

# Russia, U.S. Reach Some Consensus on Syria, but Not on Bilateral Ties

MOSCOW - Russia and the United States have reached some consensus on Syria during U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's visit, but relations are far from thawing so long as the sanctions on Russia are not lifted.

During his two-day visit, Kerry held talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on Syria, the situation in the Korean Peninsula and ties between their two countries.

The two sides agreed that further talks will be focused on details of Syria's



political transition, including a framework and a

draft constitution, among other issues. The political

transition in Syria is the best and perhaps the only

way to end the war, Kerry told a press conference late

Thursday night. The agenda of further talks would include a timetable "for establishing a framework for political transition and also a draft constitution, both to be finished by August," said Kerry, who arrived here on Wednesday. Kerry and Lavrov outlined specific objectives on which Russia and the United States agreed to cooperate.

On settlement of the Syrian crisis, the two sides would take steps to reinforce cessation of hostilities and end the use of indiscriminate weapons. (Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### Iran Using Asian Help to Revamp Refineries

TEHRAN - Iran said on Friday that it is working with Asian investors and builders to revamp several of its key refineries. Abbas Kazemi, the managing director of the National Iranian Oil Refining and Distribution Company (NIORDC), told the domestic media that an agreement has been signed with companies from South Korea to renovate the refineries in Isfahan and Abadan. Kazemi said the Korean companies - which he did not name - have already made a progress of 20-30 percent over Isfahan refinery. Once the operations finish, the refinery will produce a

larger volume of Euro-IV gasoline and gas oil and less mazut, the official emphasized.

Elsewhere in his remarks, Kazemi said talks have started with Chinese lenders to fund another project to re-develop Abadan refinery. He emphasized that the project is among the key current priorities of Iran's Ministry of Petroleum.

Abadan refinery re-development is estimated to require about \$3 billion and the prime objectives will be increasing the quality of strategic products such as gasoline and gas oil, Kazemi emphasized. (PressTV)

### 3 Killed, 24 Injured in Car Bomb Attack in Turkey

ANKARA - Three Turkish soldiers were killed and 24 others were injured in car bomb attacks by militants in southeastern Turkey on Thursday, the state-run Anatolia news agency reported on Friday. Militants of the outlawed Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) attacked Mermer Gendarme Station with car bombs near the Diyarbakir-Bingol Highway late Thursday evening, according to the report. It also said that ambulances and re-

inforcements were dispatched to the area that saw the clashes between the militants and the security forces.

The highway in Diyarbakir was closed, said the report, adding that Turkish military had launched an operation to capture the PKK operatives who fled the scene.

The wounded were sent to Diyarbakir Military Hospital for treatment, some in critical conditions, added the report. ... (More on P4)... (21)

### 'State of Emergency' Declared in Libya Capital

TRIPOLI - Authorities in control of Libya's capital on Friday declared a "maximum state of emergency" after a UN-backed unity government that they reject said its members would head to Tripoli to begin work.

The city is under the control of an administration backed armed groups including Islamists that is not internationally recognised. The head of the Tripoli authorities Khalifa Ghwell called on his interior and defence min-

istries and allied armed groups to "take all security measures necessary to preserve the country's stability by increasing patrols and security checks", a statement on his administration's website said. But streets were calm on Friday morning, an AFP photographer said, with police cars deployed at their usual positions around the city, but no signs of extra security measures.

Libya has had two rival administrations since



mid-2014 when an armed alliance overran the capital, setting up its own authority and causing the government backed by the internationally recognised parliament to flee east. (AFP)

### France Says it Foils Advanced Attack Plot: Minister

PARIS - A French national suspected of belonging to a militant network planning an attack in France was arrested on Thursday morning, French Interior Minister Bernard Cazeneuve said. The arrest helped "foil a plot in France that was at an advanced stage," Cazeneuve said on Thursday night in a televised address from his ministry.

