

Action in Syria to Last as Long as Syrian Offensive : Putin

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin said that the Russian air campaign in Syria will continue as long as it's necessary to support the Syrian army offensive against "terrorists." Speaking to Russian and Turkish media before his trip to the G20 summit in Turkey, Putin said Russian forces have a "clear task to provide air support for the Syrian army's offensive against terrorists." He added that "the time of our military's stay will be determined exclusively by the fulfillment of that goal." In comments released by the Kremlin Friday, he dismissed the



claims by the U.S. and its allies that Russian warplanes have mostly target-

ed moderate opponents of Syrian President Bashar Assad instead of their

declared main target, the Islamic State group. He reaffirmed that Assad's

political fate should be discussed by the Syrians. (AP)

Putin Says has no 'Right' to Ask Assad to Leave Power

MOSCOW - President Vladimir Putin said in an interview released Friday that Russia has no "right" to ask Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad to leave power. "Syria is a sovereign country, Bashar al-Assad is a president elected by the people. So do we have the right to discuss with him these issues? Of course not," Putin said in an interview with the Interfax and Anatolia news agencies. (AFP)

Nieghbor News

Li to Attend East Asia Leaders' Meetings

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang will attend the annual East Asia leaders' meetings in Kuala Lumpur of Malaysia and make an official visit to Malaysia from Nov. 20 to 23. "China's attendance to the meeting is important for deepening its relations with the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) and promoting the East Asian cooperation," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei told Friday's daily press briefing. Li will attend the 18th leaders' meeting between China and ASEAN; the 18th ASEAN-China, Japan and Republic of Korea leaders' meeting; and the 10th East Asia Summit, according to Hong. Li will also pay an official visit to Malaysia at the invitation of his Malaysian counterpart Najib Tun Razak. "China hopes the series of meetings could focus on regional development and cooperation, and promote regional economic growth and financial stability," Hong said. He also called on related countries to reach more consensus on regional economic, financial and production capacity cooperation, free trade area ... (More on P4)...(20)

Pakistan-Tajikistan Agreed on Stronger Cooperation in Energy

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan and Tajikistan on Thursday agreed on stronger cooperation in energy, defence and trade and vowed to improve connectivity to further deepen their bilateral ties. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon addressed a press stake-out following their delegation level talks at the PM House. They termed the visit "productive" and "fruitful," and said it helped further expand their multifaceted relationship. Besides inking a joint statement the two leaders witnessed signing of seven agreements dealing with cooperation in energy, industrial sectors, extradition, establishment of Joint Business Council, collaboration in science and technology and geology. "We reviewed our ties and agreed to build on the potential of our relationship for the mutual advantage of the two peoples," Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said. The Tajik president, who is on his sixth visit to Pakistan termed it a success and said the two countries laid a "solid foundation" by inking another set of agreements, that would help them explore new avenues of cooperation. Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif said the establishment of the Joint ... (More on P4)...(21)

Gen. Raheel Expresses Confidence in Pakistan's Nuclear Security

RAWALPINDI - Pakistan's Chief Of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif on Friday paid a visit to Pakistan's Centre of Excellence for Nuclear Security (PCENS) and expressed confidence over the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal. "Pakistan has taken measures, including setting up of the PCENS, to strengthen its nuclear security," said the COAS. Interacting with officers and troops at the PCENS, the chief added that nuclear security is a sacred responsibility and lauded the progress the institution has made after its establishment. General Raheel Sharif also stated that Pakistan has also offered the PCENS as a regional and international hub for imparting education and training in the field of nuclear security to the international community. Earlier, the army chief was received by Lieutenant General Mazhar Jamil, Director General Strategic Plans Division (DG-SPD). Since its establishment, PCENS has conducted several national and international training courses focusing on physical protection, personal reliability as well as safety and security of nuclear and radioactive materials and facilities. (Agencies)

Iran will 'Definitely' take Part in Syria talks in Vienna: Ministry

TEHRAN - Iran will "definitely" attend international talks in Vienna on the Syrian conflict this weekend, a foreign ministry spokesman said on state television without specifying the level of Tehran's delegation. "The level of our participation is still not clear but we will definitely participate in the process," spokesman Sadegh Hossein Jaberi Ansari said late Thursday. The talks due to take place from Saturday will bring together 17 countries and three international bodies and are the second round of negotiations between foreign actors with a stake in Syria's war. Iran is the main regional ally of Syria and provides President Bashar al-Assad with financial and military aid, including by posting military advisers on the ground. An Iranian delegation led by Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif took part in the first round of talks on October 30. On Monday Zarif insisted that the next meeting in Vienna must determine which groups in Syria's four-and-a-half-year war are "terrorists" and then agree on how to pro ... (More on P4)...(22)

Indian PM Modi Meeting Queen on 2nd Day of UK Visit



LONDON - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is meeting Queen Elizabeth II on the second day of his high-profile official visit to Britain.

