

American Official Wants 'Steep' Increase in Syrian Refugees Admitted by U.S.

WASHINGTON - A US State Department refugee official said on Saturday that U.S. leaders are committed to bringing more Syrian refugees to the United States and that she would like to see a steep increase in their numbers in 2017. Anne Richard, assistant secretary of state for population, refugees and migration, told National Public Radio the Obama administration would like to see the refugee process move more quickly and is trying to streamline the vetting process without cutting corners on security. The United States has taken in 1,500 refugees since the start of the Syrian war in



2011, and President Barack Obama last week committed to accepting 10,000 more over the coming year. Four million refugees have

fled the 4-year-old civil war in Syria into neighboring Middle Eastern countries and are spilling into Europe in what has be-

come the continent's worst refugee crisis since World War Two. "I think that the most senior leadership at the State Department, the

National Security Council and the White House want to bring more refugees and so that's something that we're very focused on

right now," Richard told NPR. "Well, next year the president has said we will bring 10,000. So the year after that I'd like to see a steep ramp up," she said. Though a number of U.S. lawmakers and humanitarian groups have asked Obama to bring in 65,000 to 100,000 Syrian refugees, there appears to be little appetite among the public for that type of relief. A Reuters/Ipsos poll released on Wednesday showed few Americans want their country to take in more Syrian refugees even though many believe the United States should do more to help them. (Reuters)

Bahrain's Largest Opposition Party Suspended Following Court Verdict



MANAMA - Bahrain's largest opposition group Al Wafaq National Islamic Society was suspended on Sunday from conducting any activities for three months after it lost an appeal in a court. The Justice, Islamic Affairs and Endowments Ministry had filed a case against the party in July 2014 on ground for violating the law related to political societies. The ministry said Al Wafaq violat-

ed the law by holding two general assemblies without proper quorum rules and also held them in ma'atams which is a religious venue. The appeals court on Sunday upheld the initial verdict of suspending the society for three months until it rectifies its situation. "The office of political society affairs affirms that the government is fully committed to an inclusive pluralistic society, (Xinhua)

US, Britain Show Different Attitudes Towards Russia's Involvement in Syria Crisis

LONDON - British Foreign Secretary Philip Hammond and visiting U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry held talks on Saturday in London, showing different attitudes towards Russia's involvement in the Syria crisis. After the meeting at Hammond's official residence, Kerry said defense secretaries of the United States and Russia had held extensive talks via telephone on the fight against the Islamic State, according to local media reports.

Kerry, who is on his three-day visit to Britain, said "Would we welcome Russian help in going against Isil? Obvi-

ously. We have talked about it for some period of time." "But the other part of the equation is Assad and how you resolve the fact that he is a magnet for foreign fighters to come to the region," he added. The British government had been clear that if it is believed airstrikes in Syria were necessary it would go back to parliament for a vote, Hammond said. "We keep that situation under continuous review and we will continue to talk to our allies about the military situation in the round," he said. But Hammond said the situation in Syria be-



comes more complicated because of the Russian engagement. "I think we need to discuss this as part of a much bigger problem: the migration pressures, the humanitarian crisis in Syria as well as the need to defeat Isil," he added.

Kerry described Russia's new focus on fighting IS militants as an opportunity to push toward a political settlement, BBC reported, adding Kerry said the "root cause" of the current migrant crisis in Europe was the violence in Syria. (Xinhua)

Australian PM Unveils New Cabinet Line-up

CANBERRA - Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on Sunday announced the line-up of his new cabinet almost a week after he toppled former Prime Minister Tony Abbott in a party spill. "Today I'm announcing a 21st century government and a ministry for the future," Turnbull told reporters at a press conference in Canberra on Sunday afternoon. "As you will have gathered, there are some very big changes in the cabinet - there are

now five women in the cabinet," he said. An increased number, up to five from two, of women being promoted to the inner cabinet has been a shining spot of the new cabinet, showing the new prime minister's effort to address the criticism of lack of females in the Abbott government. Apart from Julie Bishop and Susan Ley keeping their portfolios as foreign minister and minister for health, a number of women holding lower positions in the

Abbott government have been promoted, including Marisa Payne, who stands out in the new cabinet to be the first female defense minister in Australian history. Meanwhile, former Assistant Minister for Immigration and Border Protection Michaelia Cash is promoted as Employment Minister and Minister for Women, and former Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasurer Kelly O'Dwyer is promoted as Small Business Minister and Assistant Treasurer.

