

Thousands Rally in Istanbul to Mark May Day

ISTANBUL - Tens of thousands of people gathered in Turkey's largest city of Istanbul on Sunday to mark the International Workers' Day, also known as May Day, amid tight security measures.

This year, labor unions and city officials agreed to hold the rally in the remote district of Bakirkoy at Istanbul's European side, despite workers' insistence on gathering as past at the Taksim Square. The square at the heart of the metropolis has been closed to all kinds of rallies since



2013. At the rally, workers, labor union representatives, members of opposition parties and

citizens mainly chanted against long working hours, low wages, discrimination against

women and poverty. Police fired tear gas at members of pro-Kurdish People's Democratic

Party over a dispute due to attempts to carry out body checks for the second time.

Some members of leftist groups were dispersed by police with water cannons and tear gas, as they intended to break the police barricades to cross to the Taksim Square.

Meanwhile, 36 people in several parts of the city were arrested after they tried to march toward the square, official Anadolu Agency Anadolu reported.

Police have sealed off entire Taksim neighborhood with metal barricades, fearing that May Day rallies might turn into anti-government protests. (Xinhua)

Yemeni Gov't Delegation Halts Participation in Peace Talks over Truce Breaches

ADEN - A delegation of Yemen's internationally recognized government decided on Sunday to suspend its participation in the Kuwait-based peace talks with the Shiite Houthi group, citing cease-fire breaches, well-informed sources said.

Yemen's Foreign Minister Abdul-Malik Mekhlafi, who heads the government delegation to the talks, has officially in-



formed UN Special Envoy Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed of the decision, the sources, close to Yem-

en's Saudi Arabia-based government, told Xinhua. The cease-fire came into force on April 10 and was

supposed to pave the way for the Kuwait peace talks, but both warring sides have complained of violations by each other, along with continuing heavy shelling and airstrikes. On Saturday, fighters of the Shiite Houthi group stormed a key military base allied with Yemen's legitimate government in the country's northern province of Amran and ... (More on P4)... (24)

Russia Says Talks to Extend Syrian Lull in Fighting to Aleppo

MOSCOW/BEIRUT - Russia said on Sunday talks were taking place to include Aleppo in a temporary lull in fighting declared by the Syrian army in some western parts of the country, a sign of intensified efforts to halt a surge of violence in its former commercial capital. The United States said stopping the bloodshed in Aleppo, which has been at the center of an escalation of violence that has all but destroyed a wider ceasefire deal and broke up peace talks in Geneva,

was a top priority. Nearly 10 days of bombardments by both the government side and insurgents in the city of Aleppo has killed more than 250 people, a monitoring group says, confounding hopes of an end to five years of war. The city was calmer on Sunday, a monitoring group said, but rebel shellfire hit one area, and there were government air raids on its outskirts. Moscow and Washington brokered the Feb. 27 ceasefire deal, which applied to western Syria but excluded al-Qae-



da and Islamic State fighters. World powers and the United Nations have been trying to salvage that truce. Syria's army announced late on Friday a "regime of

calm", or lull in fighting, which applied to Damascus and some of its outskirts, and parts of northwestern coastal province Latakia; but it excluded Aleppo. (Reuters)

Israel Claims Sovereignty over Golan Heights, UN Rejects

CAIRO - Israel's recent claim that a rocky plateau it seized from Syria decades ago would remain as part of the country was rejected by the UN Security Council. "The Golan Heights will always remain in Israel's hands," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu told

the the first-ever cabinet meeting on the Golan on April 17. "The time has come after 40 years for the international community to finally recognize that the Golan Heights will remain forever under Israeli sovereignty," Netanyahu declared. The UN Security Council on Tues-

day expressed its "deep concern" at Netanyahu's statements about the Golan, stressing the status of the occupied land on the Syrian border with Israel "remains unchanged." The remarks came as Liu Jieyi, the permanent representative of China ... (More on P4)... (27)

Abe Embarks for Weeklong Visit to Europe, Russia Ahead of G7 Summit

TOKYO - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe departed Sunday to visit European leaders on issues of global economic growth and sustainability ahead of a Group of Seven summit he will host in Mie Prefecture, central Japan, later

this month. The Japanese leader will begin his week-long trip in Italy, and will also visit France, Belgium, Germany, and Britain. Abe's trip will conclude in Russia where he is slated to hold talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin

on a long-held territorial dispute between Tokyo and Moscow, among other topics. The Japanese prime minister said prior to his departure that he wants to hold candid discussions with the leaders of the ... (More on P4)... (28)

Up to 33 Killed in Twin Car Bomb Explosions in Southern Iraq

BAGHDAD - Up to 33 people were killed and some 63 others wounded Sunday when two car bombs went off in the town of Samawa, the capital of Muthanna province, a security source said.