The Indian leader arrived at Buckingham Palace Friday in a Jaguar - the iconic British car brand owned by India's Tata Motors. Later, Modi will rally thousands of supporters at Wembley Stadium, home to rock concerts and England's national soccer team. British Prime Minister David

Cameron says Modi's visit cements a "modern, dynamic partnership" between the world's fifth-largest economy - Britain - and India, which will soon rank third. The two countries have announced 9 billion pounds (\$14 billion) in business deals during the trip. Modi has also been met by protests from Sikhs, Muslims, human rights groups and others concerned at growing religious intolerance and violence in India. (AP)

Refugee Reception Capacities on Lesbos Needs Urgent Improvement: UNHCR

GENEVA - With an average of 3,300 refugees and migrants arriving every day on the Greek island of Lesbos in November, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) highlighted on Friday the urgent need for enhanced reception capacities on the island. "Lesbos is at the epicentre of the crisis," said UNHCR official Diane Goodman who spoke by telephone from Athens, adding that the lack of adequate infrastructure is "creating tensions between refugees, police and local residents." Figures show that out of the 660,000 refugees and migrants who have reached Greece so far this



year, over half have used Lesbos as their first point of entry in to the EU. UNHCR also warned that the arrival of winter conditions is further hampering the ability to adequately receive migrant arrivals on the Aegean island, whose reception capacity is limited to 2,800

individuals despite there being some 16,000 refugees and migrants currently on site. "With winter approaching there are some serious concerns," Goodman noted, adding that the issue of land, enhanced site management and improved sanitation is

critical. UNHCR has appealed to Greek authorities for the creation of additional accommodation and reception capacities as a matter of urgency, while calling for improvements including lighting, latrines, heating and site management to existing ... (More on P4)...(16)

Ukraine Threatens to Stop Debt Payments to Russia

KIEV - Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseny Yatsenyuk said here Friday that Kiev could stop repaying its multi-billion debt to Russia if Moscow does not agree on its restructuring. "If Russia does not accept the restructuring, the government will introduce a moratorium on the debt payments," Yatsenyuk told reporters. He pointed out that Kiev is offering to Moscow the same conditions of the debt restructuring as to other lenders, who have joined Ukraine's credit

relief deal. In August, the Ukrainian government and a group of its international creditors have reached an agreement, which envisages a 20-percent write-off of Kiev's outstanding foreign debts and a 4-year extension of the loan repayment period. Russia has reportedly declined to join the debt-restructuring talks and said it would file a lawsuit against Ukraine to the international court if the debt payments were not met. Ukraine got a 3-billion-U.S.-dollar loan



in the form of Eurobonds from Russia in December 2013 to shore up its economy amid financial crisis. The loan matures next month. In May, the Ukrainian parliament granted the govern-

ment the right to impose a moratorium on state debt repayment, which was widely seen as a tool to improve Kiev's position in debt-restructuring talks with foreign lenders. (Xinhua)

Kurdish Forces Seize Iraq's Sinjar Town from Islamic State

NEAR SINJAR TOWN - Kurdish peshmerga forces backed by U.S. air strikes seized the Iraqi town of Sinjar from Islamic State on Friday, a Reuters witness said, in one of the most significant counter-attacks since the militants swept through the north last year. "ISIL defeated and on the run," the Kurdistan regional security council said in a tweet, using an acronym for Islamic State. It said the peshmerga had secured Sinjar's wheat silo, ce-

ment factory, hospital and several other public buildings. Iraqi Kurdish regional President Massoud Barzani also declared victory in an offensive that could provide critical momentum in efforts to capture the western provincial capital Ramadi, and Mosul in the north, an Islamic State bastion. "The liberation of Sinjar will have a big impact on liberating Mosul," Barzani told reporters atop Mount Sinjar, overlooking the ... (More on P4)...(17)