"The individual questioned, a French national, is suspected of high-level involvement in this plan. He was part of a terrorist network that planned to strike

France," Cazeneuve said. Following the arrest by the French counterterrorism service, DGSI, the agency carried out a raid on Thursday night at an apartment building in Argenteuil, a suburb in northern Paris, he said.

"At this stage, there is no tangible evidence that links this plot to the attacks in Paris and Brussels," said Cazeneuve, who was in the Belgian capital earlier on Thursday. French radio station France Info reported that the man had ... (More on P4)... (22)

### Syrian Army Recaptures Palmyra's Ancient Citadel

DAMASCUS - The Syrian army fully captured the ancient citadel of the millennia-old oasis city of Palmyra on Friday, following intense battles against the Islamic State (IS) group, state news agency SANA reported.

The military forces captured the citadel after dealing heavy blows to the IS militants, who overran the city and raised their flag over the citadel last May, SANA said, citing a military source. Meanwhile, pan-Arab al-Mayadeen TV said the



IS militants withdrew on Friday from the ancient citadel of the historical city of Palmyra in central Syria to another district in that city as a result of the

wide-scale offensive of the Syrian army. The IS militants withdrew from the ancient citadel of Palmyra toward the al-Amiriyyeh district in that

oasis city in the eastern countryside of the central province of Homs, said the report, adding that the terror group had tried to ... (More on P4)... (23)

### Putin Keeps Chechen Leader on the Job

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday nominated Chechnya's regional leader for another term in office, shrugging off demands for his dismissal over an alleged role in the killing of a Russian opposition leader. But in an apparent bid to rein in the unruly strongman, Putin warned Ramzan Kadyrov of the need to more closely follow the federal law. Putin has relied on Kadyrov to stabilize Chechnya after two separatist wars, effectively allowing him to rule the region like a personal fiefdom. Kadyrov's unparalleled privileges and defiant behavior have earned him numerous enemies in Russia's law-enforcement agencies, whose leaders have long pushed for his dismissal. The February 2015 killing of Boris Nemtsov, a prominent Kremlin critic, has raised pressure on Kadyrov, because the suspected triggerman was an officer in his security force. Russia's liberal opposition activists have accused Kadyrov of involvement in the killing, accusations he has rejected. Putin didn't mention the killing during a televised meeting with Kadyrov Friday, praising the Chechen leader for rebuilding Chechnya and raising living standards. (AP)

### Greece Marks Independence Day with Calls for Solidarity with Refugees

ATHENS - Greece marked on Friday the anniversary of Greek independence from Turkish rule in 1821 with an annual military parade here, student parades across the country and messages of solidarity with refugees by political leaders.

President Prokopis Pavlopoulos, Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, and opposition parties included references to the ongoing refugee crisis that has tested Greece and Europe over the past year in their statements for Independence Day. "Following the example of our ancient Greek ancestors who helped for-



signers in need as well as the Christian principles of love and solidarity, Greeks today are facing refugees with humanism," Pavlopoulos said after the end of the military parade in front of the parliament. The president called on all Europeans to do more

to assist the thousands of people landing on Europe's shores, and help end wars. Referring to the economic crisis that has also tested Greece in recent years, he suggested unity "to successfully confront the ... (More on P4)... (24)

### S. African President to Visit Saudi Arabia, UAE to Boost Ties

JOHANNESBURG - South African President Jacob Zuma will lead a high-level delegation on a state visit to Saudi Arabia, and a working visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to promote bilateral ties, the Presidency said on Friday.

Zuma's visit to Saudi Arabia, scheduled for Sunday, will serve as an important structural catalyst to strengthen bilateral political and economic relations, in particular, by strengthening cooperation in the areas of trade

and investment and in support of expanding cultural and people-to-people interaction between the two countries, the Presidency said in a statement.

This will be the third presidential visit to Saudi Arabia following the first state visit by the late former president Nelson Mandela in 1997, and a working visit by former President Thabo Mbeki in 2007.

In March this year, Saudi Arabian firm ACWA ... (More on P4)... (25)

### British Politician Heading to South America Walking for Peace

LONDON - British politician Lord Bates will start his new journey of 3,000 km "Walk for the Olympic Truce" in April from Buenos Aires to Rio de Janeiro to raise funds for UNICEF.