"Our reports said that the toll rose to 33 civilians were killed and 63 others wounded by the massive blasts of two car bombs

in central Samawa," the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. The attacks occurred around noon when one booby-trapped car parking near the provincial government compound detonated, while another car bomb ripped through a busy parking lot in al-Sharji district in downtown Samawa, some 270 ... (More on P4)... (30)

With Help, Africa Targets Coordinated Fight Against Boko Haram

N'DJAMENA - With US and European support, African states threatened by Boko Haram are out to smash the militant Islamist group terrorising the region -- but a coordinated response is required if they are to succeed. A regional offensive launched early last year against the group by

Chad, and Nigeria under new President Muhammadu Buhari has seen Boko Haram driven out from numerous towns and villages that it controlled in northeastern Nigeria. Two weeks ago, Nigeria's military said it would raid the group's Sambisa Forest ... (More on P4)... (31)

741 People Killed in Violence Across Iraq in April: UN

BAGHDAD - A total of 741 Iraqis were killed and 1,374 others wounded in acts of terrorism, violence and armed conflicts in April across Iraq, a UN statement said on Sunday. The statement by the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) said the figures included 410 civilians killed and 973 others wounded, while 331 security members were killed and 401 others wounded. It said the UN envoy to Iraq and the UNAMI chief Jan Kubis "expressed his deep concern at the incessant violence."

"It pains us to see the continuing bloodletting and loss of life, particularly among civilians who are paying a high price as a result of bombings and the armed clashes," Kubis said. "Terrorists have used suicide attacks to target cafes, places of worship, pilgrims and markets in a wicked, unrelenting campaign to cause maximum casualties and inflict untold suffering on the population," Kubis added. A month ago, the toll of casualties in March registered 1,119 people killed ... (More on P4)... (25)

Anti-Immigrant AfD Says Muslims Not Welcome in Germany

STUTTGART - Members of the anti-immigration party Alternative for Germany (AfD) on Sunday backed an election manifesto that says Islam is not compatible with the constitution and calls for a ban on minarets and the burqa. Set up three years ago, the AfD has been buoyed by Europe's migrant crisis, which saw the arrival of more than one million, mostly Muslim migrants, in Germany last year. The party has no lawmakers in the federal parliament in Berlin but has members in half of Germany's 16 re-

gional state assemblies. Opinion polls give AfD support of up to 14 percent, presenting a serious challenge to Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives and other established parties ahead of the 2017 federal election. They rule out any coalition with the AfD. In a raucous debate on the second day of a party congress, many of the 2,000 members cheered calls from the podium for measures against "Islamic symbols of power" and jeered a plea for dialogue ... (More on P4)... (26)

Political Chaos Erupts in Iraq Amid Ceaseless Military Havoc

CAIRO - Ceaseless warfare has been wrecking Iraq for years, leaving the country more fragile to a recent political chaos after an attempted reform.

Thousands of followers of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr on Saturday stormed the heavily fortified Green Zone in central Baghdad and took control of the parliament building and surrounding areas.

The demonstrators broke into the main gate of the government district, many jumping over the barbed wired fences into the zone that houses major government offices, including the parliament and some foreign embassies. Footage aired by local media showed dozens of



four-wheel drive vehicles, said to be carrying lawmakers and government officials who were trying to escape the zone, were crowded in long lines at other entrance of the zone near the Tigris River. They were well-controlled by their leaders who shouted with loudspeakers

that their move inside the Green Zone must be peaceful and the security forces are their brothers not enemies.

