore it is a very critical area geographically and strategically." (Xinhua)

Israel Rejects Kerry's Warning on Iran Nuclear Deal

JERUSALEM - Israel rejected on Sunday a recent warning by U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry that if the Congress would block the nuclear deal with Iran, the international community might blame Israel for the failure.

Israeli Minister of Energy Yuval Steinitz told Israel's Walla news site that Israel will not be pressured to stop voicing its criticism of the deal.

"Israel will make its views clear on the Iranian nuclear issue, which is relevant to



its security, and no one has the authority to intimidate us," said Steinitz.

He added that "criticism of

the agreement in the U.S. in general and Congress in particular stems from the serious flaws and loop-

holes in the deal."

Kerry addressed on Friday the Council on Foreign Relations think tank in New York, saying that if the Congress will not endorse the agreement, "our friends in Israel could end up being more isolated and more blamed." The Obama administration is on campaign to push for the nuclear deal signed in Vienna on July 14 between Iran and the world powers, the United States, Britain, China, France, Russia plus Germany. (Xinhua)

Ukraine Claims Russian Officer Detained

MOSCOW - Ukraine's border guards service says it has detained a Russian officer who was driving a truck packed with weapons including rocket-propelled grenades.

There was no immediate comment from the Russian military, but the self-styled defense ministry of the rebel forces in Donetsk said Sunday that the claim "provokes irony." Ukraine and Western countries contend Russia is providing troops and weaponry to east-

ern Ukraine's rebels, who have been fighting Ukrainian forces since April 2014 in a war that has killed at least 6,400 people. Russia consistently denies the allegation.

The border guard service said the truck and its two occupants were intercepted late Saturday at a checkpoint about 30 kilometers (19 miles) south of Donetsk, the main rebel-held city. It said one of the men acknowledged he was a Russian major. (AP)

Merkel Urges Turkish PM to Stick with Kurdish Peace Process

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Sunday urged Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu to stick with the Kurdish peace process despite escalating violence, her office said. Merkel assured Davutoglu of the "solidarity and support of Germany in the fight against ter-

rorism" but also recalled "the principle of proportionality in the implementation of necessary measures". The chancellor appealed to the Turkish premier "not to give up the peace process with the Kurds but to continue it despite all the difficulties," Merkel's spokesman

Georg Streiter said in a statement. Turkey has launched a two-pronged cross-border offensive against Islamic State (IS) jihadists and Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants after a wave of violence in the country, pounding their positions with air strikes and artillery. (AFP)

Britain May Vote on EU Membership in 2016: Report

LONDON - Prime Minister David Cameron intends to hold a referendum on the country's membership of the European Union around June of 2016, the Independent on Sunday reported.

"The Independent on Sunday has learned that Mr Cameron has decided to pencil in June of

next year," the newspaper reported, citing an anonymous source.

A Downing Street spokeswoman declined to comment on the report, which said the prime minister would announce the timing of the referendum during the annual Conservative party conference in October.

A comment from the Conservative party was not immediately available.

Cameron has promised to re-negotiate the terms of Britain's membership of the 28-member block before holding a referendum by the end of 2017.

The report comes just ... (More on P4)... (22)

Iran Launches Charm Offensive Among Wary Gulf Arabs



KUWAIT - Iran's foreign minister called on Sunday for a united front among all Middle Eastern nations to fight militancy, in his first regional trip after reaching a nuclear deal with world powers that raised concerns among Iran's Gulf Arab neighbors.

