

France's Leads World War II Commemorations in Paris

PARIS - France's president on Sunday led low-key commemorations in Paris marking the end of World War II in Europe. Under a baking sun, Francois Hollande began the proceedings by laying a wreath at the statue of Charles de Gaulle, the former president and leader of the French World War II government-in-exile. In his last Victory in Europe Day ceremony before next year's presidential election, Hollande observed a minute of silence before a rendition of the French national anthem.



He then shook hands and chatted with De Gaulle's grandson, Yves. A cortege followed Hollande up to the Arc de Triomphe war memorial. The French president laid another wreath at the

tomb of the Unknown Soldier, where another moment of silence was held. Adolf Hitler marched his Nazi troops through the Arc de Triomphe when Germany took over France in 1940. It was also the site where Allied troops celebrated victory over Germany 71 years ago. Victory in Europe Day is celebrated on May 8 to mark the date in 1945 that World War II ended in Europe following Nazi Germany's surrender of its armed forces. (AP)

UN Envoy Bids to Break Yemen Peace Talks Impasse

KUWAIT CITY - The UN special envoy to Yemen held talks Sunday with the country's warring parties in a bid to break an impasse, a day after the government pulled out of direct negotiations. Ismail OuldCheikh Ahmed held separate morning talks in Kuwait City with delegates, and plenary or committees' meetings were planned in the afternoon, spokesman for the UN envoy CharbelRaji said. Yemen's government on Saturday pulled out of di-

rect negotiations with representatives of the Huthi rebels after there were no signs of any progress. A source close to the government delegation said the talks had reached a delicate stage after "the rebels backtracked to the starting point". "That has complicated the situation," the source told AFP, requesting anonymity. The rebels and their allies have demanded the formation of a consensus transitional government ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

S.Korea Rejects Inter-Korean Dialogue Proposed by DPRK

SEOUL - South Korea on Sunday rejected the inter-Korean dialogue offer proposed by the leader of Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Kim Jong-un saying that the proposal is merely a propaganda drive with no authenticity as DPRK continued to develop its nuclear program. "The North's proposal is merely its propaganda drive with no sincerity as it speaks of inter-Korean dialogue while continuing to develop a nuclear

arsenal," the unification ministry of South Korea said in a statement. Kim Jong-un made the remarks in a report delivered at a national congress of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea (WPK), the first in 36 years. "We see the need to have dialogue and talks between the two Koreas' military officials," Kim said. "If military talks are held, they would help eliminate risks of conflict along the border and ease tension." Seoul urged



Pyeongyang to give up its nuclear weapons program saying the Korean Peninsula denuclearization is the premise of a peace talk of the two sides. "South Korea and the international community have the same stance ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

Sykes-Picot's Ghost Hovers over Iraq, Syria

ISTANBUL - One hundred years after the Sykes-Picot agreement arbitrarily drew the borders for Syria and Iraq, the two countries are daunted by the risk of border change as they are both struggling to confront a seemingly endless civil war. The two central governments have gained the upper hand over rebels in the past six months or so, but this has been possible largely thanks to military support from outside powers. "It is not clear whether Syria and Iraq

will be able to preserve their territorial integrity after the crisis," Yasari Yakis, a former Turkish foreign minister, told Xinhua. It remains to be seen if the two governments will manage to reclaim all the territory from rebels, given the fact that years of civil war has greatly drained their resources -- human, economic and military. "It looks almost impossible for Syria and Iraq to preserve their unity and territorial integrity," said Murat Bilhan, deputy

chairman of the Istanbul-based think tank Turkish Asian Center for Strategic Studies. Bilhan, a former ambassador, does not expect the de facto divide in

the two countries to become de jure in the short term due to the clash of interests between various local, regional and major ...*(More on P4)...(21)*



New Saudi Energy Minister Vows to Continue with Same Oil Policy

RIYADH - Saudi Arabia's newly appointed Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih said on Sunday that his country will keep up the same oil policy, Al Arabiya News reported. Al-Falih was named energy minister on Saturday as part of a cabinet reshuffle to meet the requirements of the oil-rich kingdom's newly launched economic 2030 vision. He replaced oil minister Ali Al Nuaimi who served in the post for the last 21 years. Al-Falih stressed that his country will remain committed to

maintaining its role in international energy markets and strengthening its position as the world's most reliable energy supplier. He added that his ministry will reinforce energy supplies and diversity and enhance the efficiency of local energy consumption. "The focus will be on the creation of new industries to increase the added value of the Saudi national economy," he said, stressing that his ministry will create job opportunities for Saudis and focus on renewable sources of energy. (Xinhua)

