

Lavrov, Kerry Discuss Syria Ahead of Further Peace talks

MOSCOW - Russia and the United States have exchanged views on "concrete steps" that should be taken in implementing the hard-won peace treaty in Syria, Russian news agency Interfax quoted Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov as saying Tuesday. Lavrov and his U.S. counterpart John Kerry are scheduled to co-chair a meeting of the International Syria Support Group on Tuesday in Vienna, which also includes the Arab League, Europe-



...and China. Prior to the meeting, the two held a bilateral meeting, discussing "preparations for the Syria Sup-

port Group" as well as "steps we should take to implement the earlier decisions," Lavrov told Interfax. The Russian foreign minister said that the United States understands the necessity for all opposing groups to attend the talks on Syrian reconciliation. The International Syria Support Group was founded in November as a platform for related countries and world powers to find measures to end the civil war in Syria. (Xinhua)

Fighting Against Terrorists Top Priority in Syria: Russian FM

VIENNA - Fighting against terrorism in Syria is top priority in the Syrian issue, but not to overturn Syria's Bashar al-Assad government, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov told reporters here on Tuesday. At a press conference after the Syrian talks in Vienna, Lavrov said some people should not expect the fall of al-Assad government before combating terrorist groups in the region, the fall of al-Assad government could not lead to the collapse of terrorism in Syria. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said al-Assad government and his supporters could not end the war without a political solution. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

Chinese Premier Meets French FM

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang met with French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault and discussed bilateral cooperation on Monday. Li said the Chinese government attaches great importance to relations with France and is ready to expand bilateral nuclear energy cooperation, increase two-way investment, jointly explore markets in third countries, and strengthen communication and coordination on regional and international affairs. Li also briefed Ayrault on China's economic and financial situation as requested. He said China has seen stable economic and financial performance this year, with good momentum in structural adjustment and transformation, as well as controllable debt levels. He said China's devel-

opment is still facing multiple difficulties and challenges as the world economy experiences a sluggish recovery. However, China is capable, through comprehensive reform and opening up, of keeping economic performance within a reasonable range, maintaining sound economic fundamentals, preventing systemic financial risks and maintaining financial stability. Ayrault expressed optimism about China's economic development prospects and confidence about future development of France-China relations and cooperation. He said France is willing to strengthen high-level, people-to-people and cultural exchanges with China and promote cooperation in areas including nuclear energy and electricity. (Xinhua)

Refugees Host City Pins Hope on World Humanitarian Summit

ISTANBUL - Kilis, a Turkish border city grappling with a population of Syrian refugees larger than its own, has high hopes for the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit slated for May 23-24 in Istanbul. When Kilis became the capital of the namesake province in 1996, its infrastructure was designed to meet the needs of a population up to 115,000 by 2023. Things have not turned out as expected, however.

The city is now hosting some 130,000 Syrians fleeing from their war-torn country over the past five years. The municipality used to collect 40 tons of garbage before the influx, now the figure has skyrocketed to 160 tons per year. The need for purified water has tripled to 30,000 cubic meters daily, while the number of funeral services has risen to 1,600 from 700 per year. The public green space per capita, meanwhile,



has dwindled to only 1.1 square meters. "Suddenly we have been left with a population of refugees, which has outnumbered our own population of 93,000," Mayor Hasan Kara told Xinhua over the phone. "Imagine a man who weighs 70 kilos and the next morning he ... (More on P4)... (18)

Vienna Syria Talks "Important, Urgent" for Ceasefire, Peace Talks: German FM

VIENNA - Ahead of an international meeting on Syria, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said here Tuesday that he hoped the Syria talks would help better implement the agreed ceasefire. Under the co-chairmanship of the United States and Russia, the fifth International Syria Support Group (ISSG) ministerial meeting is being held in Vienna, Austria, to discuss the enhancement of a nationwide cessation of hostilities in war-ravaged

Syria. Speaking to reporters ahead of the talks, Steinmeier said relative peace had been achieved in Syria since the last ISSG meeting held in February in the German city of Munich. "We have seen a certain calming of combat actions in many parts of Syria in the past three months ... We have seen that relief supplies have become possible in many areas where people were completely cut off from supplies," he said. Participants at Tuesday's ... (More on P4)... (19)