"Any threat to one country is a threat to all... No country can solve regional problems without the help of others," Mohammad Javad Zarif said at a news conference hosted

by the Iranian embassy in Kuwait. Zarif earlier met Emir Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmed al-Sabah and his Kuwaiti counterpart, Sheikh Sabah al-Khaled al-Sabah, who was not present at the press conference. Zarif began the one-day, three-country tour by visiting Kuwait. He was due to go on to Qatar and then Iraq. Most Gulf Arab states are worried that Iran's July 14 accord will hasten detente between Tehran and ... (More on P4)... (23)

Assad Hails Iran, Hezbollah Roles in Fight against Rebels

DAMASCUS - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said Sunday that Iran has presented military expertise to Syria, while the Shiite Lebanese Hezbollah group fought with the Syrian army. "Iran has only presented military expertise and our faithful brothers in the Lebanese resistance fought with us," Assad said during a speech he delivered Sunday and aired by the Syrian TV, referring to Hezbollah. "The Lebanese resistance has an important role and we are grateful for their courage, strength and backing us,"

the president said, in his first explicit acknowledgment in the backing of Iran and Hezbollah to his administration in the face of a ferocious insurgency. They have the important role in backing the Syrian army because they have the experience, he added. "The blood of our brothers in the Lebanese resistance has mingled with the blood of their brothers in Syrian army and they have the important role and efficient performance with the army in making achievements in many places," he said. (Xinhua)

Israel is Dragging the Region to a Religious War: Abbas' Aide

RAMALLAH - An aide for religious affairs to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Sunday accused Israel of trying to drag the entire region to a religious war. Mahmoud Habash, who is also the justice chief of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA), told Xinhua that the endless Israeli repressive measures and the ongoing attacks on Palestinian worshippers in Jerusalem "are denounced."

"What is happening on the ground in Jerusalem rings a bell that Israel is trying to drag the entire Middle East region into

a religious war," said Habash, in reference to the clashes that broke out in the old city of Jerusalem. On Sunday, clashes broke out between dozens of Palestinian worshippers and Israeli police at al-Aqsa Mosque in the old city of Jerusalem after Israeli settlers tried to enter the area of the mosque, according to Palestinian sources. "Attacking our holy shrines and sites will ignite more flames of fire of hatred and confrontations with Israel," Habash said, warning that the entire region is heading towards more religious radicalism. (Xinhua)

Ex Sri Lankan President Rejects Idea of Unity Gov't



COLOMBO - Former Sri Lankan President Mahinda Rajapaksa on Sunday said that the United Peoples Freedom Alliance (UPFA), under which he is contesting for a seat in Parliament at elections next month, will not agree to form a national unity government.

Speaking at an election rally, Rajapaksa said that the ruling United National Party (UNP) has been speaking of forming a national government after the election.

However, he said the

UPFA is confident of securing majority seats in Parliament and will not form a national government. Rajapaksa also warned the public to be on alert over the election manifesto of the main Tamil minority political party, the Tamil National Alliance (TNA) and the support it is getting from the UNP. The former president noted that the TNA has called for power devolution but the UPFA will not allow the country to be divided. (Xinhua)

U.S. President Ends Kenya Visit



NAIROBI - U.S. President Barack Obama left Kenya on Sunday afternoon after his three-day visit, his first visit as president to the country of his father's birth.

Obama left the country for Ethiopia, the second stop of his tour, where he will attend bilateral meetings with Ethiopian and African Union leaders.

During his visit, the U.S. leader opened the 6th Global Entrepreneurship Summit, held bilateral talks with Kenyan officials and later addressed Kenyans including civil society organizations.

In his speech Sunday to Kenyans, Obama praised Kenya for its regional leadership and said that the country is headed for a bigger global role.

"Kenya's future is filled with hope. You are poised for a bigger role in the world," he said.

Obama said the U.S. government is grateful for the role Kenya has played in the African Union Mission in Somalia that is stabilizing the Horn of Africa country. He said the U.S. government will stand by Kenya in combating the threat posed by terrorists. (Xinhua)

18 Police Recruits Injured in Egypt Bus Blast

ARISH, Egypt - At least 18 police recruits were injured on Sunday during a blast that targeted their bus in northern Sinai province, according to medical sources. An explosive device hit their bus on a coastal highway in Arish city of Egypt's restive North Sinai province, bordering the Palestinian Gaza Strip and Israel, medical sources in Arish told Xinhua.

"Most of the injuries were cuts and bruises, and some of the recruits have been discharged from the hospital after treatment," the medics added.

Meanwhile, a security source told Xinhua that three recruits were injured on Sunday by sniper shots at different checkpoints in Rafah and Sheikh Zuweid cities in North Sinai.

