

# Norway Helps in Transporting 60 Tonnes of Natural Uranium to Iran

OSLO - Norway said Tuesday it has assisted in financing and transporting 60 tonnes of natural uranium to Iran as part of the agreement on Iran's nuclear program.

Norway provided support for the transportation of the natural uranium from Kazakhstan to Iran on Sunday, amounting to around 6 million U.S. dollars, the Norwegian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

Iran has also transported unused enriched uranium fuel out of the country and experts from the Norwegian



Radiation Protection Authority have verified and controlled the transportation of the natural uranium, according to the statement. "The agreement on Iran's nuclear program is historic, and it is crucial that it is implemented in a credible way. Norway has therefore

helped to ensure that Iran's excess enriched uranium is replaced by natural uranium, so that the commitments in the agreement can be met," Norway's Foreign Minister Borge Brende was quoted as saying. Under the agreement in July between Iran and the P5+1 group, namely Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States plus Germany, Iran has committed itself to restricting its stockpile of low-enriched uranium to a maximum of 300 kg, which means Iran needs to dispose of its excess enriched uranium. (Xinhua)

## Syrian Army, Backed by Air Strikes, Advances Toward Southern Town

BEIRUT - Syrian troops backed by heavy aerial bombardment pushed toward a strategic town in southern province of Deraa on Tuesday after capturing nearby military base, the army said. The Syrian army said it retook Brigade 82, one of the largest bases north of the mainly rebel-held town of Sheikh Maskin, whose capture by rebels earlier this year threatened the army's supply routes to the south. The army offensive toward Sheikh Maskin is part of the first major as-

sault in southern Syria since Russia launched air strikes on Sept. 30 to support its ally President Bashar al-Assad.

The army also said in a news flash on state television it had recaptured the Al Hesh hills, northwest of Sheikh Maskin. The hilltop, which was held by the rebels for about a year, overlooks much of rebel-held western Deraa. The aerial bombardment supporting Tuesday's ground offensive appeared to be carried out by Russian jets, a monitoring group said. Russia



has until recently focused its bombing on insurgent targets in northwestern Syria and coastal areas to help the Syrian army claw back territory it lost earlier this year. Sheikh Maskin, which is the main goal of the army's southern campaign, lies on one of the main supply routes from the capital Damascus to the city of Deraa, ... (More on P4)...(22)

## Central African Republic Set to Vote for 'President for Peace'

BANGUI - The Central African Republic votes Wednesday in presidential polls, in which all leading candidates have vowed to reunite a nation torn and terrified by unprecedented sectarian strife. Postponed several times due to violence and logistical problems, the first round of the polls was again delayed by three days from Sunday, partly because of reports of clashes in regions where armed gangs still hold sway. The vote, which also includes leg-

islative polls, follows a referendum on constitutional change that was backed by a resounding 93 percent of voters, widely seen as showing how much people long for peace and a return to normal life. Three men are tipped as front-runners in a race with 30 candidates. All are experienced politicians who held high-profile posts in previous governments and one comes from the small Muslim minority population. ... (More on P4)...(23)

## Indonesia Stops Search for Sunken Boat Victims, Confirms 66 Dead, 12 Missing

JAKARTA - Indonesia on Tuesday stopped the search and rescue operation for victims of a boat that capsized ten days ago, while confirming 66 people dead and 12 others still missing. "The operation was closed at 16:00 p.m. local time," Zainul Tjahar, spokesman of the national search and rescue office, told Xinhua by phone. A total of 40 people have been saved, with 66 others dead and 12 missing, he said, adding that the authorities had extended the operation by three days. The ill-fated boat, KM.

Marina Baru 02B, sank near Southeast Sulawesi on Dec. 19, with 118 people on board. According to survivors, the boat capsized after being hit by storm and some people may still be trapped inside the boat. "The front part of the boat was filled with water and the bow went down into the sea first," said Roki Asikin, head of the search and rescue office in South Sulawesi province. "Besides, the boat was also suffering from engine failure," Roki added over the phone. ... (More on P4)...(24)

## Erdogan Visits Saudi Arabia for Syria Talks

RIYADH - Hours before arriving in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan accused Syria's president of "mercilessly" killing hundreds of thousands of people and criticized Russia for backing him. Erdogan was speaking to reporters before departing for Saudi Arabia, where he will meet King Salman for talks focused on the Syrian civil war. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are strong backers of the rebels fighting to overthrow Syrian President



