

UN Chief Ban Ki-Moon in Baghdad for Talks

BAGHDAD - United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon arrived in Baghdad on Saturday for talks with senior officials on ways of assisting war-ravaged Iraq, the world body said. Ban, who had last visited the Iraqi capital in March 2015, was travelling with World Bank chief Jim Yong Kim and Islamic Development Bank head Ahmad al-Madani. They went straight into talks with Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari. Ban flew from Lebanon, where he called



for an end to war in the region and visited some

of the 1.2 million refugees the country hosts. A

drop in oil prices has had a devastating effect on

the economy of Iraq, already strained by the cost

of the fight against the Islamic State group. As areas are gradually retaken from the jihadists in intense battles, Baghdad is left with little to spare on the reconstruction of ravaged cities. The government has asked for support from its foreign partners. During a visit to Baghdad on March 16, British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond said lenders would be urged to help. "We will work with our partners from the G7 in order to ... (More on P4)...(17)

UN Slams 'Gruesome' Killing of Palestinian

JERUSALEM - The United Nations condemned on Friday the "gruesome" killing of a wounded Palestinian attacker by an Israeli soldier in the West Bank, after a video of the shooting spread online. "I strongly condemn yesterday's apparent extrajudicial execution of a Palestinian assailant in Hebron in the occupied West Bank," UN Special Coordinator for the Middle East peace process Nickolay Mladenov said in a statement. "This was a gruesome,

immoral and unjust act that can only fuel more violence and escalate an already volatile situation." He welcomed, however, Israeli Defence Minister Moshe Yaalon's condemnation of the incident and called on the Israeli authorities to "swiftly bring to justice" the perpetrator. The Israeli army on Thursday arrested a soldier caught on video shooting a wounded Palestinian attacker in the head as he lay on the ground after stabbing another soldier, ... (More on P4)...(18)

Syria Government Says will Restore Ancient Palmyra

DAMASCUS - Palmyra's ancient Roman temples and archway, blown up by Islamic State fighters last year, will be restored once Syria recaptures the city from the ultra-hardline Islamist group, the head of the antiquities authority said on Saturday. Mamoun Abdelkarim told Reuters he hoped Palmyra would be retaken within days, after government forces fought their way into the western and northern parts of the city,

and promised to revive the Roman-era monuments "as a message against terrorism". Islamic State militants dynamited the temples of Baal Shamin and Bel, as well as funeral towers and a triumphal arch, which had stood for 1,800 years in the oasis city described by the U.N. cultural agency as a crossroads of cultures since the dawn of humanity. The group's acts of cultural destruction in Syria



and neighboring Iraq, which it documented and broadcast with the same thoroughness as its shooting, beheading, drowning and burning of prisoners, were condemned by the ... (More on P4)...(19)

N. Korea Warns of Strike on Seoul's Presidential Palace

PYONGYANG - North Korea warned Saturday that its military is ready to attack Seoul's presidential palace unless South Korean President Park Geun-hye apologizes for "treason" and publicly executes officials responsible for what Pyongyang says are plans to attack its leadership. The warning, issued by state media in the name of a unit of the Korean People's Army, is the latest in a barrage of threats against Washington and Seoul over joint military drills now underway that the North sees as a dress rehearsal for invasion. It also came shortly af-

ter a North Korean propaganda outlet posted a video depicting a nuclear attack on Washington, D.C. The joint military exercises are held annually, but tensions are particularly high this year because the drills are bigger than ever and come on the heels of North Korea's recent nuclear test and rocket launch. Further angering Pyongyang have been reports in South Korean media that this year's exercises include simulated training for a "decapitation strike" targeting North Korea's top leaders. The warning Saturday said ... (More on P4)...(20)

Fears and Tears Grip Yemenis Amid Airstrikes and Conflicts

SANAA - Tens of thousands of supporters of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh and Houthi Shiite group held separate rallies in Yemen's rebel-held capital Sanaa on Saturday to mark the one-year anniversary of the outbreak of the Saudi-led coalition airstrikes and civil war in Yemen. The capital was divided into two squares between the Iran-allied Houthi and Saleh's groups. Supporters of the General People's Congress, which is headed by Saleh,



gathered morning in Al-Sabeen area in southern Sanaa, while the Houthis staged their rally afternoon in Al-Rawda in northern the capital.

