

Yemen Foes Begin Direct Peace Talks in Bid to End Conflict: UN

KUWAIT CITY - Yemen's warring parties began face-to-face peace talks on Saturday on "key issues" in a bid to end the conflict in the impoverished Arab country, the United Nations said.

"All delegations are present. Key issues will be addressed," Charbel Raji, spokesman for Yemen's UN envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, told AFP about the negotiations taking place in Kuwait.

Most of the meetings in talks which began April 21 have so far been confined to encounters



between rival delegations and Ould Cheikh Ahmed. More than 6,800 people have been killed

and around 2.8 million displaced in Yemen since a Saudi-led coalition began operations in March

2015 against Iran-backed Huthi rebels, who seized swathes of territory including the capital Sanaa.

Key issues to navigate include the withdrawal of armed groups, a handover of heavy weapons,

the resumption of a political transition and the release of prisoners.

The new phase of meetings comes after the government and rebel delegations each submitted a framework for a political and security solution to end the 13-month war.

The government delegation said their proposal is based on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 2216, which states that the rebels must withdraw from seized territories and disarm before talks can progress. (AFP)

84 Migrants Still Missing after Boat Sinks Off Libya: IOM

ROME - Eighty-four migrants are still missing after an inflatable craft sank off the coast of Libya, according to survivors cited by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) on Saturday.

Twenty-six people were rescued from the boat which sank on Friday, and were questioned overnight. "According to testimonies gathered by IOM in Lampedusa 84 people went missing," IOM spokesman in Italy Flavio Di Giacomo wrote



on his Twitter feed. Earlier Saturday Italy's coastguard said an Italian cargo ship had rescued 26 migrants from a flimsy boat sinking off the coast of Libya but voiced fears

that tens more could be missing. The coastguard received a call from a satellite phone late Friday that helped locate the stricken inflatable and called on the merchant ship to make

a detour to the area about four miles (seven kilometers) off the Libyan coast near Sabratha.

The nationalities of the rescued migrants, who ... (More on P4)... (22)

Japan's PM Abe to Visit Putin in Russia Next Week: Kremlin

MOSCOW - The Kremlin has announced that Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe will visit Russia next week to meet with President Vladimir Putin, a step toward deepening relations overshadowed by a World War II territorial dispute.

Saturday's announcement said Putin would host Abe next Friday in Sochi, the Black Sea city where the 2014 Winter Olympics were held.

The foreign ministers of

both countries met two weeks ago and agreed to schedule a meeting of their leaders this year, but no date had been officially announced.

Abe has been pushing to make progress in the dispute over Russian-held islands, called the Northern Territories in Japan and the southern Kurils in Russia, which has kept the two countries from signing a peace treaty formally ending their World War II hostilities. (AP)

Austria in EU Talks to Extend Migrant Border Controls

VIENNA - Austria said on Saturday it was in talks with the European Union's executive body to extend border controls brought in last year to help stem the migrant flow.

"I can confirm that we are having discussions with the EU Commission and our European partners about this," interior ministry spokesman Karl-Heinz Grundboeck told AFP.

His remarks came after German media reported that several EU states were pressing Brussels to extend the temporary controls inside the passport-free Schengen zone for at least six months.

The EU allowed bloc members to introduce the

restrictions as hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees began trekking up the Balkans from Greece towards western and northern Europe last September.

Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany and Sweden have all clamped down on their frontiers as the continent battles its biggest migration crisis since the end of World War II.

However, the extraordinary measures - triggered in case of "a serious threat to public policy or internal security" - are now due to expire on May 12.

"We request that you put forward a proposal, which ... (More on P4)... (23)

Germany to Ask EC to Allow Extension of Border Controls

BERLIN - Germany will ask the European Commission (EC) to allow an extension of temporary border controls within the Schengen zone of passport-free travel beyond mid-May, Interior Minister Thomas De Maiziere said on Saturday. Germany and some other European Union members have introduced temporary border checks to control or halt record flows of migrants fleeing conflicts in Syria, Iraq and elsewhere and traveling to western Europe via the Balkans. Germany took

in more than one million migrants last year. But the number of arrivals has slowed significantly after border clampdowns were imposed by Austria and other countries along the migrants' main Balkans route northwards from Greece. "Even if the refugee situation has eased at internal borders along the West Balkan route, we look with concern at the developments on the external borders of the Union," De Maiziere said in a statement. Berlin will therefore ask the Europe-



an Commission, the EU's executive arm, to allow the border controls to be extended beyond May 12 when the legal basis for the current measures expires, he said. A German govern-

ment official said the request was a joint initiative by Germany, France, Austria, Belgium, Denmark and Sweden and the letter would be sent to Brussels on Monday. (Reuters)

