

# Iran Nuclear Negotiations will Resume Within Days

TEHRAN - Iran and the P5+1 group of world powers will resume negotiations to draw up a final agreement on Tehran's nuclear program within days, Catherine Ray, spokesperson for EU foreign policy chief, Federica Mogherini, says.

At a press briefing in Brussels on Friday, she added that the negotiating sides were maintaining contact by phone and e-mail.

Ray said she would inform the media on the exact day of the talks as soon as it has been agreed upon.

She emphasized that the European Union is try-



ing hard and playing an intermediary role in the negotiations.

The comments came a day after Leader of the Is-

lamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said it is the very specifics of the nuclear negotiations between Iran and

six world powers that would determine the fate of the talks. "Everything lies in the details," said the Leader

in an address on Thursday.

Ayatollah Khamenei further underlined that any deal would have to "ensure the interests and dignity of the [Iranian] nation." Iran and five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the US, Britain, France, Russia and China - plus Germany along with officials from the European Union reached a mutual understanding on Tehran's nuclear program after eight days of marathon talks in Switzerland on April 2. The two sides will now work on drawing up a final accord by the self-designated June 30 deadline. (Press TV)

## Syria Urges Int'l Community to Tackle Terrorism

DAMASCUS - Syria's Ambassador to the UN Bashar al-Ja'afari has urged the international community to tackle ter-

tative meeting is positive. "The delegations of the government and the opposition proved able to formulate a joint docu-

Lebanon's Hezbollah resistance movement in fighting terrorism there. Ja'afari pointed out that terrorist groups such as ISIL and the al-Nusra Front are common enemies of Syrian people.

Moscow hosted the second round of talks between the Syrian leadership and the opposition between April 6 and 9. The first round of the peace talks took place in the Russian capital on January 26 and 29.

Representatives of both sides agreed on Friday on a ten-point plan proposed by Vitaly Naumkin, the Russian moderator to the meeting.

Naumkin said the plan calls upon "the international community to immediately and seriously pressure Arab and foreign sides to abide by UN Security Council resolutions concerning fight against terrorism, and halt their support for terrorism, transit of terrorists to Syria and their training, protection, financing and arming." (Agencies)

ment entitled 'Assessment of the Current Situation in Syria,' he said, adding, "We managed to find a common denominator and secure our common approach to a number of key issues. This was impossible earlier, during our first meeting in Moscow."

The head of the Syrian government delegation to Moscow talks further accused some regional countries of fueling the militancy in Syria, and hailed efforts made by Iran and



rorism in the crisis-ridden country.

During a press conference after talks between representatives of the Syrian government and members of the domestic opposition in Moscow on Friday, Ja'afari asked world countries to support the inter-Syrian consultations in the Russian capital.

The Syrian official also welcomed the results of the negotiations, saying, "I can say that our assessment of what happened during the second consul-

## EU Warns Against Sabotage of Libya Talks

BRUSSELS - The EU warned Friday that anyone sabotaging talks on forming a Libya national unity government will be held responsible by an international community desperate to get the rival factions to agree a deal.

"All groups in Libya should refrain from actions that increase tensions at a time when Libyan parties are engaged in a decisive stage of the political dialogue," European Union foreign affairs head Federica Mogherini said.

"Those who continue to undermine the talks will be identified by the international community and held accountable for their actions," Mogherini said in a statement.

She gave no further details. Mogherini has been at the forefront of efforts for the EU to play a more active role in resolving the Libyan crisis, sparked by the 2011 ouster of dictator Moamer Khadafi. Since then, the country has descended into chaos as rival factions fight it out for control, allowing

extremist Islamist groups to gain a foothold, including Islamic State.

The 28-nation EU fears Libya could become a direct security threat while more and more refugees seeking safety in Europe present a massive humanitarian problem. Mogherini said the bloc "stands ready to support a national unity government as soon as it is created."

EU foreign ministers would meanwhile "discuss on concrete ways to support the new Libyan authorities and related security arrangements" when they meet April 20, she added. Analysts said there is little prospect of an early agreement, with UN-brokered talks dragging on without progress. A spokesman for the UN mission to Libya told AFP the negotiations could resume this weekend, focusing on a six-point proposal to set up a transitional government to rule until a new constitution is adopted and elections held. (AFP)

## Coalition Air Strikes 'Hit Yemen Defence Ministry'

SANAA - Air strikes by the Saudi-led coalition on Thursday hit Yemen's defence ministry in the capital Sanaa which is controlled by Shiite rebels and allied troops, witnesses said.

Three explosions were heard as warplanes hit the building in central Sanaa and thick smoke billowed over the area, the witnesses said.

The attack was part of raids that struck positions across the capital, including a base of the elite Republican Guards in Fajj Attan, in south Sanaa, according to witnesses.