Without any surprise, former Social Services Minister Scott Morrison becomes Treasurer, taking the second most important portfolio and will be responsible for managing the country's economy. Outgoing Treasurer Joe Hockey is expected to quit parliament. Former Western Australian Treasurer Christian Porter is named Social Services Minister. Turnbull said the reshuffle is about "renewal" and bringing young blood into the cabinet. (Xinhua)

Egypt's President Swears in New Government

CAIRO - Egypt's newly elected President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi chaired the first meeting of his new Cabinet on Tuesday, shortly after its members were sworn in at the presidential palace in Cairo. After an hours-long meeting that started early in the morning, Prime Minister Ibrahim Mahlab said the government plans to work around the clock to combat corruption, ensure the return of security and build what he de-

scribed as a "strong state." "Failure, reluctance, incompetence and shaking hands are no option," Mahlab told journalists at a news conference. He said el-Sissi asked ministers to be in their offices by 7 a.m. each work day. There are 13 new members of the Cabinet, including Foreign Minister Sameh Shukri, who was Egypt's ambassador to Washington. He replaced veteran diplomat Nabil ... (More on P4)... (19)

UNHCR Repatriates over 4,000 Somali Refugees from Kenya

NAIROBI - The UN refugee agency said that it has so far repatriated 4,108 Somali refugees from Dadaab refugee camp in northeast Kenya to Somalia since December last year. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in its bi-Weekly Update received in Nairobi Saturday that 250 individuals returned to the Horn of Africa nation by road convoy while 224 returnees were assisted to return to Mogadishu by flight in the first half of September. "The total number of returnees assisted under the voluntary return process stood at 4,108 as of Sept. 15 (3,510 by road and 598 by flight)," the UN refugee agency said in its latest report. It said some 4,878 refugees have confirmed their intention to return to Somalia as of Sept. 15, adding that it has strengthened the identification and assessment of people with special needs under the voluntary return process. "Their details and needs will be shared with UNHCR Somalia for further follow up upon arrival in Somalia," the UN agency said. It also said that with the anticipated rains in October and November, the number of flights carrying returnees to Mogadishu will be increased to six flight rotations per week. "This will allow more returnees going to Mogadishu and its environs to reach their destinations safely before the rainy seasons starts," UNHCR said. The new phase of repatriation is the result of efforts by the Tripartite Commission, formed by UNHCR and the governments of Kenya and Somalia, to step up support for voluntary repatriation of Somali refugees. Despite the fragile security environment situation in Somalia, refugees have started to return, UNHCR said, noting that more still have returned spontaneously without receiving assistance from UNHCR. (Xinhua)

Dozens Missing in New Refugee Vessel Tragedy

ATHENS - A new tragedy with the sinking of a vessel carrying dozens of refugees from Turkey to Greece was reported on Sunday off the island of Lesbos in the Aegean Sea, as Greek citizens were casting their ballots in general elections. At least 26 undocumented migrants and refugees were missing and 22 were rescued in the Aegean Sea, according to the first information by the Greek Coast Guard. Survivors said that the boat overturned by the waves created from a larger passenger vessel that was sailing nearby. A girl about five years old

lost its life on Saturday and at least 13 undocumented refugees and migrants were still missing after the capsizing of a boat amidst strong winds also off Lesbos island. More than 300,000 undocumented desperate people have reached Greece's shores since the start of 2015, according to official data. The overwhelming majority continues its journey to more prosperous central and northern European countries, but after the introduction of tighter border controls by several countries lately, Greeks fear that the refugees and migrants will be trapped in a country that does not have the means to help them. (Xinhua)

Iran Govt., Nation don't Trust US Officials: FM Zarif

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says lack of trust on the part of the Iranian nation and government in the US statesmen is the main problem in relations between Tehran and Washington. "What the American officials have done in recent months, particularly after [the finalization of] JCPOA [the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action], to satisfy critics inside the US has unfortunately failed to

help restore the trust," Zarif said in a joint press conference with the visiting Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders in the Iranian capital, Tehran, on Sunday. The Iranian minister expressed hope that the US would seriously live up to its obligations in the implementation of the nuclear agreement with Iran to help resolve the mistrust. On July 14, Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, France, Britain, Russia, China ... (More on P4)... (21)