Iraq's top leaders then called on the protesters to leave the building and preserve the public properties. "We assure our ... (More on P4)... (29)

Nieghbor News

US Court Ruling on Iran Frozen Assets Threat to Intl. Law: Official

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian lawmaker says the baseless ruling by the Supreme Court of the United States authorizing the seizure of about USD 2 billion of Iran's frozen assets in the US is a serious threat to international law.

"The US must know that as it has experienced the bitter taste of defeat in all areas of confrontation against the Islamic Republic of Iran, it will experience a heavy defeat in this area as well," First Vice Speaker of Iran's Parliament Mohammad Hassan Aboutorabi-Fard said on Sunday.

He added that the great Iranian nation would strongly confront Washington's illegal move and restore its rights in

the best possible way.

The US Congressmen and some other statesmen think that they are living in the "Stone Age" and that they can confiscate other nations' interests on the strength of their military power to serve their own "illegitimate" interests, the Iranian lawmaker said.

On April 20, the US Supreme Court ruled that about USD 2 billion in frozen Iranian assets must be turned over to American families of people killed in the 1983 bombing of a US Marine Corps barracks in the Lebanese capital of Beirut and other attacks blamed on Iran. The Islamic Republic has denied any role in the attack. (PressTV)

UAE, Turkmenistan Hold Round of Judicial Negotiations

ABU DHABI - Officials from the UAE and Turkmenistan met in Abu Dhabi on Sunday to discuss ways to enhance joint co-operation in judicial and legal fields. The first round of talks also covered treaties for mutual legal assistance on criminal matters and for extradition.

Judge Abdul Rahman

Al Balushi, Director of International Co-operation Department, Ministry of Justice, said the three-day talks were characterised by an atmosphere of joint co-operation and coordination as they underscored a mutual desire to combat crimes and pursue fugitive criminals. (WAM)

Pakistan Says Talks Underway with U.S. to End Deadlock in F-16 Sale

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan officials said the country is involved in discussions with the United States to get F-16 fighter planes though the Obama administration was forced to halt the financial aid to Pakistan to purchase the aircraft.

Despite the U.S. administration's support on F-16s for Pakistan, American lawmakers at a recent meeting of a subcommittee of the Congress foreign affairs panel objected to using taxpayers' money to fund the sale, according to reports. Senator Bob Corker, chairman of the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee, had stopped funding the deal.

Pakistan was to pay only 270 million U.S. dollars for eight jets, valued at over 700 million U.S. dol-

lars. The Obama administration was to cover the remaining 430 million U.S. dollars through the U.S. foreign military financing budget.

Officials in Islamabad say the country seeks the fighter jets for its fight against terrorists.

"The proposed sale of F-16 fighter aircraft by the United States is still under discussion between the two countries," Pakistan foreign office spokesman Nafees Zakariya said on Sunday while commenting on the cut of financial subsidy for the sale of the aircraft.

"Mutual efforts are needed to tackle the menace of terrorism and the responsibility to eliminate terrorism cannot be placed on one country," Zakariya said in response to the media reports. (Xinhua)

Chinese Language Education Lays Solid Foundation for Future U.S.-China Relations

CHICAGO - Encouraging more American students to study Chinese and study abroad in China will ensure Sino-American relationship grows and flourishes in the future, U.S. educators have said.

"The goal is to strengthen the overall U.S.-China relationship by ensuring very strong people-to-people ties," said Travis Tanner, vice president of 100,000-Strong Initiative Foundation, a non-profit U.S. organization that leads the Chinese language education initiative called "1 Million Strong."

The 1-Million-Strong Initiative, announced by U.S. President Barack Obama last September, is aimed at encouraging one million American students to learn Mandarin Chinese in elementary and high schools by 2020.

"The U.S.-China relationship is the most important bilateral relationship of the 21st century," Jo-sette Sheeran, President and CEO of the Asia Society, said on Thursday. "Now is China's moment in the world to emerge, and the language is key to understand not only China's today, but also China's history, and the way it thinks."

She noted that the Asia Society has partnerships with Confucius Institutes in the United States along with a Chinese language learning network in 100 districts and 28 states throughout the country. Tanner, who himself is a fluent Mandarin speaker, told Xinhua in an exclusive interview on Saturday that the 1-Million-Strong Initiative also includes expanding the number of Americans studying abroad in China. (Xinhua)