The Republican Guard is a force that has remained loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, who stepped down in 2012 following nationwide protests against his three-decade rule and who is allied with the Huthi rebels against the government.

A food supply building belonging to the army in western Sanaa was also targeted in an air raid, other witnesses said.

Earlier in the day, a base for the Republican Guard in Arhab, north of the capital, was also hit.

The attacks come as the an air campaign led by Riyadh in support of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi entered its third week. (AFP)

## Clinton to Announce Presidential Bid on Sunday

WASHINGTON - Hillary Clinton is expected on Sunday to announce, via video and social media, her intention to seek the Democratic presidential nomination in 2016, a Democrat close to the Clinton camp told Reuters on Friday.

The relatively low-key announcement is a recognition that the former secretary of state and wife of former President Bill Clinton, viewed as the heavy favorite for the nomination, already has huge name recognition and needs an uncomplicated start to the long campaign ahead.

Following the announcement, Clinton will travel to the key early voting states of Iowa and New Hampshire, said the source, who asked to remain unidentified.

"She's expected to make her intention to run known on Sunday," the source said.

A representative for Clinton, who also served as a senator from New York, declined to comment.

Once she starts traveling, Clinton is expected to participate in small events to get up-close to voters to hear their concerns and explain why she wants to be president. This is different from the campaign rollouts of Republicans Ted Cruz and Rand Paul, who both held big events to announce their 2016 campaigns.

Democratic strategist Steve Elmendorf said a more modest rollout would be helpful for Clinton, who lost the 2008 Democratic presidential race to Barack Obama, now serving his second term. "She hasn't been out campaigning for a long time," he said. "You need to get your sea legs back. All candidates benefit from listening to people and getting a sense of what concerns voters have and respond to them. It's a long campaign. There's no need to start out with a bunch of big rallies." (Reuters)

## Neighbor News

### SWIFT in Talks to Revive Services to Iran

TEHRAN - Iran's media are reporting that SWIFT - a company that provide a global electronic banking system - has started talks with Iranian banks to restart its services to the country.

A report by Tabnak news agency says this comes in light of a gradual thaw in Iran's banking transactions with the world introduced by developments in the country's nuclear case, especially after the country was allowed to have access to its frozen funds by virtue of the Geneva deal in 2013. Based on the Geneva deal or the Joint Plan of Action reached between Iran and P5+1 in November 2013, Iran agreed to certain limitations on its nuclear energy

activities in return for the removal of some economic sanctions. A key area of economic sanctions easing for Iran was paying billions of dollars of the country's assets that had been frozen due to sanctions in overseas banks in separate installments.

The Tabnak report has added that SWIFT has already held a series of "official and unofficial meetings" with Iran's private banks over the resumption of its services to the country. The Belgium-based Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication, or SWIFT, is a global supplier of secure messaging services and interface software to wholesale financial entities. (Press TV)

### Corps Commanders Focus on Yemen Conflict and Internal Security

ISLAMABAD - The Pakistan Army corps commanders' first meeting after the eruption of the Yemen crisis resulted in deliberation upon the Middle East conflict. The army's top brass stressed that continuation of the conflict may have serious implications for regional security.

The 181st Corps Commander's Conference chaired by Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sherif was held at General Headquarters (GHQ), said a statement issued by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR).

Addressing the conference Gen Raheel expressed his complete satisfaction over the major gains recently achieved in ongoing Operation Zarb-i-Azb in Khyber Agency.

He directed commanders to focus on achieving the end objective of total elimination of terrorism from across the country by coordinating with law enforcement and other government agencies.

"Intelligence-based operations must be further

intensified to unearth terrorist sleeper cells, and apprehend hiding terrorists and their abettors from urban centres as well", the COAS said.

Appreciating the effects of intelligence-based operations, and the improving security situation, the COAS emphasised the need to concentrate on combating extremism in society by re-energising the National Action Plan (NAP) in true letter and spirit in order to achieve discernible results.

The army chief expressed his satisfaction over the initiation of the repatriation of internally displaced persons (IDPs) in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (Fata), which was reflective of a successful Zarb-i-Azb strategy.

Gen Raheel directed all concerned persons to make the return operation smooth and enduring. "The eventual purpose of the operations is to ensure stability, leading to normalcy and prosperity in accordance with the aspirations of the people of Fata", he said. (Monitoring Desk)

### US Must Act with Discretion over Islands Dispute with Japan: China

BEIJING - China has urged the US to act with discretion over Beijing's dispute with Japan on a group of islands in the East China Sea.

"We urge the US side to be discreet with what it says and does, honor its commitment of not taking sides on issues concerning territorial sovereignty, and do more to promote regional peace and stability, instead of the other way around," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said at a news briefing on Thursday.

The Chinese official's comments came after US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter said in Japan that Washington is opposed to any moves by China to undermine Japan's

administrative control of the disputed islands in the East China Sea.

