

UN Chief to Kick off Talks Between Warring Factions in Yemen

BERLIN - U.N. chief Ban Ki-moon will hold meetings with Yemen's warring factions and regional powers Sunday, kicking off the first substantive talks by all parties involved in the conflict.

A U.N. spokesman told reporters in Geneva on Friday that Ban hopes the talks will produce a "new dynamic that will build confidence between the Yemeni actors and yield concrete benefits for the population." Ahmad Fawzi said the



U.N.'s special envoy for Yemen will seek to bring the opposing factions together at one table during the negotiations, which will begin as "proximity talks." They are currently scheduled to last two or three days.

Apart from regional actors the ambassadors of Germany, Japan, the Netherlands, the European Union and the five U.N. permanent Security Council members will take part in the Geneva talks. (AP)

Putin Praises Russia as Open and Democratic

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin, presenting state awards on Russia's analogue of independence day, has praised the country for democracy and openness.

The comments during a Kremlin ceremony come as criticism continues abroad of Putin for stifling opposition and promoting a culture of truculent and defensive patriotism.

Putin's Friday speech marked Russia Day, which commemorates the 1990 declaration of state sovereignty for Russia, when it was one of 15 republics within the Soviet Union. He presented state awards to seven Russians for achievements in the arts, science and humanitarian affairs. In the quarter-century since the declaration, Russia "has made a successful breakthrough



to democracy and a market economy, but also able to establish itself as a modern, open and independent country," Putin said. (AP)

Turkey's Pro-Kurdish Opposition Leader sees State Links in Unrest

ANKARA - The leader of Turkey's pro-Kurdish opposition party on Friday accused figures within the state of links to violence in the largely Kurdish southeastern province of Diyarbakir this week, which left four dead.

"We want the people within the state and the government who are associated with the attacks to be found," Peo-

ples' Democratic Party (HDP) co-chair Selahattin Demirtas told reporters in the mainly Kurdish city of Diyarbakir. The violence between different Kurdish factions came days after a parliamentary election which saw the ruling AK Party lose its majority, casting doubt over stalled efforts to end a decades-long Kurdish insurgency. (Reuters)

U.S. Allies Conduct 23 Air Strikes against IS: Military

WASHINGTON - U.S. and coalition forces conducted 13 air strikes targeting Islamic State in Iraq on Thursday, as well as 10 strikes against the militant group in Syria, the U.S. military said.

The attacks were intended to diminish the support systems for Islamic State, hurting its "morale and ability to sustain the fight in forward tactical battle areas," Colonel Wayne Marotto, chief of public affairs for the Combined Joint Task Force, said in a statement on Friday.

In Iraq, forces hit targets near Kirkuk, Mosul, Ramadi, Tal Afar and Walweed, destroying a motorcycle, an excavator, weaponry, armored vehicles and other targets, the statement said.

The Syria strikes were concentrated near Raqqa, where they destroyed Islamic State fighting positions, a vehicle and a rocket system, and near Day Az Zawr, where they hit four crude-oil collection points. There were also two air strikes near Kobani, the military said. (Reuters)

Barrier on Border with Serbia Possible: Hungary's Orban

BUDAPEST, Hungary - The Hungarian government will consider "all options," including a physical barrier on the southern border with Serbia, to stem the increased flow of migrants, the prime minister said Friday. Prime Minister Viktor Orban said that "migration is dangerous" and that the government will hear the interior minister's recommendations on the issue next week. Hungary has received

more than 50,000 asylum requests so far this year, compared to 43,000 in 2014 and 2,157 in 2012. About 70 percent of the refugees now are from Afghanistan, Syria or Iraq. Orban said the governments of Hungary and Serbia would hold a joint session in early July, including discussions on migration. "I don't consider it right that they send the refugees to us," Orban said on ... (More on P4)...(25)

Germany Drops Probe Into U.S. Spying on Merkel

BERLIN - Germany's top public prosecutor closed a year-long investigation into the suspected tapping of Chancellor Angela Merkel's cell phone by U.S. spies, saying there was a lack of evidence that would stand up in court. "The accusations made would not stand up in court with the means available for criminal proceedings," the federal prosecutors office in Karlsruhe said in a statement. "The vague remarks from U.S. officials about U.S. intelligence surveillance of the chancellor's cell phone - i.e. 'not any more' - are insufficient evidence".