Iran's Parliament Okays Motion to Challenge U.S. Policies

TEHRAN - Iranian lawmakers on Tuesday approved outlines of a bill to oblige President Hassan Rouhani's administration to seek compensation from the United States over Washington's "damaging" policies against Iran and its nationals, Press TV reported. If the bill is signed into law, Rouhani's administration would be required to urge Washington to compensate for, among other things, its "misappropriating of Iranian assets frozen in the U.S.

banks under various pretexts," the report said. In April, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that almost two billion dollars in frozen Iranian assets must be turned over to U.S. citizens killed in the 1983 bombing of a U.S. Marine Corps barracks in the Lebanese capital of Beirut and other attacks blamed on Iran. The assets belong to the Central Bank of Iran, which has been blocked under U.S. sanctions. On Tuesday, Iranian ... (More on P4)... (20)

Liberian Government Presents First Proposed Budget

MONROVIA - The Liberian government has submitted the country's Proposed Budget for the fiscal year 2016/2017 to legislators for approval consistent with law. Minister of Finance and Development Planning Boima S. Kamara presented the budget on behalf of the government in Monrovia, the country's capital city on Monday. "My team and I have come today to present you this Proposed Budget which we believe outlines and captures our

country's priorities in the best possible way given the constraints, facing the country," Kamara said. Total projected revenue envelop is 555.9 million U.S. dollars comprising of 495.5 million dollars for core domestic revenue, 30.2 million dollars as grant and 30.1 million dollars as contingent domestic revenue. "We have endeavored to keep social spending on health at 77 million dollars, education at 83 million dollars and social development spending at



10.5 million dollars," the minister told lawmakers. "Additionally, we have allocated 20 million dollars toward elections; 10 million dollars for United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) drawdown, 5 million dollars for agriculture; 15 million dollars on road construction, ... (More on P4)... (21)

Denmark Reaching Parallel Agreement with EU on Europol Not Optimistic

COPENHAGEN - It will be difficult or perhaps impossible for Denmark to reach a parallel agreement on Europol with the EU, the President of the European Council Donald Tusk said here Tuesday. Tusk made the remarks at a joint press conference with Danish Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen during his visit to the country. He however noted that a Danish parallel agreement is among the



EU's political priorities. "It is one of our priorities. Because it is also a matter which is important for other countries than Denmark," Tusk said. Danes voted "No" in EU justice opt-out referendum end of last year, and ... (More on P4)... (22)

Turkish Parliament Set to Vote on Immunity for MPs

ANKARA - Turkey's ruling AK Party on Tuesday faces the first test of its unity since Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu announced he was stepping down, as parliament prepares to vote on a divisive bill to lift lawmakers' immunity from prosecution. Brawls broke out in previous debates over the bill this month between members of the AKP and the pro-Kurdish HDP opposition, which says the legislation is designed to target them and to suppress dissent. President Tayyip Erdogan, who founded the AKP, has called for members of the HDP to face prosecution, accusing them of links to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militant group which has waged a three-decade insurgency in the largely Kurdish southeast. The HDP, parliament's third biggest party, denies direct links with the militant group. The vote comes two weeks after Davutoglu said he would leave office at an AKP congress on May 22 following an increasingly public rift with Erdogan, which fueled speculation of splits inside the party. Davutoglu's successor as head of the AKP is widely expected to be a staunch Erdogan ally. Tuesday's vote on the bill to lift lawmakers' immunity will be a secret ballot as it concerns constitutional change. An anonymous Twitter account seen as close to Erdogan loyalists, which previously predicted Davutoglu's departure, said 71 AKP deputies would oppose the bill. (Reuters)

Sisi Urges Palestinians, Israelis to Value Chance for Peace

CAIRO - Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi said Tuesday that there is a "real chance" to establish true peace between the conflicting Palestinian and Israeli sides if they can respond to Arab and international peacemaking efforts, official MENA news agency reported. "Egypt is willing to play a mediating role between the Palestinians and the Israelis," the Egyptian president said while opening a power project in Upper Egypt's province of Assiut. Going on for about seven decades, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict has long been a gnawing concern in the turmoil-stricken Middle East region. A Saudi-led Arab peace initiative in 2002 urged Israel to fully withdraw from the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967 in return for normal relations with the Arab world. ... (More on P4)... (25)