Both rallies were called upon by the two war leaders, Ali Abdullah Saleh and Abdul-Malik Badr al-Deen al-Houthi. In their brief speeches to their supporters, both leaders confirmed they went into peace talks with Saudi Arabia which began last month and that they ... (More on P4)...(21)

UN Envoy Decries Use of Child Soldiers by Somali Militants

MOGADISHU - The UN top envoy for Somalia has decried the use of child soldiers by the Islamist Al-Shabaab militant in their attacks in the Horn of Africa nation. In a statement received on Saturday, the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General (SRSG) for Somalia Michael Keating deplored the high number of children among the Al-Shabaab militants captured by Puntland security forces during the recent fighting in that part of Somalia. Keating said the blatant deployment of children by Al-Shabaab extremists is an outrage that warrants special condemnation. "These children need support, and it is imperative that all feasible steps be taken to rehabilitate them and eventually reunite them with their families," Keating said. The UN envoy said these children are among dozens of extremists who were captured in coastal areas of Puntland and have been subsequently moved to the state capital of Garowe.

The statement came as Somali militants have ... (More on P4)...(24)

UN Chief to Help Iraq Overcome Financial Crisis, Fight IS

BAGHDAD - United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Saturday paid an official visit here, aiming at showing the international community's support to the Iraqi government to confront economic crisis and fight against the Islamic State (IS).

The UN chief, who was accompanied by World Bank President Jim Yong Kim and President of the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) Ahmad al-Madani, was received at the Baghdad airport by Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari, and the two sides held a meeting before heading to the office of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.



In a joint news conference by Abadi, Ban and the two bank chiefs, Abadi welcomed the visiting top officials and said their visit was aimed at assisting Iraq in its war against the IS, and also to help Iraq overcome the ordeal of the acute fall of oil prices.

"I heard from the visiting top officials that there are plans by the international community to help Iraq, and the plans will kick off next week," Abadi told reporters without giving further details. After his meetings with ... (More on P4)...(22)

Algeria on High Alert As Hit by Waves of Terror Acts

ALGIERS - Algerian counter-terrorism forces on Saturday killed three armed militants, including an explosive expert in the province of Tizi Ouzou, 120km east of Algiers. "National Army troops on Saturday morning shot down three terrorists, including an explosive expert, following an ambush that was set in the woods of Sid Ali Bounab, near Tademaït in Tizi Ouzou," said a statement of the Defense Ministry. The source noted that the operation is still underway, ... (More on P4)...(25)

Somali Forces Kill 60 Al-Shabaab Militants, Nab 38 in Central Somalia

MOGADISHU - Somali local forces killed 60 Al-Shabaab militants and arrested 38 others in central Somalia, the President of Galmudug troops Abdikarim Hussein Guled said on Saturday. Guled said the Al-Shabaab militants have suffered a big blow in the hands of Galmudug forces and vowed to sustain the onslaught until the militants are eliminated from the entire state of Galmudug. "The enemy has lost 60 militants and 38 others were captured. We took all their weapons, ... (More on P4)...(26)

Greece Starts Emptying Idomeni Border Camp as New Arrivals Slow

IDOMENI - Greece said Saturday it has begun emptying the main migrant camp on its Macedonia border, as the huge tide of refugees flooding into the country slows to a trickle following the EU-Turkey deal. Eight buses transported around 400 refugees from the Idomeni camp Friday, while a dozen more buses were waiting for migrants so far reluctant to leave the border, shut down earlier this month. Those persuaded to board the first buses

were mainly parents with children who can no longer tolerate the difficult conditions in the squalid camp. Janger Hassan, 29, from Iraqi Kurdistan, who has been at the Idomeni camp for a month with his wife and two young children, thinks he will probably leave. "There's nothing to do here. The children are getting sick. It's a bad situation the last two days it's windy, sometimes it's raining here," he told AFP. "We don't ... (More on P4)...(23)

