

US to 'Pre-Position' Heavy Weapons along NATO's Eastern Flank: Carter

TALLINN - The US will pre-position heavy weapons, including tanks, infantry fighting vehicles and artillery in central and eastern Europe for the first time, US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter said Tuesday in Estonia's capital Tallinn.

"We will temporarily stage one armoured brigade combat team's vehicles and associated equipment in countries in central and eastern Europe," Carter said at a joint press conference with three Baltic defence ministers. "This pre-positioned European activity set includes tanks,



infantry fighting vehicles artillery," he confirmed, adding that "Estonia as well as Lithuania, Latvia, Bulgaria, Romania and Poland have agreed to host company to battalion-sized elements of this equipment, which will be moved around the region for training and exercises."

The announcement comes as NATO vowed Monday to step up its military presence in eastern Europe amid the worst standoff between Russia and the West since the Cold War, caused by the conflict in Ukraine. (AFP)

Israel Vows Crackdown after 'Lynching' of Wounded Syrian



MAJDAL SHAMS - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pledged Tuesday to track down Druze rioters in the occupied Golan Heights responsible for the "lynching" of a wounded Syrian being transported to a hospital. The Monday attack, roundly condemned by local Druze religious and secular leadership, comes as Druze are increasingly concerned over the fate of their brethren in Syria after attacks by rebels there. Two Syrian men were being taken to hospital late Monday when dozens of Druze in the town of Majdal Shams stoned their

ambulance, forcing it to stop and dragging the men from the vehicle. They beat both of them, with one later pronounced dead and the other seriously wounded. An Israeli soldier and an officer in the ambulance were roughed up. "This is very severe," Netanyahu said of the attack. "We will find those who carried out the lynching and bring them to justice." "We are a country of law, not part of the anarchy spreading around us," he continued, calling on local Druze leadership to calm things down and tell all the Druze "not to take the law into their hands." (AFP)

Spanish Resident Arrested after Allegedly Fighting for IS

MADRID - A Moroccan national with the initials A.A.E.K and who is a Spanish resident was arrested by police in Warsaw (Poland) on Monday as he was returning to Spain, the Spanish Interior Ministry has informed. The ministry said that A.A.E.K was thought to have been on his way back after fighting for the Islamic State (IS). The individual had been under investigation and the Spanish National Court (Audiencia Nacional) had issued an international detention order in January of this

year. This led to his arrest in Warsaw after he had taken a flight from Belgrade. The suspect left Spain midway through 2014 after undergoing a process of radicalization and joining IS. He is believed to have received weapons training from IS and taken part in fighting, presumably in Syria. Spanish Interior Minister, Jorge Fernandez Diaz, recently commented that Spanish security forces had detected 116 people who had left Spain to fight in Iraq or Syria. (Xinhua)

Iraqis Return to Shattered Tikrit after Islamic State Routed



TIKRIT, Iraq - Abdel Mowgood Hassan climbs over toppled bricks and a torn-away front door to enter his uncle's house in Tikrit, the first of his relatives to make a cautious return home since Islamic State militants were driven out. "It's safe," Hassan calmly says. "I checked for booby traps." He is one in a trickle of civilians to return to Saddam Hussein's hometown in recent days after Iraqi forces and allied militias captured the city in April from the Islamic

State group. But while police now patrol the streets, its Sunni civilians are worried about the future, apprehensive about the Shiite militias that liberated Tikrit and fearful the Islamic State group could come back. U.S.-trained Iraqi police officers look over identification papers for all those returning to Tikrit, 130 kilometers (80 miles) north of Baghdad, wanting to stop the extremists from infiltrating this city on the banks of the Tigris River. (AP)

Japan to Host G7 Summit Meeting Next Year

TOKYO - Japan will host a summit meeting of the Group of Seven industrialized nations on May 26-27 next year in the city of Shima in Mie Prefecture, central Japan, local media reported Tuesday.

The country will also host ministerial meetings, such as foreign affairs and finance, however the time and venue of them haven't been decided yet, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said at a news conference, adding the Japanese government will announce relevant messages in due course.