Bashar Assad, who in turn is supported by Russia and Iran. Erdogan said his government and Saudi Arabia are working "in solidarity and consultation" to find a political solution for Syria, as both countries push for an agreement that would re-

move Assad from power. In comments apparently directed at Russia's military intervention in Syria, ... (More on P4)...(25)

## India Attaches Highest Importance to Relations with Iran: Modi

NEW DELHI - India has said that it gives high importance to its relations with Iran and expressed its willingness to bolster bilateral ties. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed the message to visiting Iranian Finance Minister Ali Tayyebnia on Monday, according to a statement by the Prime Minister's Office. It added: "Modi expressed readiness on the part of India to further strengthen bilateral relations, including in areas of trade, investment, oil and gas, connectivity, port development," said the statement. India is developing Chahbahar port in Iran. (Xinhua)

## Syrian Army Recaptures Strategic Town from IS

DAMASCUS - Syrian army retook a strategic central town from the Islamic State (IS) group, after the group managed to capture it several times over the recent months, pan-Arab al-Mayadeen TV reported on Tuesday. Military forces succeeded in recapturing the key town of Mahin and its surrounding hills, as well as its weapon depots in the countryside of the central province of Homs, according to the report. The army units also captured the nearby town of Hawarin. Mahin, located in the southeastern countryside of Homs, is crucial for the IS group and the government troops due to its strategic location near the international road, which is the main lifeline of the Syrian troops between the capital Damascus in the south, Homs and the northern region. On Dec. 10, IS stormed the town, just a month after the Syrian army managed to take it from the IS hands. Earlier in the day, the Syrian army captured ... (More on P4)...(27)

## British Opposition Leader Challenges PM to TV Debate

LONDON - Britain's Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn on Tuesday challenged Prime Minister David Cameron to hold annual televised "state of the nation" debates. Announcing the plan on his twitter account, Corbyn said he wants "politics to the people." Corbyn hoped Cameron would sign up to a cross-party initiative to debate the dominant issues of the year and allow party leaders to be questioned by voters, the Labour leader told The Independent newspaper. "People are entitled to know more about their political leaders and to have their government



held to account by the elected opposition in every way possible," he noted. "It is crucial that the Prime Minister and Government are held to account, both inside and outside Parliament, throughout their period in office - not just at election time," added Corbyn.

No political leader should "shrink from the chance to engage more fully with the public," the Labour Party leader stressed. The Scottish National Party (SNP) leader Nicola Sturgeon and the Liberal Democrats leader Tim Farron said they would take ... (More on P4)...(26)

## Abadi Visits Ramadi to Celebrate IS Defeat

BAGHDAD - Iraq's prime minister visited Ramadi on Tuesday, a day after the army took back the western city from Islamic State in the first major success for the U.S.-trained force that fled in the face of the militants' advance 18 months ago. Security sources said Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who arrived by helicopter with a top military officer at the Anbar University complex in the city's southern outskirts, would meet commanders from Iraq's army and counter-terrorism forces,

which had spearheaded the offensive. Abadi later announced the visit himself on Twitter. The army's apparent capture of Ramadi, capital of Anbar province in the Euphrates River valley west of Baghdad, marks a milestone for the forces which crumbled when the hardline Sunni Muslim militants seized a third of Iraq in June 2014. In battles since then, Iraq's armed forces had operated mainly in a supporting role beside Iranian-backed Shi'ite ... (More on P4)...(28)

## Norway to Tighten Asylum Policy

OSLO - Norway on Tuesday made proposals for 40 changes in its laws and regulations to tighten its policy on asylum and immigration in response to growing influx of asylum seekers into the Scandinavian country. "There may be between 10,000 and 100,000 asylum seekers to Norway next year... it can have violent consequences for our welfare society," Minister of Immigration and Integration Sylvi Listhaug told reporters when she presented the government's proposals. The main proposals include tightening rules on family reunification so that a person must have four years of work or education in Norway before family reunification can take place. Asylum seekers who are not entitled merits of their application for asylum in Norway can be expelled from the border. In addition, asylum seekers arriving by transit visas across the border from Russia will not be able to get asylum. Norway also wants to introduce new requirements to obtain permanent residency in the country, including Norwegian language and social studies as well as requirements for self-sufficiency for three years. It is also proposed that the basis for permanent residence will lapse if the need for protection lapses within a period of five years. Unaccompanied asylum seekers will be given temporary protection until they are 18 years old. (Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### Salehi Confirms Transfer of Enriched Uranium to Russia

