

Obama again Urges Congress to Pass Gun Laws

ORLANDO - U.S. President Barack Obama on Thursday again urged Republican-controlled Congress to pass stricter gun control laws during his visit to Orlando in the wake of the country's deadliest mass shooting incident. "Those who were killed and injured here were gunned down by a single killer with a powerful assault weapon," Obama told reporters. "The motives of this killer may have been different than the mass killers in Aurora, or Newtown. But the instruments of death were so similar. Now another 49 innocent people are dead.



Another 53 are injured. Some are still fighting for their lives." At least 49 people were killed and 53 others wounded, including a po-

lice officer, early Sunday morning in a shooting spree at a popular LGBT

nightclub in Orlando, Florida. It was the deadliest terror attack in the U.S.

history since 9/11 in 2001. The gunman, identified by authorities as Omar Mateen of Port St. Lucie, Florida, was found dead inside the nightclub after a shootout with the police. "I truly hope that senators rise to the moment and do the right thing. We can stop some tragedies. We can save some lives. If we don't act, we will keep seeing more massacres like this," said Obama. Following the 2012 school mass shootings in Newtown, Connecticut, which claimed 26 lives, including 20 children, the Obama administration initiated but ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

UN Vows to Equal Rights for Disabilities to Achieve Development Process

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations on Thursday concluded a three-day meeting on the disabled persons with determination to never leave them behind in the global drive for sustainable development. Bringing together hundreds of disability advocates and government delegates, the 9th Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) constituted one of the largest and most

diverse international meetings on disability in the world. The main focus of the Parties to the CRPD, which kicked off on Tuesday at the U.N. Headquarters in New York, is to implement the new Sustainable Development Goals for all persons with disabilities. During the event, U.N. officials, including Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and U.N. General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft highlighted the critical role which



the disabilities play as invaluable partners to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. "Let us work together

for a world of opportunity and dignity for all, a future of inclusion, one in which we all gain by leaving no one behind," the ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

Putin Denies Existence of State-Run Doping Program

ST. PETERSBURG - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday denied the existence of any state-sponsored doping program in the country amid a series of doping allegations that have battered the country's sports community. "There is no support for doping at the state level and there cannot be any," Putin said at the annual St. Petersburg International Economic Forum held in Russia's second largest city. He added that Moscow is "categorically against

any doping," and vowed to fight against doping in sport at the state level. In May, the New York Times published a report claiming that various Russian athletes had used banned substances during the 2014 Winter Olympic Games in Sochi under a government-sponsored scheme. Putin said Russia's Prosecutor General's Office and the Investigative Committee are conducting their own investigation into the report. (Xinhua)

Iraqi Forces Free Govt. Compound in Fallujah

BAGHDAD - Iraqi security forces on Friday took control of the government compound in the Islamic State (IS)- held city of Fallujah in the country's western province of Anbar, after days of battles against IS militants inside the southern part of the city, security sources said. "The troops managed in the morning to free the government compound and raised the Iraqi flag on its main building in the central part of Fallujah," Raid Shakir Jawdat, the Commander of the Federal Police, said in a press release.

The recapture of the government compound came after the troops freed the districts of Nazal, Jubail and Resala, in addition to the industrial area in the southern part of the city, some 50 km west of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, a security source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. The latest advance is the result of fierce clashes during the past few days, which forced many of the extremist militants to flee the city, the source said. The battles continued in the day to free northern ...*(More on P4)...(29)*

Over 8,000 Children Rescued from Armed Groups between 2009 to 2015

KINSHASA - Over 8,000 children were rescued from armed groups by the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and the Congolese army, from Jan. 1, 2009 to May 31, 2015, head of the interim MONUSCO office in Goma, Josiah Obat, said Thursday. Obat was speaking in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DR Congo) during celebrations to mark the International Day of the

African Child. This year's event was marked under the theme "Conflicts and crises in Africa Let us protect rights of all children." He said 56 percent of those children were rescued in North Kivu province in the east of the country. "There are some rebels who do not want to surrender. I believe it is time they put down their weapons and support efforts to restore peace in eastern DR Congo," Obat said. On Wednesday, MO-