Merkel's spokesman Stefan Seibert declined to comment on the prosecutor dropping the probe. "The federal prosecutor has made his decision," he said. "Such a decision should not be commented on by the government." The two countries have been at odds over the NSA spying habits since Snowden's revelations last year showed the United States had listened in on many of its allies, including Merkel. Federal Prosecutor Harald Range had launched the probe last June, saying there was preliminary evidence to ... (More on P4)...(26)

Cameron to Meet Italy's Renzi on EU Reform Push

LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron will meet Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi next week to discuss his plan to renegotiate Britain's relationship with the European Union ahead of a membership referendum.

Cameron, elected for a second term last month, is due to set out his reform plans in more detail at a summit of EU leaders in Brussels at the end of the month and has said he hopes to

hold preliminary talks with each of them before that.

Cameron has promised to negotiate a new settlement with Brussels and hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU by the end of 2017.

After talks with the leaders of Spain, Finland, Romania and Belgium on Thursday, he has now met with about half of them. As well as Italy, Cameron is due to visit Luxembourg next week. The reception so far has been

mixed. Earlier this month German Chancellor Angela Merkel pledged to work to clinch a deal that would keep Britain in the EU, but Friday's British newspapers were full of tales of rebuff from the latest talks. Cameron has said he believes changes to EU treaties will be needed to achieve some of the reforms he is seeking, such as restricting EU migrants' access to British welfare benefits. (Reuters)

Ukraine's Mariupol Steel Plants in Critical State after Gas Cut-Off

KIEV - Two of Ukraine's largest steel plants are in a critical situation and may have to cut production, owner Metinvest said on Friday, after fighting in the separatist east severed gas supplies to the port city of Mariupol and two other towns.

Mariupol, a southeastern government-controlled city on the Sea of Azov, lies close to the frontline with rebel territories. Metinvest's Ilyich and Azov Steel plants employ 10 percent of Mariupol's population. The interior ministry accused rebels on Friday of shelling the pipeline, causing damage which gas transport monopoly Ukrtransgaz said had left three



towns, including Mariupol, without gas supplies for up to two days. "The situation (at the plants) ... is critical. They are considering switching the blast furnaces to low run and limiting their steelmaking and rolling processes," Metinvest said in a statement. Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk

said Russia-backed had deliberately targeted the pipeline in a bid to destabilize Mariupol. "They're doing this on purpose to sow panic in Mariupol, to shut down the factories so that people don't get wages. It's part of the Russian plan," he said in a government meeting. (Reuters)

U.S., S. Korean Leaders Agree to Reschedule Security Meeting

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Barack Obama and South Korean President Park Geun-hye agreed to reschedule a White House meeting to discuss the North Korean nuclear threat and other regional security issues, the White House said on Friday. Obama spoke by telephone with

the South Korean leader and offered condolences to the Korean people who have been affected by Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, it said in a statement Park canceled a visit to the United States, including a Tuesday meeting with Obama, to deal with the outbreak, which has

infected 126 people in South Korea and killed 11 since it was diagnosed three weeks ago in a businessman who had returned from a trip to the Middle East. Obama said he understood her decision and offered additional U.S. assistance if needed, the White House said. (Reuters)

S. Korea says Mers Cases Slowing Despite New Death

SEOUL - South Korea Friday reported its 11th death from Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), but health officials urged people go about their day-to-day lives as normal, saying the rate of new cases was slowing. In what has become the largest outbreak of the virus outside Saudi Arabia, a 72-year-old woman died Friday after being infected by a MERS patient at a hospital, the health ministry said.

The number of new cases, however, fell to four, down from 14 on the previous day and 13 on Wednesday, bringing to 126 the total number of people in South Korea diagnosed with the virus. Currently, 3,680 ... (More on P4)...(24)

Trust Improving in Complex U.N. Climate Talks: Officials

BONN, Germany - The latest round of U.N. climate talks in Bonn helped build trust among countries and kept the long trek to a new global climate deal on track, despite a lack of substantive progress over the past two weeks, officials and experts said.

