

# Iran Must Make Further Concessions to Clinch Nuclear Deal: UK

*British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond says Iran will have to make further concessions in order to reach an agreement on its nuclear program.*

LONDON - Speaking to reporters in the Saudi capital, Riyadh, on Monday, Hammond added that while significant progress has been made in the nuclear talks between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries during recent weeks, it would be extremely challenging to reach a deal. "It remains the case that Iran has to make significant further movement if we are going to be able to secure an agreement," he said.

"There are a lot of complex and difficult issues that remain to be resolved before a deal can be agreed. Reaching a comprehensive, lasting and verifiable deal will be extremely challenging, but remains in all our interests," the British foreign secretary added. Iranian officials have repeatedly warned that excessive demands on the part of the six negotiating countries would impede progress towards a final nuclear deal. Iran's Deputy Foreign



Minister for Legal and International Affairs Abbas Araqchi said on Sunday that Western countries should arrive at a common position during the course of

"We are currently at a critical juncture and should reach the point, where we have a balanced deal that recognizes our nuclear program and lifts sanctions

in exchange for confidence-building measures," Araqchi pointed out. A fresh round of nuclear talks is scheduled to resume in the Swiss city

of Lausanne on Thursday with a planned visit between Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and US Secretary of State John Kerry. (Press TV)

## US Deployment of Nukes in Europe Violates NPT: Russia

MOSCOW - Russia has called on the United States, as a NATO member, to withdraw its nuclear weapons from Europe, saying their deployment in the continent violates the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

"We have repeatedly drawn NATO's attention to the fact that such practices directly run counter to the spirit and the letter of NPT," said Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman, Alexander Lukashevich, on Tuesday.

However, the Western military alliance turns a blind eye to Moscow's calls and keeps pursuing the same policy, said

Lukashevich, stressing, "This abnormal situation has been observed for more than 40 years [since the NPT went into effect]. And it is not becoming any more acceptable for us." The remarks came days after US State Department spokeswoman, Jen Psaki, claimed that "the deployment of US nuclear weapons on the territories of our NATO allies is consistent with the NPT."

"These weapons remain under US control at all times and are never transferred," Psaki said on March 19, adding, "NPT Articles I and II do not prohibit these



types of nuclear basing or planning arrangements."

Lukashevich further denounced Psaki's statement, saying Washington is "blatantly misrepresenting facts." Article 1 of NPT stipulates that no country is allowed to transfer its nuclear weapons to oth-

er parties while article 2 of the treaty prohibits those countries lacking nuclear know-how from having access to nuclear weapons, Lukashevich stated, adding that the US deployment of nuclear arms in Europe infringes upon the terms of the agreement. (Monitoring Desk)

## No Time Should be Wasted in Iran Talks: China

*China has urged all sides involved in the negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program not to lose any time in the bid for a comprehensive agreement.*

TEHRAN - Speaking at a regular press conference on Monday, Chinese Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Hong Lei urged all sides in the negotiations about Iran's nuclear program to build up political will in an attempt to reach a comprehensive agreement.

"The negotiation on a comprehensive agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue has come to a critical point... All parties concerned should build up political will, work towards the shared goal, waste

no time in making political decisions and make joint efforts to clinch a final deal through negotiation," Hong said. He added that during the latest nuclear talks between Iran, the P5+1 countries and the EU in Lausanne, Switzerland, all participants demonstrated "strong political will, pragmatic attitude for negotiation and innovative thinking." The Chinese official pointed out that important progress has been made in Lausanne while the gaps still remain. (Press TV)

## Nieghbor News

### China-India Agree to Foster Peace on Disputed Border

NEW DELHI - India and China agreed Tuesday to foster peace along their Himalayan border after wrapping up two days of talks designed to resolve a long-festering boundary dispute.

In comments issued after the round of talks in the Indian capital, the governments of both countries stressed their common desire to maintain calm and to press ahead with further negotiations. "Both sides agreed to take necessary steps to maintain peace and tranquility in the border areas, which is a pre-requisite for continued growth of bilateral relations," the Indian foreign ministry said. The Chinese foreign ministry said both sides had agreed to make "joint efforts to safeguard peace and tranquility of the border area," which has been the scene of several recent military

standoffs. China's special representative Yang Jiechi and Indian national security adviser Ajit Doval led their respective delegations at the talks, which were first agreed during President Xi Jinping's visit to India last year. The talks that started Monday were part of a push to make progress on the border dispute before Modi's expected visit to China in May. China defeated India in a brief but bloody war in 1962 but an agreement on their border remains elusive, with each side regularly accusing the other of sending soldiers to encroach on territory. Tensions peaked last September when hundreds of Chinese troops allegedly moved into the Himalayan territory just as Xi arrived in India on a landmark visit, casting a shadow over his talks with Modi. (Agencies)

### Iran Criticizes IAEA Snap Inspection Demand

TEHRAN - An Iranian official criticized the U.N. atomic agency chief for demanding snap inspections of Iran's nuclear sites, saying such a demand stands in the way of Tehran and world powers reaching a deal on the country's controversial nuclear program.