NUSCO and the Congolese Football federation signed an agreement for elimination of the phenomenon of "child soldiers." MONUSCO will use

football tournaments to sensitize armed groups to end the phenomenon of "child soldier" in DR Congo, so that they can rejoin their families. (Xinhua)

CIA Chief Warns of further IS Attacks, Dismissing Orlando Shooter's Terror Link

WASHINGTON - The Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq is training and attempting to deploy operatives for further attacks on the West, CIA Director John Brennan told Congress on Thursday, while confirming the Orlando "lone wolf" shooter had no direct links to the extreme group. "ISIL has a large cadre of Western fighters who could potentially serve as operatives for attacks in the West," Brennan told the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, warning the group may infiltrate refugees into western nations. ISIL is another acronym for the group. "Unfortunately, despite all our progress against ISIL on the battlefield and in



the financial realm, our efforts have not reduced the group's terrorism capability and global reach," said the spy chief. According to Brennan, the IS has lost "large stretches" of territory in Iraq and Syria but still has about 18,000 to 22,000 fighters there and its branch in Libya is

"probably the most developed and the most dangerous," echoing concerns that Libya's close proximity to Europe is a problem. He testified to the Congress that the IS has between 5,000 and 8,000 fighters in Libya, plus some 7,000 in Nigeria and ...*(More on P4)...(30)*

ISIS Committing Genocide against Yazidis: UN Commission

GENEVA - A latest report by a UN commission warned that the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS) is committing genocide against Yazidis, an ethnically Kurdish religious community or an ethno-religious group indigenous to northern Mesopotamia. The report, "They Came to Destroy: ISIS Crimes

Against the Yazidis," was issued Thursday by the independent international Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic in Geneva. "Genocide has occurred and is ongoing", emphasized Paulo Pinheiro, chairperson of the commission, adding that "ISIS has subjected every Yazidi woman, child or man that

it has captured to the most horrific of atrocities." As per the Commission's mandate, the report focuses on violations committed against Yazidis inside Syria, where thousands of women and girls are still being held captive and abused, often as slaves. "ISIS has sought to erase the Yazidis through kill ...*(More on P4)...(31)*

Hamas Leader Warns of Increasing Arabs' Normalization with Israel

GAZA - Ismail Haneya, the deputy chief of Islamic Hamas movement, warned on Friday of increasing and speeding up the Arabs' normalization with Israel. Haneya told prayers at one of Gaza mosques that all Arab and regional peace initiatives will fail

due to "the impossible Israeli terms and having the Likud Party the ruling party of Israel." "Even Oslo peace accords (the transitional peace treaties reached between Israel and the PLO) had failed after 23 years. All these treaties and initiatives had failed to help

gaining the Palestinian rights," said Haneya. Hamas movement, which opposes the peace process and refuses to recognize Israel, has been ruling the Gaza Strip since it had taken the coastal enclave by force in 2007 and routed Palestinian President ...*(More on P4)...(32)*

UN Envoy Urges Malian Parties to Make Peace, Reconciliation "a Reality"

UNITED NATIONS - The UN envoy in Mali on Thursday urged the relevant Malian parties to make peace and reconciliation "a reality" in the West African country as key challenges to implement Mali's peace and reconciliation agreement remained.

In his briefing to the UN Security Council, Mahamat Saleh Annadif, special representative of the UN secretary-general and head of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), made the statement one year after the Malian government

and armed groups signed the accord. "Quite clearly, neither the signatories nor the national mediation team are satisfied with the slow pace of implementation," he said. "This slow pace is difficult to understand and it is ...*(More on P4)...(34)*

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Pakistan's Entry Into SCO to Enhance Its Status: Chinese AFM