French President Postpones Middle East Peace Conference to Summer

PARIS - A French-sponsored international conference to re-launch Israeli-Palestinian peace talks stand postponed from May to the summer, French President Francois Hollande announced on Tuesday. In an interview with local broadcaster Europe 1, Hollande said the gathering, initially scheduled for May 30, would be delayed as U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry cannot come on that date. "(The summit) will take place in the course of the summer," he added. "This summit is necessary because if nothing happens, if there is no strong French initiative, then terrorist attacks and conflicts are going to continue," Hollande noted. The planned international gathering in Paris aiming to end the deadlocked of the Middle East peace process is to include the Middle East Quartet (the United States, Russia, the European Union and the ... (More on P4)... (26)

Singapore, Indonesia Discuss Enhancing Cooperation on Counter-Terrorism

Indonesia came together to share best practices and enhance bilateral cooperation on counter terrorism, according to a press release by Singapore's Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Tuesday.

MHA, partnering the Indonesian Embassy in Singapore, held a Focus Group Discussion (FGD) on Monday. Experts and representatives from government agencies including MHA, the Singapore

Police Force and National Security Coordination Secretariat, as well as academics from Singapore and Indonesia attended this FGD. During the FGD, various topics like ... (More on P4)... (23)

31 Killed in 3 Bomb Attacks in Baghdad

BAGHDAD - A total of 31 people were killed and 82 others wounded on Tuesday in three bomb attacks, including a suicide one, in Iraqi capital of Baghdad, security sources said. One of the attacks occurred in Shaab district

when a roadside bomb detonated at a crowded market and was followed by a massive explosion of a suicide bomber who blew up his explosive vest, leaving 15 people dead and 37 wounded, a police source told Xinhua

on condition of anonymity. Earlier, Saad Maan, the spokesman of Baghdad Operations Command (BOC), which is responsible for the security of Baghdad province, put ... (More on P4)... (24)

Indian PM to Visit Iran to Boost Cooperation

TEHRAN - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will make an official visit to Iran on May 22 in a bid to spruce up bilateral ties with the Islamic republic, state IRIB TV reported on Tuesday. During his two-day visit to Tehran, Modi will be accompanied by a high-ranking politico-economic delegation. Modi is scheduled to meet with a number of Iranian senior officials including President Hassan Rouhani and Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani. Rouhani's office announced on Tuesday that during the visit, both sides will ink a

number of agreements to deepen their mutual ties in the post-sanction era, IRIB reported. The documents will encompass economic, trade, investment, transportation, ports developments and culture science sectors. Iran has reportedly said that it can be a "reliable partner" for India's energy needs and New Delhi has lined up 20 billion U.S. dollars investment in oil and gas, petrochemical and fertilizer projects in that country. Also, India said it is ready to invest in the development of Iran's southeastern port of Chabahar. (Xinhua)

Nawaz Paid Rs35.9 Million in Tax Over 23 Years

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif paid personal tax amounting to Rs35.9 million over a period of 23 years, starting from 1993-2016. The details were released by the National Assembly Secretariat on Tuesday, following the premier's submission of his personal and business tax details yesterday to the speaker of the house. The premier paid tax amounting to Rs10.4 million from 1993 to

2007, the year he returned from his exile. During the 14 year period, Nawaz was in exile for seven years, starting in 2000. Tax records for the years of 2007-2009 are missing in the details provided. The premier resumed paying taxes during fiscal year 2009-2010, during which he paid Rs2.7 million in tax. For the current fiscal year, the prime minister has paid tax amounting to Rs2.5 million. (Agencies)

Tajikistan, Egypt Vow to Develop Relations Between Parliaments



BISHKEK - Speaker of the Egyptian House of Representatives Ali Abdel Aal on May 16 received the Ambassador of Tajikistan, Khusrav Noziri, in Cairo, reported the press service of the Foreign Ministry. The Tajik diplomat has conveyed a congratulatory letter of the Chairman of the Tajikistan's Parliament Shukurjon Zuhurov to the Speaker of the Egyptian Parliament. Expressing gratitude for the congratulatory message to

his Tajik counterpart, Ali Abdel Aal said that Egypt and Tajikistan have long-standing historical and cultural ties. He stressed that Egypt seeks to develop cooperation with Tajikistan in all fields and expressed hope that the Parliaments of the two countries will establish bilateral relations through creation of groups of Tajik-Egyptian friendship and will exchange visits between the parliamentarians of the countries. (AKIpress)