Militant activities have mounted in Egypt since the army ousted former Islamist President Mohamed Morsi in July 2013. Hundreds of police and army personnel have been killed since then, especially in the Sinai Peninsula.

The authorities have taken various measures to combat rising terrorism in the ... (More on P4)... (24)

Neighbour News

Extremism Rooted in Atheism, Irreligion: Iranian Ambassador to Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - Iran's Ambassador to Tajikistan Hojatollah Faghani has stressed that extremism has no relationship with religion, adding that the goal of religion is to promote moderation.

Speaking to IRNA on the sidelines of the international conference on Islam against religious extremism and terrorism, the Iranian accredited ambassador to Tajikistan reportedly said on July 24 that the roots of extremism rest in promotion of hatred and violence. According to IRNA, he noted that religious extremism is a wrong interpretation as religion has no relationship with extremism and the goal of religion is promotion of moderation.

However, he continued, the topics which are not referred to by anybody is irreligious extremism and pro-

posed that religious scholars concentrate on the issue and root it out. Elsewhere in his remarks he outlined the important role that co-operation between Iran and Tajikistan can play in developing unity in the Islamic world and in fighting against extremism.

The ambassador said that Iran and Tajikistan have always had close cooperation in different fields, adding that in the field of fight against terrorism and extremism such cooperation can have its effects on all regional countries, especially the Farsi-speaking regions.

Both Iran and Tajikistan agree that terrorism and extremism are serious threats against the region and believe that these cases have nothing to do with Islam and that outside hands are using tools of terrorism for realizing their goals. (Asia-Plus)

Xi Congratulates Maldivian President on Independence Day

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping on Sunday congratulated his Maldivian counterpart Abdulla Yameen on the Maldives' 50th Independence Day.

In his message, Xi highlighted and congratulated on the remarkable progress the Maldives has achieved since its independence 50 years ago.

Xi said he believed that the country would realize further development under Yameen's leader-

ship.

The Chinese president and his Maldivian counterpart jointly announced the establishment of a future-oriented all-round friendly and cooperative partnership during Xi's visit to the Maldives last September.

Stressing that China has always valued its friendship with the Maldives, Xi said China would like to work with the country to further promote bilateral ties. (Xinhua)

Tajikistan Hopes to Attract \$80 Million From WB and ADB for Implementation of Anti-Crisis Plan

BISHKEK - Tajik authorities expect to attract the funds from the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in the amount of over \$80 million to implement the anti-crisis plan, said First Deputy Minister of Finance Jamshed Karimzoda at the press conference in Dushanbe on Friday.

Currently, the talks are held with the representatives of the two major international financial institutions to provide

financial assistance on a grant basis.

The World Bank will be asked to allocate \$30 million and the Asian Development Bank - \$50 million, says the statement.

"In the framework of implementation of the anti-crisis plan, a little reduction of funding of number of articles of the state budget is expected, but the decision has not been made yet," added Karimzoda. (AKIpress)

Pakistan Hosts First Meeting of SAARC's Advocacy Group on Gender

ISLAMABAD - First Gender Policy Advocacy Group of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) meeting started here on Sunday in conviction with members' commitment to work together for the rights of the women.

The State Minister and Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Cabinet Barrister Zafarullah Khan inaugurated the meeting held under the auspices of the Ministry of Law, Justice and Human Rights. Speaking on the occasion, Barrister Zafarullah emphasised that women shall be treated at an equal basis to the men.

He said that the government has enacted a number of legislations for women em-

powerment and it was an honour for Pakistan to host first meeting and to compile first report of the group. He emphasised that the SAARC members must replicate the best practices in their respective regions.

The other speakers included ministry's Joint Secretary Humera Azam Khan, Foreign Office director general Muhammad Nafees Zakria, SAARC Director Najwa Fathima and Rebecca Reichmann from the UN Women.

In her speech, Humera shared the background of the SAARC group and informed that the group had been established in the wake of Addu Declaration - adopted by the seventeenth SAARC summit in November 2011. (Monitoring Desk)