BEIJING - Chinese Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs Li Huilai has said that Pakistan's entry into SCO will enhance the organization's status and influence to effectively address security issues, and giving boost to socio-economic partnership among the member countries. Welcoming Pakistan to become full-member of the SCO at a news conference here, he said it would be important development in its future development to address the issues of common interest. Pakistan, he said is an important member of the region and its role towards security and counter-terrorism is highly positive. The Minister said China has been supporting the expansion of the organi-

zation and attached high importance to Pakistan's role as its full member. Pakistan will be joining the organization at a time when it was celebrating its 15th anniversary. Pakistan, he said is China's close friend and partner and they are looking forward to work together at the regional fora, pushing forward their common goals. He hoped that the SCO's Summit, going to take place at Tashkent on June 23 and 24 will be a landmark event for making the organization more strong and effective, particularly to deal with the security issues. The Summit, he said would adopt a common strategy on counter-terrorism. China, he said is willing to ...*(More on P4)...(35)*

P5+1 Must Fulfill JCPOA Obligations: Iranian Official

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian diplomat says the P5+1 group of countries must completely fulfill all its obligations, particularly in the banking sector, under the nuclear agreement it reached with Iran last July. In a meeting with Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter in Bern on Friday, Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for European and American Affairs Majid Takht-e Ravanchi said the Islamic Republic has complied with its obligations under the agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, France, Britain, China and Russia - plus Ger-

many started implementing the JCPOA on January 16. Under the deal, all nuclear-related sanctions imposed on Iran by the European Union, the Security Council and the US would be lifted. Iran has, in return, put some limitations on its nuclear activities. However, many large European banks still refrain from engaging in transactions with Iran for fear of US penalties. Takht-e Ravanchi also said political dialog between Tehran and Bern would prepare the ground for further expansion of cooperation, particularly in the economic sector. The Swiss foreign minister, for his part, welcomed the growing ...*(More on P4)...(36)*

Iran, Tajikistan Opt for Broadening of Cultural Cooperation

TEHRAN - Senior Iranian and Tajik officials in a meeting in Dushanbe underlined the need for boosting mutual cooperation between the two countries, specially in area of culture. During the meeting in the Tajik capital on Thursday, Iranian Cultural Counselor in Tajikistan Ebrahim Khodayar

and Tajikistan's international affairs director from Tajikistan culture ministry discussed ways for expansion of cultural and artistic cooperation between Iran and Tajikistan. The two sides also agreed on holding a ceremony in October to commemorate three ...*(More on P4)...(37)*

Turkmenistan Promotes Freedom of Religion and Belief

BISHKEK - Religious literacy, society and security were discussed at a three-day seminar for some 20 legislators, law-enforcement officials and researchers that concluded in Ashgabat on Friday. The OSCE Center in Ashgabat organized the event to facilitate the exchange of best practices in implementing international standards on freedom of religion and belief, and raising public awareness in the area of religious freedom. International experts presented experiences of other OSCE participating states in promoting religious freedom and discussed with participants the social and

political benefits of religious literacy in relation to the freedom of religion and belief. "In the age of globalization, which enhances interaction between different cultures and faiths, it is essential to educate the public about other religions and promote understanding of the important role of religious freedom," said Adam Walendzik, Project Coordinator at the OSCE Center in Ashgabat. The seminar also featured an overview of the Center's previous activities addressing religious freedom and highlighted links between international standards, education, religious literacy, society, and security. (AKIpress)

Boko Haram Kill 18 in NE Nigeria Attack: Police

LAGOS - Gunmen suspected to be Boko Haram insurgents have killed 18 people in Kuda-Kaya village of Madagali area in restive northeast Nigeria's Adamawa State, local police authority said Friday. The attack occurred around 10 p.m. local time on Thursday night, Othman Abubakar, the state police spokesperson told Xinhua in Yola, the state capital. Abubakar also confirmed the arrest of a Boko Haram suspect by the Police in Gombi area of the state. "We are still investigating the suspect to ascertain whether he is among the wanted Boko Haram leaders," Abubakar said. (Xinhua)

U.S. Confirms Expulsion of 3 American Officials by Nicaragua

WASHINGTON - The U.S. government confirmed on Thursday that three American officials had been expelled from Nicaragua, warning that this could damage ties between the two countries. "The expulsion on June 14 did occur," John Kirby, a spokesperson for the State Department, confirmed in a news briefing. All three officials were in Nicaragua "on temporary duty status" and arrived in the country recently. However, Kirby did not disclose ...*(More on P4)...(33)*