

2003 Iraq Invasion Played Role in Islamic State Rise: Blair

LONDON - Former British Prime Minister Tony Blair acknowledged the 2003 invasion of Iraq played a part in the rise of the Islamic State militant group, and apologized for some mistakes in planning the war, in an interview broadcast on Sunday. Blair's decision to send troops to back the U.S.-led invasion is still a live political issue in Britain, where a six-year public inquiry into the conflict is yet to publish its findings. [ID:nL5N113IL] Asked whether the offensive was the principal cause of the rise of Islamic State, which now controls large areas of Iraq



and neighboring Syria, Blair said there were "elements of truth" in that. "Of course, you can't say that those of us who removed Saddam (Hussein) in 2003 bear no responsibility for the situation in 2015," Blair told U.S. network CNN. Critics say the U.S. decision to disband Saddam Hussein's army after the invasion created a huge security vacuum exploited by al Qaeda, which was eventually replaced by Islamic State. Some former Iraqi army officers, members of the Sunni Muslim minority which says it has been marginalized by the Shi'ite-led government backed by Western powers, are senior strategists in Islamic State. The Iraqi government says it has not marginalized Sunnis. (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

President of French Senate to Visit Iran Soon



TEHRAN - President of the French Senate Gerard Larcher is to visit Iran in the near future to hold talks with senior Iranian officials. Speaking to reporters at the end of his visit to Lebanon in the capital, Beirut, on Saturday, Larcher said he plans to meet Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, who is expected to visit Paris within the next three weeks. The French official described his expectant meeting with the Iranian president as being very significant, adding that his discussions would focus on the latest developments in Lebanon. The French Senate speaker added that Tehran and Paris have maintained their political relations under any circumstances. On September 15, French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said the Iranian president has accepted an invitation by Paris to visit the European country. He added that French President Francois Hollande will host his Iranian counterpart in November. Back in July, French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius visited Tehran, where he conveyed the invitation from Hollande to Rouhani. (PressTV)

Japan, Uzbekistan Sign Deals Worth more than \$8.5 Billion



TASHKENT - Japan and Uzbekistan signed deals worth more than \$8.5 billion Sunday, covering the communications, energy, transport and other sectors, Uzbek President Islam Karimov said after meeting visiting Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Japan will finance around \$5 billion of those deals, Karimov said. One of the projects aims to explore the Central Asian nation's hydrocarbon reserves jointly with the Uzbek state oil and gas company Uzbekneftegaz. Another will modernize a power plant generating electricity for the Uzbek capital Tashkent. Abe is visiting the five former Soviet nations of Central Asia, the first trip in nine years by a Japanese premier to the region where Japanese companies are active and where both Russia and China are vying for influence. Uzbekistan is the region's most populous nation with 31 million people and a major producer of cotton, gold and natural gas. In neighboring Turkmenistan, which holds the world's fourth-largest natural gas reserves, Abe oversaw Friday the signing of deals worth over \$18 billion, mainly in the chemicals sector and power station construction. (Reuters)

China-Britain Energy Cooperation Boosts Low-Carbon Development

LONDON - As China and Britain have been working on a major nuclear power project and renewable energy, the two countries are set to step up their efforts to shape a low-carbon future. British Prime Minister David Cameron described as "historic" the agreement signed between Chinese and French companies to build a British nuclear power plant at Hinkley Point in southwestern England, as the project will provide reliable, affordable energy to nearly 6 million homes. Aside from the nuclear power plant, Chinese companies are also investing in Britain's renewable energy projects, such as solar energy, offshore wind and biomass. SinoFortone Group, a Chinese private development company, recently announced that it has decided to invest in a biomass power station project in Britain. Chinese companies are also working closely with their British partners to push forward low-emission transport projects in Britain, including electric buses and environmentally friendly taxis. These projects will not only help Britain build a greener economy, but also boost the exchanges of low-carbon expertise and technologies between the two countries. Low-carbon transition is seen as one of the top priorities by China and Britain, as both countries are working hard to meet the challenges of climate change. In a joint declaration issued by the two countries, China and Britain pledged to work together in various fields, notably in the field of tackling climate change. (Xinhua)

Erdogan Party Hits the Hustings Ahead of Turkey Vote

ISTANBUL - A week ahead of Turkey's second election in five months, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's party is working overtime to try to reclaim its parliamentary majority, in a climate of tension fuelled by the Ankara attacks and the reignited Kurdish conflict. Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu, leader of the dominant Justice and Development Party (AKP), was holding a mass campaign rally in Istanbul, hoping to drum up enough support to defy the opinion polls that predict a replay of the June vote on November 1. Police and private security teams were out in force, with Turkey still on edge after the October 10

bombings in the heart of the capital, the worst in the country's history. Adding to the jitters, Turkish security forces are hunting four suspected members of the Islamic State group, including a German woman, who have crossed from Syria, media reports say. The four belong to the same cell behind the Ankara carnage and are feared to be plotting a major attack "such as hijacking a plane or a vessel or detonating suicide bombs in a crowded location," the Anatolia news agency said Saturday. Although several thousand party faithful turned out in Istanbul on Sunday, waving Turkish ... (More on P4)... (17)

Thousands of Israelis March in Tel Aviv Calling for Peace Talks with Palestinians