TEHRAN - Head of Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI), Ali-Akbar Salehi, on Tuesday confirmed the transfer of 11,000 kg of low-enriched uranium to Russia under the July nuclear agreement. Pursuant to the nuclear deal, "some 11,000 kg of enriched uranium was exchanged with 197,000 kg of yellow cake," Salehi was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency. "We received the yellow cake first and then sent out the enriched uranium," and the exchange operation was completed in the past days, he said. On Monday, U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said a ship carrying over 25,000 pounds low-enriched uranium materials departed from

Iran for Russia, calling it "one of the most significant steps Iran has taken toward fulfilling its commitments."

The shipment included the removal of all of Iran's nuclear material enriched to 20 percent that was not already in the form of fabricated fuel plates for the Tehran Research Reactor, Kerry said. Under the nuclear deal reached by Iran and world powers in July, Iran is required to ship out all except 300 kilograms of low-enriched uranium.

"Thanks God, we implemented one of the major steps (as the sides' obligation under the nuclear deal) and we are currently busy with other small measures in this regard," Salehi said. (Xinhua)

### 696 Militants, 95 Security Personnel Killed in Karachi in 2015

ISLAMABAD - At least 696 militants and 95 security personnel were killed in encounters in Pakistan's southern port city of Karachi in 2015, local media reported on Tuesday. The Karachi police said that paramilitary troops Rangers had 69 encounters with insurgents in which a total of 152 hardened criminals and terrorists were killed. A total of 12 Rangers personnel also got killed in the armed attacks and 20 other were wounded in different actions during the year. The Karachi police killed 544 suspected

militants, gangsters and criminals in 1,577 encounters during the year while losing 83 cops. At least 89 policemen were injured in clashes with militants. The Rangers said they arrested 4,074 suspects in 2,410 operations across Karachi city during the year, with 2,198 of them handed over to the police. A police spokesman said that around 6,887 suspects were arrested during the year. According to police figures, 986 people were killed in targeted attacks during 2015, compared with 1,925 last year. (Xinhua)

### Invitation of Kabirito Conference on Islam in Tehran Angers Tajikistan

BISHKEK - The Committee on Religious Affairs of Tajikistan is outraged by the invitation of Kabirito, the leader of the banned Islamic Renaissance Party in Tajikistan, to the international conference on Islam in Tehran. Activities of the Party were banned and the Party itself was recognized as terrorist and extremist by the Supreme Court of Tajikistan in late September. "The Iranian side invited the leader of this Party, which is in the international wanted list at the request of Tajikistan, although it was

aware of that," says the statement. The Iranian side has not yet commented on the Committee's dissatisfaction over Kabirito's invitation. The 29th Islamic Unity Conference was opened in Tehran on December 27. Tajikistan will be represented by head of the Committee on Religious Affairs Sulaymon Davlatzoda, director of the Center of Islamic Studies Faizullo Barotzoda, head of the Ulema Council of the Islamic Center of Tajikistan Saidmukarram Abdudukorizoda. (AKIpress)

### Sino-Russian Relations See New Breakthroughs in 2015: Chinese Ambassador

MOSCOW - Relations between China and Russia have made further progress and achieved new breakthroughs in 2015, the year that marked the 66th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic ties, a Chinese diplomat said. "The China-Russia relationship is the best major-country relationship in the world, because the two countries are guided by principles of equity and equality, as well as fully respect for each other's interests and concerns," Chinese ambassador to Russia Li Hui said in a recent interview with Russian Dostoinstvo magazine. Each side benefits from their comprehensive

strategic partnership of coordination, which is becoming closer and increasingly stable, Li said. As two rapidly developing economies and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, he said, the two countries jointly support international justice and seek to develop a new type of international relations based on win-win cooperation. "The two countries have played a special and irreplaceable role in safeguarding peace, stability and development in the world," he added. This year, both Russia and China held a series of activities to commemorate the 70th anniversary ... (More on P4)...(29)