The so-called P5+1 group - Britain, China, France, Russia, the U.S. and Germany - faces an end-of-the-month deadline to reach a final nuclear deal with Iran.

Iran's nuclear spokesman Behrouz Kamalvandi was quoted Tuesday on Iranian state TV's website as saying that snap inspections are "illegal." He did not elaborate. Kamalvandi was responding to the de-

mand earlier this month by Yukiya Amano, the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), that Tehran agree to the inspections.

In an exclusive interview with VOA's Persian service, Amano said he was confident that Iran and the P5 +1 would be able to reach a comprehensive nuclear agreement before the deadline. Asked about concerns that the IAEA lacks the necessary tools and authority to verify Tehran's nuclear program, Amano said it was too early to comment but that he believes "there is a solution for every difficult problem." The IAEA suspects that Tehran has worked on nuclear arms in the past. (VoA)

### ADB Reviews Forecast for Turkmenistan's Economic Growth

BAKU, Azerbaijan - The Asian Development Bank (ADB) revised its GDP growth forecast on Turkmenistan in 2015, the bank's Asian Development Outlook 2014 report, released on March 24, said.

Turkmenistan's GDP growth is expected to slow to 9.7 percent in 2015 and 9.2 percent in 2016, according to the report.

"With hydrocarbons representing more than 90 percent of exports, the continued decline in energy prices and fluctuating demand for Turkmen gas will likely reduce export revenues, weakening the current account," the report said.

However, according to ADB, Turkmenistan has strong external buffers, as the International Monetary Fund estimated its foreign exchange reserves equal to 22 months of imports

in 2014. Moreover, breakeven petroleum prices for the fiscal and external balance are considered to be the lowest in the region, providing some insulation against fluctuating energy prices.

On the supply side, industry and services were the main sources of growth. The government reported that industry expanded by 11.4 percent in 2014, an improvement from 7.3 percent in 2013 that reflected faster growth in hydrocarbons, electricity, chemicals, construction materials, textiles, and agro-industrial products. Expansion in services slowed to 10.6 percent from 12.7 percent in 2013. Growth in agriculture decelerated to 4.2 percent from 10.0 percent in 2013 as unfavorable weather held wheat and livestock production below targets. (Agencies)

## IS Recruits 400 Children since January: Syria Monitor

BEIRUT - Islamic State has recruited at least 400 children in Syria in the past three months and given these so-called "Cubs of the Caliphate" military training and headline indoctrination, a monitoring group said on Tuesday.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the children, all aged under 18, were recruited near schools, mosques and in public areas where Islamic State carries out killings and brutal pun-

ishments on local people. One such young boy appeared in a video early this month shooting dead an Israeli Arab accused by Islamic State of being a spy. A French police source said the boy might be the half-brother of Mohamed Merah, who killed three soldiers, a rabbi and three Jewish children in Toulouse in 2012.

"They use children because it is easy to brainwash them. They can build these children into

what they want, they stop them from going to school and send them to IS schools instead," Islamic State declared a caliphate last year in territory it controls in Syria and Iraq and is being targeted by U.S.-led air strikes in both countries. It has headed or shot dead Syrian civilians, combatants, foreign aid workers and journalists and has released videos appearing to show children witnessing or participating in some of

the killings. The group persecutes people across sects and ethnicities who do not adhere to its ultra-hardline doctrine.

The group may be resorting to children because it has been having difficulties recruiting adults since the start of the year, with only 120 joining its ranks, Abdulrahman said. This was partly due to tighter controls on the Turkish border, where foreign fighters tend to enter, he added. (Reuters)

## Iraq FM in Damascus for Talks on Terrorism

DAMASCUS - Iraq's Foreign Minister (FM) has held talks with senior Syrian officials in Damascus with the issue of terrorism being the main top of discussions.

During a Tuesday meeting with Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Muallem, Ibrahim al-Ja'afari discussed ways to tackle the issue of terrorism in the two neighboring countries. The discussions "focused on the fight against terrorism and common dangers that threaten our countries," Syria's state

television said. The Iraqi foreign minister also met with the Syrian deputy foreign minister, Faisal al-Muqdad, at the Damascus International Airport.

Ja'afari is the first senior Iraqi official to visit Damascus since the conflict began in Syria over four years ago. He also met with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The neighbors are both engaged in battle against the ISIL Takfiri terrorists that currently control parts of Syria and Iraq. (Agencies)

## US, Israel Snub UN Rights Council Session on Gaza War

GENEVA - US and Israeli envoys refused to attend a UN Human Rights Council special session Monday on the situation in the Palestinian territories in the aftermath of the 2014 Gaza conflict.