TEL AVIV - Thousands of Israelis took the streets of Tel Aviv on Saturday night, calling for new peace talks with the Palestinians, amid an international effort to quell a month-long Israeli-Palestinian wave of violence. The protesters marched from Rabin Square in central Tel Aviv, Israel's trade capital, towards Hakirya defense compound, where the ministry of defense is located. According to Peace Now, a left-wing organization that organized the march, about 6,000 people attended the event. The demonstrators chanted "Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies" and "two states for two people, Israel and Palestine." "These difficult days, days of violence, fear, and pain, are



only reinforcing our understanding that there will be no real security here until there's peace through a negotiated solution," the organizers said in a statement. Zehava Galon, the leader of the left-wing faction of Meretz, addressed the crowd, saying "Netanyahu, you've failed. You've failed in providing personal security for the citizens of Israel; you've failed in proposing any vision for changing the reality." Peace Now chairman Yariv Oppenheimer blamed the government and ultra-nationalist leaders for the recent unrest. "They took a whole country hostage of an unnecessary religious war, and we're all paying the price," he told the protesters. He accused the government of turning the country into a "violent, racist and hopeless" place. The recent spate of violence includes almost daily attacks by Palestinians and violent clashes between Israeli security forces and Palestinian youth protesters. (Xinhua)

EU Mini-Summit Seeks Unity in Balkans over Migrant Crisis

BRUSSELS - European Union leaders will on Sunday consider sending hundreds of guards to its borders with the western Balkans, as well as deploying more ships off Greece, as the bloc seeks to balance Germany's welcome for refugees with tougher security measures. Central and eastern European leaders meeting in Brussels may agree to send 400 border guards and set up new checkpoints if the EU's frontier states drop their policy of giving arrivals passage to other countries, according to a draft statement seen by



Reuters that must still be agreed. "We commit to immediately increase our efforts to manage our borders," the draft said, which, if formalized, would be a 16-point plan and the latest step in drawing up a common approach to dealing with the thousands of migrants streaming into the EU every day from the Middle East, North Africa and Afghanistan. Jean-Claude Juncker, the EU's chief executive, has called leaders of Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Slovenia, plus refugee organizations ... (More on P4)... (18)

Yemen Govt. Forces make Gains in Southwest City Taiz, Locals Say

DUBAI - Yemeni forces loyal to President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi made gains on Sunday in the southwestern city of Taiz after days of battles with Houthi fighters, a local official and residents said. The Hadi supporters, who have been backed by air strikes by a Saudi-led coalition since March, made particular progress around the presidential palace, the locals said. The complex has changed hands several times and been all but destroyed in the fighting. Medical sources said 13 Houthi fighters were killed in the fighting in Yemen's third largest

city. So were eight fighters loyal to Hadi. Reuters could not independently verify their accounts. The Arab coalition is trying to restore Hadi's government and fend off what it sees as creeping Iranian influence. The Houthis are allied to Iran and also have support from forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Several residents said Hadi loyalists had taken control of a number of mountain peaks on the southern approach to Taiz, Yemen's cultural capital. At least 5,600 people have been killed in Yemen, the ... (More on P4)... (19)

S. African Students Vow to Fight for Free Education

CAPE TOWN - South African students vowed on Sunday to continue their struggle for education transformation characterized by free education. Although widespread protests died down after President Jacob Zuma on Friday announced a zero-percent increase in tuition fees for 2016, sporadic protests have continued in several universities for the past two days. The students are demanding that free quality education be offered and institutionalized racism abolished. Students at the University of North West say they want Afrikaans not be used and imposed onto students. The nationwide protests have continued for two weeks under the slogan "Fees Must Fall", triggered by university plans to raise tuition fees for 2016, ranging from 10 to 50 percent. The protests have been marred by violence in many parts of the country, particular on Friday when thousands of students gathered outside the Union Buildings, the seat of government in Pretoria. Police used tear gas, rubber bullets and stun grenades to disperse students trying to storm the Union Buildings. Seven students have been arrested, police have confirmed. Emerging from a meeting with university vice-chancellors and leaders of ... (More on P4)... (20)

AU Calls for Comprehensive Approach to Post-Ebola Recovery

ADDIS ABABA - The African Union (AU) has called for a comprehensive approach to the post-Ebola recovery efforts to more effectively address the wider social, economic and political consequences of the Ebola outbreak. The AU Peace and Security Council during its latest meeting has deliberated on the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) outbreak and post-Ebola recovery efforts in the three most affected countries in West Africa, namely, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Council welcomed the progress in the fight against the EVD outbreak in the three most affected countries as well as in the post-EVD recovery efforts, said an AU statement on Sunday. The Council commended the three most affected countries for their



resilience and continued efforts to eradicate the EVD and also for the progress made in their post-EVD recovery efforts. It emphasized that the concerned countries need to remain extra-vigilant and to ensure effective surveillance mechanisms for monitoring cross-border movements of people, until all of the three most affected countries reach a zero-case status, to effectively eradicate the EVD and to prevent its re-spread throughout the region and beyond. In an exclusive interview with Xinhua, Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko, AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, said the pan-African bloc is focusing on capacity building activities in the most affected countries. (Xinhua)

UK Govt. Under Pressure over Welfare Cuts for Poor

LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron's government faced a growing row Sunday over plans to cut welfare payments for low-income workers on the eve of a highly sensitive vote in parliament. Finance minister George Osborne, a possible successor to Cameron and his de facto deputy, wants to cut tax credits as part of £12 billion (17 billion euros, \$18 billion) in welfare cuts to help reduce Britain's deficit. Opponents and many in Cameron and Osborne's centre-right Conservative party argue that the move is unfair and will hurt several million families. The House of Lords will hold a series of votes on the issue Monday in which the government could face defeat after peers tabled motions to try and stop the cuts. Encapsulating the often emotional nature of the debate, an angry female Conservative supporter cried on a primetime BBC talk show this month as she confronted a government minister about the impact the cuts would have on her. Education Secretary Nicky Morgan, an Osborne ally, suggested to the BBC Sunday that there could be some changes to the policy as media reports suggested the government could U-turn on the issue in a budget statement in ... (More on P4)... (21)