IS Militants Launch 4 Suicide Bombings in Central Iraq

BAGHDAD - Four huge explosions occurred on Saturday by suicide bombers of the Islamic State (IS) militant group in Salahudin province and the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, security sources said. In Iraq's northern central province of Salahudin, two suicide bombers drove their explosive-laden vehicles near the positions of the security forces and allied militias and blew them up in Iraq's largest oil refinery near the battleground town of Baiji, some 200 km north of Baghdad, a provincial security source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. Dozens of IS militants immediately followed the two huge blasts sparking heavy clash with the troops, the source said. At least two security members were killed and five others wounded by the blasts and the following clash, he said without giving details about the casualties among the IS militants. The security forces and pro-government paramilitary groups, known as Hashd Shaabi, backed by Iraqi and U.S.-led coalition aircraft, have been fighting fierce clashes with the extremist militants to drive them out of the town of Baiji and the nearby 22-square kilometer oil refinery, but the two sides have involved in fierce tug-of-war battles during the past few months. Also in the province, a police force clashed with IS militants in Himreen mountainous area in the eastern part of the province, after the force was called in to save a group of civilians who escaped the IS-held town of Hawija, in west of the northern province of Kirkuk, and were chased by IS militants, leaving a policeman killed and three others injured, the source said. IS militants prevent the residents of the Iraqi cities and towns under IS control from leaving their homes to seek safer areas or to get rid of the ... (More on P4)... (20)

Neighbour News

IAEA Chief Amano Arrives in Iran

TEHRAN - UN nuclear chief Yukiya Amano arrived in Iran's capital Tehran on Sunday to hold talks with senior Iranian officials. The visit came as the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) is racing to implement an agreement reached in mid-July between Iran and the world powers to resolve Iran's nuclear stand-off. In his one-day visit, Amano is scheduled to meet Iran's President Hassan Rouhani, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Ali Akbar Salehi, accord-

ing to official IRNA news agency. Amano is also likely to attend a meeting at which the recent Iran-powers nuclear deal is being discussed by Iranian experts, the deputy Foreign Minister Hassan Qashqavi said. The P5+1 countries, including Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States plus Germany, want strengthened monitoring measures to ensure that Tehran complies with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and its commitment to the comprehensive nuclear deal. (Xinhua)

NAB Chairman Defends Bargain Options

LAHORE - Pakistan's National Accountability Bureau Chairman Qamar Zaman Chaudhry has defended plea bargaining and voluntary return of money and said action will be taken against all those involved in major cases of corruption. "We have decided to lay hands on all those involved in mega corruption cases irrespective of party or social differentiation," he said at a function here on Saturday. NAB has been facing severe criticism, especially from the PPP, that it is being used by the PML-N government to victimise its political opponents. The judiciary has also been criticising the bureau for "letting suspects off the

hook" after striking plea bargain and voluntary return deals with them. Mr Chaudhry acknowledged that the bureau had been accused of accepting amounts lower than the determined booty and allowing the accused to escape prosecution. "For the sake of clarification I want to say that NAB (law's) preamble emphasises recovery of looted money if an accused is willing to return it. Voluntary return is applicable at the time of inquiry which is the initial stage of a case. If the accused is willing to pay the principal amount plus mark-up, he is within his rights under the law to do so. NAB evaluates his offer with appropriate guarantees. (Agencies)

Guarantees of Access to Information: Uzbekistan's Experience

TASHKENT - International conference entitled "Transparency in the activities of government and management bodies as an important guarantee in securing the constitutional right of citizens for information: the practice of Uzbekistan" has taken place in Samarkand. The conference was organized by the Public Fund for the Support and Development of Independent Print Media and Information Agencies of Uzbekistan in cooperation with corresponding ministries and other government agencies, UNESCO Office in the country, the OSCE Project Coordinator in Uzbekistan. The event was attended by members of the Senate and Legislative Chamber of Uzbekistan's Oliy Majlis, heads of information services of government bodies, specialists of civil society institutions, representatives of offices of international organi-

zations in the country, experts from Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States, Estonia, Greece, Finland, as well as mass media. Deputy Chairwoman of Uzbekistan's Senate Committee on Science, Education, Culture and Sport Gavhar Alimova, director of the Public Fund for the Support and Development of Independent Print Media and Information Agencies of Uzbekistan Abdulaziz Abdullaev, head of the UNESCO Office in the country Krista Pikkat and others noted that steadfast reforms have been underway in Uzbekistan under the leadership of President Islam Karimov to build a democratic state with a rule of law and a free civil society. In this process, particular attention is paid to ensuring the constitutional rights of citizens to information, freedom of information and expression. (Agencies)

China-UK Cooperation Contributes to World Development: Official

LONDON - Visiting Chinese Vice Premier Liu Yandong met with British Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne on Friday, saying the strong momentum of China-Britain relationship will not only benefit the two peoples, but also bring significant contributions to world development. The vice premier said that China-Britain relations are evolving strongly, yielding fruitful results from their pragmatic cooperation in various areas. China will make joint

efforts with Britain and take Chinese President Xi Jinping's upcoming state visit to Britain as an opportunity to further enhance the relationship, she said. Osborne said the current UK-China relationship is going smoothly. China is UK's global significant partner in the areas such as security and economic growth. "UK hopes to push forward the pragmatic collaboration of the both countries in finance, nuclear power and city development and the like," said Osborne. (Xinhua)