The US decision will disappoint those who hoped the recent disagreement between the allies over Iran policy and the Middle East peace process would see Washington withhold diplomatic cover from Israel.

"As was the case last year, the United States will not engage in the debate. Neither will Israel. Instead, we will call a vote, and vote 'no' on Item 7 resolutions," said the US ambassador to the council, Keith Harper.

Speaking in Washington, State Department spokeswoman Marie Harf confirmed that Washington had "coordinated our refusal to participate with Israel." Israel provided no immediate explanation for missing the session dedicated overwhelmingly to a discussion of alleged abuses by its forces, but a

source close to the council said its absence clearly amounted to a boycott.

It has long been US policy not to participate in council debates on "Item 7" - which is always on the Human Rights Council agenda and which Washington maintains unfairly singles out the Jewish state.

"We remain deeply troubled by this council's stand-alone agenda item directed against Israel, and by the many repetitive and one-sided resolutions under that agenda item." Monday's session had been scheduled to discuss a probe on the 50-day war in Gaza last year, but investigators obtained a delay after the head of the team quit under Israeli pressure. Canadian international law expert William Schabas resigned as chair of the Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza conflict last month after Israel complained he could not be impartial because he had prepared a legal opinion for the Palestine Liberation Organization in October 2012. (AFP)

## Obama to Host Japan's Abe to Discuss Security, Trade

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Barack Obama will host Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe at the White House next month for talks expected to focus on their joint response to China's rising power and efforts to finalize a major Asia-Pacific trade pact.

Abe, who will spend eight days in the United States, will go to the White House on April 28 to discuss a range of economic and security issues as well as a formal state dinner, the White House said on Monday. The visit signals another step in the Obama administration's efforts to focus policies on the Asia-Pacific region. The talks are expected to focus on security cooperation in the face of growing Chinese assertiveness in Asia and Abe's moves to loosen the restraints Japan's pacifist postwar constitution. The leaders' talks are expected to be preceded by a meeting of their foreign and defense ministers to finalize updated defense cooperation guidelines. (Reuters)

## Yemen Militia Sends Forces South As UN Warns of Civil War

SANAA - Yemen's Shiite militia sent reinforcements south and clashed with local fighters on Monday after the United Nations warned the country is on the brink of a protracted civil war.

Security sources said the militiamen, known as Huthis, had sent thousands of troops and clashed with Sunni tribes, with their sights set on the main southern city of Aden, where President Abdurabbo Mansour Hadi fled to from the capital last month.

The militia on Sunday seized the airport and a nearby military base in Taez, 180 kilometres (110 miles) north of Aden and seen as a strategic entry point to Hadi's southern refuge. Yemen, a long-time US ally which borders Saudi Arabia, is increasingly divided between a north controlled by the Huthis, who are allegedly backed by Iran, and a south dominated by Hadi supporters. Mounting unrest - including



suicide bombings claimed by the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group that killed 142 people in the Huthi-controlled capital Sanaa on Friday - have raised international concerns and prompted an emergency session of the UN Security Council on Sunday. Its 15 members voiced their unanimous support for Hadi, with UN envoy Jamal Benomar warning that without immediate action the country will slide into "further violence and displacement". "Recent events" seem to be leading Yemen to the edge of a civil war," Benomar told the meeting by video link from Qatar, warning of a protracted

crisis like "a Libya-Syria combined scenario". The Huthis have also deployed some 5,000 militiamen and more than 80 tanks to an area of neighbouring Ibb province, 30 kilometres northeast of Taez, local and military sources said. Western countries and Sunni Arab Gulf monarchies have backed Hadi as the country's legitimate ruler. On Monday, Saudi Foreign Minister Prince Saud al-Faisal reiterated calls for Huthis to "obey an international consensus on rejecting the coup," in reference to their seizure of power in Sanaa. (AFP)

## Pakistan's Economy Showing Signs of Recovery: ADB

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's economy is showing signs of recovery underpinned by falling global oil prices and the expected uptick in regional economic growth. A report of Asian Development Bank (ADB) "the Asian Development Outlook (ADO) 2015, ADB's flagship annual economic publication here Tuesday forecasts that Pakistan's economic growth in 2015 would modestly improve to 4.2 percent and to 4.5 percent in 2016, subject to steady progress in macroeconomic and structural reforms, and stable secu-

rity, political, and weather conditions. In 2014, the country exuded renewed confidence with higher foreign exchange reserves, lower fiscal deficit and moderate inflation. However, gross domestic product (GDP) growth is still below the rate required to absorb a growing labor force, the report added. Unveiling the report here, the country director for ADB in Pakistan, Werner Liepach said the Pakistan's economy is expected to continue push forward with a modest growth trajectory. (Monitoring Desk)