Relations between China and Japan have soured over a territorial dispute on a group of uninhabited yet strategically-important islands in the East China Sea, known as the Senkaku in Japan and the Diaoyu in China.

The islands are "China's inherent territory. No matter what others say or do, the fact that Diaoyu Dao belongs to China will not be changed, and the determination and will of the Chinese government and people to safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity will not be shaken," the Chinese official said.

She added that the US

### US, South Korea Stage Massive Air Drill

The United States and South Korea have launched a major joint air force exercise near the border with North Korea amid growing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

WASHINGTON - The South Korean Air force said on Friday that around 1,400 servicemen from both countries will be taking part in the two-week-long drill named "Max Thunder" drill.

Sources say the drill will also involve around 100 military aircraft, including jet fighters and bombers.

The war games come as US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter is visiting the troubled region to reassure close allies about the American military support. Carter held talks Friday morning with South Korean President Park Geun-Hye and was due to meet Defense Minister Han Min-Koo later in the day. Washington is also pushing to deploy a ballistic missile defense system, known as THAAD, in South Korea. China and Russia have warned that the deployment of the system on the Korean peninsula would undermine regional stability. The United States has close to

30,000 troops permanently stationed in South Korea. In recent years, South Korea has conducted several joint military drills with the United States on the Korean Peninsula despite condemnation from Pyongyang.

Pyongyang wants South Korea to cancel all military drills with the US if Seoul is sincere about improving relations.

In the past years, the land and sea borders between the two countries have seen a number of minor skirmishes involving exchanges of fire, but with no reported casualties. The Korean Peninsula has been locked in a cycle of military rhetoric since the Korean War, which lasted from 1950 to 1953. No peace deal has been signed since then, meaning that Pyongyang and Seoul remain technically at war. North Korea accuses President Obama of plotting with regional allies to topple the government in Pyongyang. North Korea says it will not relinquish its nuclear deterrence unless the United States ends its hostile policy toward Pyongyang and dissolves the US-led UN command in South Korea. (Agencies)

### Global Economy Needs More Support: Obama Administration

WASHINGTON - The Obama administration said Thursday that Germany, China, Japan and South Korea are four countries running large trade surpluses that need to do more to combat weak global growth.

Issuing its latest currency report, the administration refrained from naming any country as a currency manipulator. But it did say that China's currency remains "significantly undervalued" and complained about South Korea's efforts to keep its currency from strengthening. The world cannot rely on the United States to be the "only engine of demand," the semiannual report said. It urged nations to use all tools available to accelerate growth and not rely solely on their central banks to boost their economies.

The administration's report is expected to form the basis for discussions at global finance talks next week in Washington among finance officials of the Group of 20 major economic powers.

It noted that the Chinese government has made "real progress" in allowing its exchange rate to rise in value over the past six months. But even with the gains, the renminbi remains "significantly undervalued," a phrase it has used in past reports.

American manufacturers



contend that the progress to date has been small and the Chinese currency remains undervalued by as much as 40 percent against the dollar. That makes American products more expensive in China and Chinese goods cheaper for American consumers.

The administration is required to report to Congress every six months on whether it has found any nations manipulating their currency to gain unfair trade advantages. A finding of currency manipulation would trigger talks with the country and could eventually lead to U.S. trade sanctions.

However, no administration has used the semiannual report to label a country as a currency manipulator in the past two decades. The last such designation occurred in 1994 when the Clinton administration said China was manipulating its currency to gain unfair trade advantages. Since then, both Demo-

cratic and Republican administrations have preferred to use diplomatic efforts to deal with China's currency policies even as the U.S. trade deficit with the world's No. 2 economy has continued to set new annual records. But there is a move in Congress to increase the ability of the United States to impose sanctions for currency manipulation as part of future trade deals, an effort the administration is resisting.

Treasury released its latest report at a time when the dollar has been rising in value against a number of currencies, hitting the highest level in a decade against the euro. That has raised concerns U.S. exports will be priced out of many major markets. The administration insists that a strong dollar is in America's interests but at the same time has stepped up efforts to try to pressure other nations to do more to boost their own domestic demand. (AP)

### Turkmenistan Increases Gas Exports by 6.5% in 2015

BISHKEK - gas exports Production of natural and associated gas in Turkmenistan in January-March 2015 increased by 5% compared to the same period last year, according to the Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of the country. The volume of exports of Turkmen gas has also increased, making the growth 6.5%. Turkmenistan ranks fourth after Russia, Iran, and Qatar on the vol-

umes of natural gas reserves in the world.

In 2014, natural gas production in the country amounted to more than 76 billion m3. In 2015, Turkmenistan plans to produce more than 80 billion cubic meters of marketable gas. Turkmenistan exports its natural gas to China, Iran, and Russia, and is now considering the possibility to make gas exports to the European countries. (AKI)