New Slovak Gov't to Face Challenges in Health Care, Education Sectors

BRATISLAVA - The new Slovak government has brought lots of expectations and will face challenges mainly in the health care and education sectors, representatives of various sectors said recently. Robert Fico was appointed as prime minister of the country for the third time. In the contrast with his governments in 2006 and 2012, the politician will manage a broad coalition consisting of four political parties. Rep-

resentatives of medical associations emphasised that it's essential to halt a qualitative drop in Slovakia's health care system and overhaul relations and communications in the sector completely. "The health care system doesn't have a vision in the long term," stressed Marian Kollar, president of Slovak Medical Chamber, calling for expert dialogues and a guarantee of continuous development. ... (More on P4)...(27)

Neighbor News

'Russia Denied Pakistanis Entry without a Reason'

RAWALPINDI - Some 30 Pakistani business professionals who were denied entry into Russia on suspicions of visa rule violations arrived at the Benazir Bhutto International Airport (BBIA) early on Friday on board Turkish Airlines flight TK-740.

The Russian authorities denied entry to 84 Pakistan business professionals, 49 of whom were from Rawalpindi. Of these, 30 were sent back to BBIA, while 19 are still waiting in Istanbul Ataturk Airport. According to the Federal Investigation Agency's immigration

department, the 30 Pakistanis who returned home on Friday were handed over by Turkish Airlines to the Pakistani authorities.

After looking over their documents, Pakistani authorities determined that their visas were genuine and that Russian immigration authorities had denied them entry without a reason.

The remaining 35 passengers who were denied entry were from Karachi and Lahore. They were also put on a flight back and have reached home. (Agencies)

Chinese Premier Stresses Quality, Efficiency of SoEs

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has called for efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of the state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Li made the remarks in a written instruction to a meeting on such work on Friday.

SOEs have been working hard to ensure steady growth and employment, and thus underpinned stable economic performances, Li noted.

China is facing more challenges this year and SOEs should play an important role in economic and social development

and focus on improving quality and efficiency, he said.

He called on the SOEs to take the lead in cultivating new growth dynamics and reforming the traditional growth dynamic, and working hard to seek efficiency through technology, reforms, restructuring, and better management.

He urged local governments and various departments to highlight SOE reform, improve mechanisms and provide favorable environment to turn SOEs into energetic and competitive market entities. (Xinhua)

Money Remittances from Russia to Tajikistan Decrease by 66.6%



BISHKEK - The Russian central bank reported that money remittances from Russia to Tajikistan fell by 66.6% last year, from US\$3.831 billion in 2014 to \$1.278 billion in 2015.

In 2013, the remittances made \$4.155 billion. There are two underlying causes for the drop in remittances: the fall of the Russian ruble,

and a 25-percent drop in the number of Tajiks going to Russia last year. Meanwhile, prices for basic food products are rising in Tajikistan, and the country's national currency, the somoni, is continuing to depreciate against the dollar. 1 US dollar equals 7.87 Tajikistani somoni as of March 26, 2016. (AKIpress)

Iran Denies Involvement in Cyber Attacks on U.S. Institutions

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Ministry denied any involvement in alleged cyber attacks against U.S. financial institutions, official IRNA news agency reported on Saturday. The Islamic republic does not support dangerous cyber acts and has always urged international efforts to counter cyber crimes, Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Hossein Jaber Ansari was quoted as saying.

Washington in the past targeted Iran's peaceful nuclear facilities by a cyber attack and put the lives of millions of people at the risk of environmental disaster, Ansari said. On Thursday, the White House announced charges against seven hackers linked to the Iranian government, who allegedly infiltrated dozens of U.S. banks as well as a dam outside New York. (Xinhua)