Putin to Visit Iran Amid Push on Syria

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit Iran later this month, the Kremlin said Friday, with the two countries backing Bashar al-Assad in Syria and Moscow looking to step up business ties after the deal over Tehran's nuclear programme. Putin - who last visited Iran in 2007 - will head to Tehran for a forum of gas-exporting countries on November 23 and is expected to hold talks with the Iranian leadership, the Kremlin's top foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov said. "It is entirely logical that some bilateral contacts are envisioned, including with the hosts," Ushakov told journalists, without specifying what would be discussed. Russia and Iran are the key military supporters of Assad's forces on the ground in Syria, with Moscow conducting a bombing campaign and Iran believed to command thousands of fighters in the country. International powers are also currently engaged in their broadest diplomatic push yet to resolve the nearly five-year conflict that has killed some 250,000 people.

Around 20 countries and international bodies will meet in the Austrian capital Vienna on Saturday to try to push forward a peace plan that would include a ceasefire between the regime and some opposition groups, and talks to find a political solution. Russia and Iran have clashed with the US and its regional allies such as Saudi Arabia and Turkey over if and when Assad should leave power. (AFP)

DPRK Urges U.S. to Sign Peace Treaty before Denuclearization Talks

PYONGYANG - The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has once again said that a peace treaty should be signed with the United States in the first place before advancing the denuclearization process, according to the official KCNA news agency. A foreign ministry spokesman was cited on Friday by the KCNA as criticizing the United States for "shunning conclusion of a peace treaty" with the DPRK and for requiring progress in the

denuclearization issue before reaching a peace treaty with the socialist country. The spokesman called the U.S. stance a "height of impudence," asserting that the failure to yield results in the past when nuclear arsenal and peace on the Korean Peninsula were discussed simultaneously was a result of "unchanged hostile relations" between Pyongyang and Washington. He stressed that a peace treaty is needed first in place of the armistice agreement signed in 1953

to forge confidence between the two countries and ensure the United States is no longer an enemy of the DPRK before other issues are put on the table. He warned the United States not to misjudge the goodwill of the DPRK but to think twice before dismissing the proposal. Pyongyang has shown strong desire for reconciliation with the United States by reiterating calls for inking a peace treaty to replace the armistice ... (More on P4)...(18)

UNHCR Suspends Repatriation of Somali Refugees Due to Bad Weather

NAIROBI - The UN refugee agency has temporarily suspended repatriation by road of Somali refugees from the Dadaab settlement in northeast Kenya due to bad weather conditions. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), however, said plans are underway in order to airlift refugees intending to return to Kismayu and Baidoa in southern Somalia during the rainy season when roads are impassable. "Voluntary repatriation by road remains temporary suspended due to poor road conditions inside Somalia," the UN agency said in its bi-weekly

report released in Nairobi. The official said the repatriation is being done through a framework agreed upon in a tripartite agreement among Kenya, Somalia and the UNHCR. The estimated number of Somali refugees in the country is over 500,000. Dadaab refugee camp, currently home to some 350,000 people, is the largest settlement in the world. For more than 20 years, it has been home to generations of Somalis who have fled a country embroiled in conflict. The UN refugee agency says Kenya remains a very important country for UNHCR ... (More on P4)...(19)

Sinjar will be Liberated in Days: Kerry



TUNIS - U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said on Friday he was "absolutely confident" the Iraqi town of Sinjar would be retaken from Islamic State militants in days after Kurdish forces, backed by U.S. air strikes, launched an offensive there. Kurdish forces said they had secured strategic facilities in the northern Iraqi town on Friday as part of an action that could provide critical momentum in efforts to defeat the jihadist group. "There are some entrenched IS fighters, but we are absolutely confident that over the next days Sinjar will be able to be liberated," Kerry said during a visit to Tunis. Kerry said U.S. officials were still assessing the strike that targeted Islamic State militant "Jihadi John", but he said the operation showed the group's days were numbered. The United States on Thursday carried out an air strike in Syria targeting the militant, a British citizen named Mohammed Emwazi who participated in gruesome videos showing the killings of American and British hostages, officials said. (Reuters)