At the meeting which

ended on Thursday, negotiators slimmed down the cumbersome 90-page text of a draft deal by a few pages as the language was edited - but no options were weeded out.

A plan was agreed to consolidate the text further, and to provide more structure by late July, well before the

next round of talks begin at the end of August. Only 10 days of negotiating time remain before the Nov. 30 start of the U.N. climate conference in Paris, where the new agreement is due to be finished and adopted. Despite the lack of headline-grabbing news from the June 1-11 Bonn ... (More on P4)...(23)

Neighbour News

Pakistan will Not allow NGOs Working against National Interest: Nisar

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on Friday said that no Non-Government Organisation (NGO) working against the country's national interest will be allowed to continue its work in Pakistan. He said that some NGOs were performing out of their respective domains and they should be probed. "We formulated a plan last year to regulate the functioning of NGOs in the country." The statement comes a day after authorities ordered the international aid group Save the Children to leave Pakistan saying the charity was "work-

ing against the country". The interior minister added that they had been receiving intelligence reports for many years but no action was being taken. NGOs, whose numbers run into hundreds, have been operating without any code of conduct, law and agenda, he said. "We don't want to put ban on any NGO but we want to compel them to work under their charter," Khan said. The interior minister also appealed to all international NGOs and governments to respect the laws of Pakistan. He said that the government will not bear any kind of foreign pressure ... (More on P4)...(27)

Everyone Should Help Iran Nuclear Negotiators Succeed: Senior Cleric

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian cleric has urged support for the country's negotiators involved in nuclear talks with six world powers, saying potential criticism should not undermine the negotiators. In a sermon to worshippers at the weekly Friday Prayers, Tehran interim Friday Prayers leader Ayatollah Seyyed Ahmad Khatami described as "a sensitive issue" the ongoing nuclear talks between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - Russia, China, France, Britain, and the United States - plus Germany. While everyone is entitled to express their views about the negotiations, Ayatollah Khatami said,

everyone should help the negotiators - "warriors on the diplomacy front" - to accomplish their tasks. Ayatollah Khatami also said that the authorities, in return, should avoid considering any criticism or gathering aimed at discussing the negotiations as destructive. Such gatherings must, however, be aimed at boosting the Iranian negotiators' bargaining power and strengthening their position in the talks, he added.

The senior Iranian cleric further said that the Islamic Republic seeks a good deal, which he said is one that would abide by the Islamic Republic's red lines. (Monitoring Desk)

China Welcomes Ceasefire in Myanmar

BEIJING: China on Friday welcomed the ceasefire in northeast Myanmar with an appeal to all sides to show restraint and halt hostilities. "We hope the conflicting sides can show restraint and stop the war as soon as possible," said Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hong Lei, referring to yesterday's declaration of a unilateral ceasefire from the ethnic Kokang's Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MDAA). "China supports all sides in Myanmar to solve their disputes through negotiation, realise peace and national reconciliation at an early date, and jointly maintain stability in the border areas. This is in the interests of both countries," Hong said. "To this end, in accordance with Myanmar's

will, China is playing an active and constructive role in promoting the peace process in northern Myanmar, which is welcomed by the Myanmar side. China will continue to play an active role in it," he added. The ceasefire was announced as Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi is currently visiting China on her first trip. She met Chinese President Xi Jinping here yesterday and held talks to improve bilateral ties. China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) is currently conducting air-ground live-fire drill in Yunnan Province, close to the border with Myanmar in an apparent warning to the Burmese military to ensure that its fighting with Kokoang rebels do not spill over into Chinese territory. (Agencies)

Uzbekistan to Increase Coal Production more than Twice Until 2018

BISHKEK - In the framework of the fair on geological, energy, petrochemical and metallurgical industries, a presentation of the work of Uzbekkumir JSC took place June 12 in Tashkent. At the event, it was noted that the identified coal reserves of the country are more than 1.8 billion tons. Uzbekkumir said its program of technological modernization and updating of the production in 2012-2018 plays

an important role in increasing the volume of coal production in the country. Thus, the coal production is expected to grow 2.5-fold until 2018. Six investment projects are planned within the modernization program, noted the company. Implementation of the program for 2015-2018, the mine Shargunkumir's production capacity will be increased to 900 thousand tons per year, they said. (AKI Press)