Deployment of U.S. Missile System only to Undermine Regional Stability

BEIJING - The possible deployment of a U.S. anti-ballistic missile system in South Korea will only undermine the regional strategic balance and inflame tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

White House spokesman Josh Earnest said Friday that Washington has been

talking with Seoul "for several weeks" about deploying the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system in South Korea that would be oriented to the "threat" in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and enhance South Korea's security. First, the

"threat" from the DPRK, which has conducted four nuclear tests so far, cannot be uprooted by deploying a missile system but would be escalated.

From a historic perspective, the essence of the Korean nuclear issue is the contradictions between ... (More on P4)... (24)

Air Strikes Pound Syria's Aleppo, 'Calm' Farther Southwest

BEIRUT - Nearly 30 air strikes hit rebel-held areas of Syria's northern city of Aleppo on Saturday, killing more people in a ninth straight day of bombardments by warring sides, and a temporary "calm" declared by Syrian military took hold around Damascus and in the northwest. The violence in Aleppo, which has borne the brunt of an escalation in fighting that has all but destroyed a ceasefire deal brokered in February by Washington and Moscow, has killed nearly 250 people since April 22, a monitoring group said. It has also contributed to the break up of peace talks in Geneva, which the main opposition walked out of



last week. A temporary "regime of calm", or lull in fighting, announced by the Syrian army late on Friday, which Damascus said was designed to salvage the wider ceasefire deal, appeared to hold in the capital and areas in its suburbs, as well as parts of northwest coastal

province Latakia. Aleppo had not been included in the plan for a lull. At least five people were killed in Aleppo early on Saturday in the latest round of air strikes, which were believed to have been carried out by Syrian government warplanes, the ... (More on P4)... (26)

Turkish Warplanes Strike PKK Targets in Northern Iraq, SE Turkey

ANKARA - Turkish warplanes bombed targets of the banned Kurdish Workers' Party (PKK) in northern Iraq and southeastern Turkey on Friday and Saturday, private Dogan news agency reported. Four F-16 and 14 F-4 2020

fighter jets struck the PKK targets in Qandil, Hakkurk and Avasin regions in northern Iraq during the Turkish military operation against the PKK on Friday night and early Saturday, said the report. Another two F-4 2020 fighter jets

bombed the PKK targets in Sirnak province in southeastern Turkey on Friday evening and early on Saturday for twice, according to the report. All the warplanes safely returned to the bases in Turkey after ... (More on P4)... (25)

France Says it will Increase Forces in Ivory Coast

ABIDJAN - France will increase the number of its troops in Ivory Coast, Defence Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian said Friday on a trip to the African nation which hosts a regional base for French forces. "This summer the French forces in Ivory Coast will increase from 500 to 900 men and form the forward operating base for west Africa," he said while visiting French forces in the Ivorian capital. The increase was already included in the military budget but comes at a ... (More on P4)... (27)

24 Killed in Truck Bomb Explosion Near Baghdad

BAGHDAD - Up to 24 people were killed and some 38 others wounded on Saturday when a truck bomb detonated at a suburb near the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, an Interior Ministry source told Xinhua. The attack occurred in the morning when a booby-trapped truck went off at a crowded livestock market in Nahrawan area in southeastern Baghdad,

the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. Earlier, the source put the toll at eight killed and some 30 others wounded by the massive blast. The source could not confirm whether the toll is final, as many of the killed and wounded people were evacuated by ambulances and civilian cars to different hospitals and medical centers in the city. Iraq is currently witness-

ing a wave of violence since the Islamic State group took control of parts of Iraq's northern and western regions in June 2014. Earlier, a report by the UN Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) estimated that 1,119 Iraqis were killed and 1,561 others wounded in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflict in March across Iraq. (Xinhua)