Assad's Ouster Iran's Redline: Official

TEHRAN - Tehran considers the ouster of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad before the end of his term in office its redline, a senior adviser to Iran's supreme leader was quoted as saying by Press TV on Sunday. "Since the Syrian nation chose Bashar al-Assad as president two years ago, he will remain in the post until the Syrian people decide to change him,"

Ali Akbar Velayati, who is Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's adviser on international affairs, said. The Syrian nation and government are firmly defending their country against their enemies, Velayati said, rejecting the idea of imposing a president on Syria who would serve the interests of Saudi Arabia or any other party. Foreigners cannot im-

pose their will on the Syrian nation, Velayati stressed. He reiterated his country's unwavering support for resistance of the Syrian and Iraqi people against terrorists. Iran, a major regional ally of the Syrian government in its fight against the militant groups, has earlier announced the presence of its military advisers in Syria. (Xinhua)

Spy Masters Say Britain Should Stay in EU for Security Reasons

LONDON - The man who headed the "spy" agency famed as the home of iconic secret agent 007 James Bond, said Sunday that Britain should stay in the EU for security reasons. Sir John Sawers, head until 2014 of Britain's Intelligence Service MI6, the "spy" agency linked to the fictional secret agent James Bond, joined forces with Lord Jonathan Evans, former head of Britain's second major intelligence service MI5, to issue their warning. They warned that leaving the EU could undermine "our ability to protect ourselves" from terror-

ists. Their "stay" plea was published today in a letter to the Sunday Times newspaper, ahead of next month's national referendum on EU membership. The two men said EU membership makes vital information more readily available to British intelligence services. Brexit, they warn, could lead to "instability in the European Continent," compounding the current "economic difficulties, the migration crisis and a resurgent Russia." They write: "Intelligence ...*(More on P4)...(22)*



Australian PM Announces Double Dissolution Election on July 2

CANBERRA - Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on Sunday announced that a double dissolution election would be held on July 2. Turnbull paid a visit to Governor General Peter Cosgrove who has accepted the prime minister's request of having a double dissolution of the Parliament and holding the fed-

eral election on July 2. This decision officially kick-started the eight-week long election campaign. "At this election Australians will have a very clear choice; to keep the course, maintain the commitment to our national economic plan for growth and jobs, or go back to Labor, with its higher taxing, higher spending, debt and deficit agenda, which will stop our nation's transition to the new economy dead in its tracks," Turnbull said at a press conference after his visit to the governor general. Turnbull said he called the double dissolution because the Senate has twice refused to pass legislation relating to the accountability of unions ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Neighbor News

Rouhani Urges Closer Iran-Turkmenistan Ties

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani underlined the great importance of the Islamic Republic attaches to its relations with neighboring Turkmenistan, calling for further efforts to boost ties at various bilateral, regional and international levels. "Iran and Turkmenistan have had successful collaborations, which should be developed in line with the interests of the two nations," Rouhani said in a Saturday meeting with Turkmen Foreign Minister Rasi-Meredow in Tehran. The Islamic Republic of

Iran always sides with Turkmenistan's nation and government and "we should use optimum use of all opportunities to expand the relations," he added. The president further emphasized the necessity of boosting multilateral cooperation among regional countries, including Iran and Turkmenistan, saying such cooperation would increase economic interaction and promote stability, unity and solidarity in the region. Meredow, who doubles as the Deputy Chairman ...*(More on P4)...(26)*

U.S., Russia Both Worry about Growing Turmoil in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - Tajikistan is rarely in the news, but the former Soviet republic has several features that have led to trouble elsewhere: an autocratic ruler, an Islamist insurgency, a sputtering economy and unstable neighbors. The U.S. and Russia are both concerned about the possibility that Tajikistan could add to the chaos in the region. The International Crisis Group has issued an "early warning" report that Tajikistan, on the border with Afghanistan, "is under dangerous pressure both internally and externally."