"The government will do its best for the success of the Ise-Shima Summit," Suga said. "The period was decided as a result of coordination with other G7 members." The G7 groups Britain, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe announced on June 5 that Japan will host a summit



of G7 in the city of Shima in Mie Prefecture in 2016 under its presidency. (Xinhua)

Turkey's New-Look Parliament Opens as Coalition Nears

ANKARA - Turkey's parliament on Tuesday opened for a new session after elections in which the ruling party lost its overall majority, with political parties working to thrash out the first coalition government in over a decade.

Turkey has not seen a coalition since the ruling Islamic-rooted Justice and Development Party

(AKP) came to power in 2002 and so far there has been no breakthrough in efforts to agree a deal.

With President Recep Tayyip Erdogan looking on, main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) MP Deniz Baykal, who as parliament's oldest member at 76 is acting speaker, declared the session open. After a bruising election campaign,

Baykal urged for calm in Turkey, saying the "conditions no longer exist for continuing the polarisation of society".

Wearing the traditional tailcoat and white bow tie of the Turkish speaker, he also called for respect of Turkey's secular traditions as set out by its modern founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. (AFP)

NATO Defense Spending to Fall this Year Despite Russia Tensions

BRUSSELS - Military spending by NATO countries is set to fall again this year in real terms despite increased tensions with Russia and a pledge by alliance leaders last year to halt falls in defense budgets, NATO figures released on Monday showed.

The figures showed defense spending by the 28 members of the alliance is set to fall by 1.5 percent in real terms this year after a 3.9 percent fall in 2014. The fall comes at a time when tension between NATO and Russia is running high over the Ukraine conflict.

Russia has sharply raised its defense spending over the past decade. It also comes in spite of a



pledge by NATO leaders, jolted by Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region, last September to stop cutting military spending and move toward the alliance's target of spending 2 percent of their economic output on defense within a decade.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said 18 allies were set to raise defense spending this year in real terms, but the total was lower, continuing a trend of declining military spending, especially by European NATO allies. (Reuters)

Airstrike Kills 15 IS Affiliates in Libya

TRIPOLI - Libyan militias on Monday launched an airstrike on the Islamic State controlled Sirte killing 15 and injuring 10 others, a militia source told Xinhua on Tuesday. "A warplane attacked a location of IS militants in Noflia town, some 120 km east of Sirte, killing 15 militants and injuring 10 others," a source for the 166 Battalion militia of the Islamist militant Libya Dawn told Xinhua.

The injured militants were taken to a hospital in the near Abo Jawad town, the source added, confirming that the air strikes will continue on Sirte against IS strongholds. After having taken the eastern city of Derna, IS affiliates recently took over the city of Sirte since Libya Dawn militias evacuated the city. Libya, an oil-rich North African country, has been suffering continuous violence since the fall of Muammar Gaddafi's regime in 2011. (Xinhua)

Putin 'Saved My Life': Yanukovich

LONDON - Former Ukraine president Viktor Yanukovich has thanked Russian President Vladimir Putin for "saving my life" during the bloody demonstrations that led to his ouster. Yanukovich, currently exiled in Russia, told the BBC that he would like to return to Ukraine one day and blamed the country's plight on the

demonstrators who occupied Kiev's Maidan Square -- the focal point of the uprising against his rule. Months of protests led to a bloody crackdown that claimed more than 100 lives and ultimately toppled the president. Yanukovich fled to Russia on February 23, 2014, with the help of Moscow troops. "The fact that Vladimir

Putin took that decision, on the recommendation of his own special forces, that was his right and his business," he said in the interview, aired on BBC's Newsnight on Monday. "I am of course grateful to him for giving the order and helping my security to get me out, and save my life," he added. (AFP)

Russia-China Media Cooperation to Facilitate Integration of Development Strategies

MOSCOW - Russian and Chinese media organizations should boost their cooperation to facilitate the integration of the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU) framework with China's Silk Road Economic Belt initiative, a Russian media leader said. It makes sense for Russian media to work out a close cooperation with their Chinese counterparts, because the implementation of the Silk Road

Economic Belt is very important for Russia, Marat Abulkhatin, deputy chief editor of the Tass news agency, told Xinhua in an interview ahead of an upcoming bilateral media forum scheduled for Thursday. In a joint statement signed by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping during Xi's visit to Moscow in early May, the two sides agreed to make concerted efforts to in-

tegrate the EAEU construction with the Silk Road Economic Belt initiative, so as to deepen the Russia-China comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination. Tass has took part in similar forums before, Abulkhatin said, but for Tass this is the first time with such a high level, and Tass has planned to participate in the event at the highest level. As Abulkhatin sees it ... (More on P4)... (26)

Neighbour News

China, U.S. Kick off Annual High-Level Talks on Ties

WASHINGTON - China and the United States opened their annual high-level talks here Tuesday to deepen cooperation in strategic and economic issues and further promote people-to-people exchanges.