Michael Bates, 55, a member of the House of Lords, announced Thursday that he is setting out on a 3,000-km solo-walk from Buenos Aires, the host city for the 2018 Youth Olympic Games to Rio de Janeiro, the host

city of the 2016 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The five-month journey will start on April 6 and finish on Aug. 22, and he will walk through four countries in South America, namely Argentina, Uruguay, Paraguay and Brazil. His wife Li Xuelin, a Chinese from Zhejiang Province, will assist him during his walking. The purpose for the walk this time is to raise awareness for the UN Olympic ... (More on P4)... (28)

### Nigeria Vows to Flush Out Illegal Migrants

LAGOS - The Nigerian government on Friday said it has put in place new stringent measures to flush out illegal migrants from the country. Comptroller-General of the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS) Martin Abeshe disclosed this at a news conference in Abuja, the nation's capital city. The immigration chief decried the menace of illegal immigrants in the country and noted that the service had arrested and deported a lot of culprits across the country. "We have also put in place additional ... (More on P4)... (26)

### Singapore to Attract More Nuclear Experts for Security Reason

SINGAPORE - While there are no plans to build nuclear power plants in Singapore, a pool of local nuclear experts will be developed in the next five years to protect the city-state from radiation, said the country's National Research Foundation (NRF) on Friday. The move came one day before Singapore Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong kicks off his visit to the United States from March 26 to April 1 during which he will attend the Nuclear Security ... (More on P4)... (27)

### Rouhani in Pakistan on Two-Day Visit

ISLAMABAD - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani arrived in Pakistan Friday on a two-day state visit for talks on bilateral and regional matters, focusing on economic and energy cooperation, officials said.

This is Rouhani's first visit to Pakistan as the president of Iran. The Iranian president is accompanied by a high-level delegation comprising ministers, senior

officials and businessmen, the Foreign Ministry said. During his stay in Islamabad, the president of Iran will hold meetings with the president and the prime minister of Pakistan.

"The Leadership will have an exchange of views on strengthening bilateral relations, particularly after lifting of the sanctions on Iran that has opened new ... (More on P4)... (29)

### OSCE Chairman in Office Expected to Visit Tajikistan Next Week

DUSHANBE - Germany's Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who currently serves as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) with regard to 2016 German chairmanship of the OSCE, will arrive in Dushanbe on April 1 on a short visit,

according to the Tajik MFA information department. On the same day, German Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs will hold talks with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon, the source said.

Frank-Walter Steinmeier is a German politician of the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). ... (More on P4)... (30)

### Uzbekistan Supports Cooperation in Priority Areas SCO Activity

TASHKENT - In July 2015 the Republic of Uzbekistan took the chairmanship of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The adoption of such a mission coincided with the 15th anniversary of the SCO, which gives special significance and high responsibility to our country in enhancing the prestige of this struc-

ture and improving its performance, Information Agency Jahon (IAJ) quoted Uzbekistan's Ministry of foreign affairs. Uzbekistan considers the organization as a union of equal states, the mechanism of multilateral cooperation aimed at strengthening peace and stability in the region, a ... (More on P4)... (31)

### Turkmenistan Offers Joint Energy Projects to Saudi Arabia

ASHGABAT - During the meeting with Saudi Arabia's Minister of Commerce and Industry Tawfiq bin Fawzan Al Rabiah, Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov proposed to thoroughly

study the possibilities of implementing joint energy projects, said the message from Turkmen government. The parties focused on boosting the cooperation in the fuel and energy sector. It was ... (More on P4)... (32)

### China, Russia Should Work to Settle Hotspot Issues: President Xi

BEIJING - China and Russia should strengthen communication and international and regional affairs to promote the political settlement of major hotspot issues,

President Xi Jinping said on Friday. "China-Russia strategic cooperation plays a key role in safeguarding peace and stability in the region and the world ... (More on P4)... (33)