Australia Launches New Strategies to Promote Int'l Education

CANBERRA - The Australian government on Saturday launched three new strategies to promote its international education sector, one of the country's largest services export industries and was worth more than 19 billion AU dollars (14 billion U.S. dollars) to the Australian economy in 2015. Being launched are the National Strategy for International Education 2025; the Australia Global Alumni Engagement Strategy and the Australian International Education ... (More on P4)... (28)

Nieghbor News

Xi Vows Mutual "Belt And Road" Benefit

BEIJING - President Xi Jinping has promised that China is looking to serve the long-term interests of all countries involved in the Belt and Road Initiative. Xi made the remarks on Friday afternoon at a group study attended by members of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee on the history of the Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road. "The Belt and Road Initiative, though initiated by China, is not only about China," he said. "I hope people in all countries along the Belt and

Road will actually feel the benefit brought by the initiative." It aims to boost not only China's development but also that of other countries, Xi said. "While taking care of our own interests, we will give more consideration and care to the interests of other countries," he said. The Belt and Road Initiative, which comprises the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, was brought up by Xi in 2013, with the aim of building a trade and infrastructure network connecting ... (More on P4)... (29)

Partial Results from Iran Runoff Parliamentary Vote Announced

TEHRAN - Partial results from the second round of parliamentary elections in Iran show that Reformist candidates have prevailed over their rivals. With almost all the votes counted in 55 constituencies, results show that Reformists and moderates have secured nearly half of the seats in the Friday runoff legislative elections. According to the latest results, Principlist and independent contenders gained nearly 30 and around 20 percent of the votes respectively in the 290-seat Majlis. As many as 136 candidates competed on Friday for constituencies in 21 provinces across Iran where candidates failed to obtain the required minimum 25 percent

of votes cast in the first round held on February 26. Speaking to reporters on Saturday, Iranian Deputy Interior Minister Hossein-Ali Amiri said participation in the runoff vote was very remarkable and put the turnout at 59 percent. All the results must be validated by the Guardian Council, the body which oversees elections and legislation. Around 17 million people were eligible to vote in the runoff elections. Iran held the 10th parliamentary and 5th Assembly of Experts elections on February 26 with an overall turnout of 62 percent nationwide. The new parliament is scheduled to begin its session on May 27. (PressTV)

'Convincing Congress of F-16 Deal is Obama Administration's Job'

ISLAMABAD - In response to reports the US Congress is withholding 60 per cent of the aid earmarked for subsidising Pakistan's purchase of eight F-16 fighter jets, a Pakistani official has said "negotiations aren't over yet". Tariq Fatemi, the Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs, told BBC Radio in an interview that bringing Congress around to the deal is the Obama administration's job. According to a BBC report published on its Hindi and Urdu services, a State Department official told the BBC on the condition of anonymity that Congress will not subsidise

the sale of eight F-16 jets to Pakistan at the advice of Senator Bob Corker, chair of the Senate Committee for Foreign Relations. As per the earlier arrangement, Pakistan would have paid \$270 million while the US would grant the remaining \$430 million for the purchase. As a result of this move, Pakistan may have to foot the bill of \$700 million for the eight fighter jets.

"There is a strong opposition to provide subsidised arms to other countries in the US Congress, but the Obama administration's offer of military aid to Pakistan still stands," Fatemi told BBC Radio. (Agencies)

Turkmenistan Names Deputy Prime Minister for Agriculture Industry

ASHGABAT - Rejep Bazarov has been appointed Turkmenistan's Deputy Prime Minister for Agriculture Industry under a decree of the Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. Esenmurat Orazgeldiyev, who was serving in this position previously,

has been appointed the governor of Turkmenistan's Akhal province. Berdimuhamedov has also made a number of personnel changes in the regional administration of the Akhal province. Turkmenistan cultivates cotton, wheat, rice and ... (More on P4)... (30)

Tajikistan Presents its National Action Plan to international community

BISHKEK - Tajikistan's National Action Plan on implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1540, which was supported by the OSCE Office in Tajikistan as a way of enhancing the country's chemical, biological, radiation and nuclear security, was presented

to representatives of the international community in Dushanbe. As well as bringing together representatives of international organizations dealing with non-proliferation issues, and embassies and diplomatic missions of the OSCE participating ... (More on P4)... (31)