The seventh China-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) and the sixth China-U.S. High-Level Consultation on People-to-People Exchange (CPE) will conclude Wednesday.

This year's S&ED is co-chaired by Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang and State Councilor Yang Jiechi, special representatives of Chinese President Xi Jinping, and U.S. Secretary of State John

Kerry and Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew, on behalf of U.S. President Barack Obama.

The CPE is co-chaired by Chinese Vice Premier Liu Yandong, a special representative of Xi, and Kerry. Speaking at the opening ceremony, U.S. Vice President Joe Biden stressed the importance of U.S.-China cooperation in dealing with varied issues facing today's world, saying his country, instead of fearing China's rise, wants to see the Asian giant's rise as it could be a significant asset for the region and the whole world. With an eye to the differences between the two sides, Biden said the United States ... (More on P4)... (27)

Iran Lawmakers Pass Bill to Protect Nuclear Programme

TEHRAN - Iran's parliament approved a controversial bill Tuesday that it said would protect the country's nuclear programme, but which could also hinder final negotiations on a deal with world powers.

The move re-exposed persistent tension between President Hassan Rouhani's government and lawmakers in Tehran, where hardliners routinely voice doubt about the merit of talking to the West. One of Rouhani's vice presidents said the bill, which still has to be signed into law by Iran's Guardian Council, was unconstitutional and would not help its negotiators at

"a sensitive point" in the talks.

The move, just one week before the deadline for an international agreement on the Islamic republic's disputed nuclear programme, lays down terms for MPs' accepting it.

Rouhani, a moderate who aims to end Iran's diplomatic isolation, wants an agreement that can lift sanctions that have hobbled the economy. However, critics of his nuclear policy, including members of the conservative-dominated legislature, say too many concessions have been made and, using the bill, they demanded a bigger say. (AFP)

Pakistan Heatwave Deaths Close to 700: Officials

KARACHI - Nearly 700 people have died in a severe three-day heatwave in Pakistan, officials said today, with medics battling to treat patients as a state of emergency was declared in hospitals.

The majority of people died in government-run hospitals in the port city of Karachi, Pakistan's economic hub of around 20 million people, as temperatures reached 45 degrees Celsius (111 Fahrenheit) at the weekend.

"The number of people who have died in the heatwave has now

reached 692," said Saad Mangnejo, a senior provincial health official, adding that the toll may rise further.

The highest number of deaths have been recorded at Karachi's largest hospital, Post Graduate Medical College Hospital, where they have treated more than 3,000 patients, doctor Semi Jamila told AFP.

Pakistan's largest charity, Edhi Welfare Organisation, said their two morgues in the city had received more than 400 corpses in the last three days. (AFP)

Donors Support Export-Oriented Enterprises in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - A sector development seminar on effective exporting for Tajik export-oriented companies working in agribusiness and manufacturing was held in Khujand, the capital of the Sughd province in northwestern Tajikistan, Avesta news agency reported. The event was organized by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the US SME Special Fund. The EBRD with the support of the US SME Special Fund launched a series of sector development seminars targeted at agribusiness enterprises in Central Asia. The first seminar was

held in Shymkent (Kazakhstan), the second was conducted in Bishkek (Kyrgyzstan), and the third took place in Khujand, the EBRD resident office in Tajikistan said.

The seminar aimed at transferring knowledge on export of food products, providing a toolkit to help small and medium-sized enterprises access highly competitive markets. The seminar gathered Tajik producers of dry fruit, flour, sausages, pasta, and dairy products, providing a much needed platform for discussion between businesses and experienced consultants on export promotion. (TCA)