Tajikistan's southern provinces. The government is imposing controls on religious expression and political opposition, moves that appear to be sewing resentment of the regime. The latest violence recalls Tajikistan's civil war in the 1990s, which broke out shortly after the country received independence in the Soviet breakup. That fighting pitted Islamic and democratic-oriented groups against the national government of President EmomaliRahmon. The five-year war concluded with a power sharing agreement -- but left Rahmon in charge. (Agencies)

Chinese Companies to Build 1,432 Apartments in Belarus

MINSK - Chinese companies will build 16 social houses containing 1,432 apartments in Belarus as the first phase of a Chinese assistance program to the country, the National Legal Internet Portal of Belarus, a state information resource, reported on Saturday. As part of the first-phase implementation of the project "Construction of Social Housing" under a memorandum between the Belarusian Economy Ministry and the Chinese Commerce Ministry, the

Chinese side will build 16 social houses in the country and bear all the construction costs. The total cost of the project shall not exceed 329.4 million Chinese yuan (50.7 million U.S. dollars), according to the bilateral agreement. All the social houses will be used to improve the living conditions of those in need in Belarus. The houses will be the state property and can't be sold, released or inherited. (Xinhua)

Iran Strives to Save Billions of Dollars Wasted by Gas Flames: Official

TEHRAN - Iran's Oil Ministry has urged the private sector to step in and help recover billions of dollars from going to waste in Iran's natural gas flames, Press TV reported on Sunday. The country loses at least 28 million cubic meters of natural gas flowing alongside extracted crude in oilfields each year, Mohsen KhojastehMehr, an official

with the Oil Ministry, was quoted as saying. Iran needs to upgrade its flaring technology so as to prevent some 3.5 billion U.S. dollars from being wasted each year, KhojastehMehr said. Besides, the existing trend will cause further damage to the environment, he said. He urged the private sector to invest in the ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

Rights Activist Khurram Zaki Killed in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD - An outspoken critic of Islamist groups, Khurram Zaki, has been killed in the Pakistani city of Karachi. Activists say that selective military operations against the port city's liberal parties are emboldening Islamists. Hundreds of human rights activists protested Zaki's murder on Sunday outside the offices of the chief min-

ister of Sindh province. Zaki was killed late on Saturday at an outdoor cafe in Karachi by four gunmen on two motorcycles, Muqada Haider, a senior Pakistani police official, said Sunday. A friend dining with him and a bystander were both injured in the attack, Haider said. A former journalist, Zaki was a prominent ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

18 IS Militants Killed in Airstrike, Bomb Blast in Iraq

RAMADI - A total of 18 Islamic State (IS) militants, including four suicide bombers, were killed on Sunday in U.S.-led coalition airstrike and a suicide car bomb attack in Iraq's western province of Anbar, a provincial security source said. International warplanes carried out an airstrike on IS positions in south of the IS-held city of Fallujah, some 50 km west of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, leaving 14 IS militants killed, the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. The warplanes also destroyed three car bombs and killed their suicide bombers as they were trying to attack the Iraqi security forces in the same area near Fallujah, the source said. The air attack near Fallujah came as Iraqi security forces allied paramilitary Sunni tribal units have carried out an offensive designed to recapture villages in south of Fallujah aiming at tightening the noose on the extremist militants inside the city. Meanwhile, five soldiers were killed and eight others ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

UN Welcomes Municipal Elections in Lebanon

BEIRUT - The United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon Sigrid Kaag welcomed Sunday the launch of the municipal elections in Lebanon. According to a press release by the UN, Kaag said during a tour of several polling centers in Beirut "I am glad to see Lebanese voting this morning." She commended the successful preparation and organization by the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities, and the provision of security by the Lebanese Armed Forces and other security forces. Kaag expressed her hope that "the municipal elections would be a stepping stone towards national elections, scheduled to take place next year." The release pointed that the UN official also reiterated "the importance of having women included on the ballot papers." "The United Nations have provided technical support and advice to the Ministry of Interior and Municipalities for the preparations of this electoral process" the release ...*(More on P4)...(24)*