

# US, Iran Hold 'Intense' Nuclear Talks Month Before Deadline

GENEVA - A month away from a nuclear deal deadline, U.S. and Iranian diplomats tried to narrow differences over how quickly to ease economic penalties against Tehran and how significantly the Iranians must open up military facilities to international inspections. American officials described the session as "at times intense."

The talks between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif lasted six hours, in what officials described as the most substantive negotiating round since world powers and Iran clinched a framework pact in April.

Last month's agreement left big questions unanswered, which weeks of subsequent technical dis-



cussions have done little to resolve. It was unclear how much progress Kerry and Zarif made before the Iranian delegation began leaving for Tehran, or if they fully rediscovered their momentum.

Asked about completing the full accord by June 30, Zarif said, "We will try."

His deputy, Abbas Araghchi, said lower-level officials would meet again in Vienna next week.

U.S. officials provided hints of what must have been a difficult dialogue, but said the encounter ultimately proved fruitful. American members of the negotiating team were not authorized to discuss publicly the private talks and spoke only on condition of anonymity. (AP)

## Bonn U.N. Talks Seek to Trim Unwieldy Climate Change Plan

OSLO - Governments will try on Monday to streamline an 89-page draft text of a U.N. deal to fight climate change due to be agreed in Paris in December, hoping to avoid the acrimony of the last failed attempt.

The 190-nation talks among senior officials in Bonn, from June 1-11, will try to narrow down vastly differing options, ranging from promises

to slash greenhouse gas emissions to zero by 2050 to vague pledges to curb rising emissions.

The talks are to prepare for a conference in Paris in six months' time to agree a global deal to curb climate change that a U.N. panel blames for a rise in temperatures and more severe droughts, floods and rising sea levels.

Time is starting to run

short to distil the draft, which has 4,232 lines of text and hundreds of brackets, into a meaningful document.

Christiana Figueres, the U.N.'s climate change chief, said there was a far better atmosphere than in 2009, when a summit in Copenhagen broke down in acrimony.

"Instead of the blaming game that was Copenhagen, what is being built

here is much more of an alliance, a broad collaboration among countries to get a deal together," she told Reuters. Bonn will be a test of whether a rare mood of harmony at the last meeting in Geneva in February can be sustained. In Geneva, all nations were allowed to add as many options as they wanted to the draft text to get all ideas on the table. (Reuters)

## IS Destroys Infamous Syria Prison as Regime Bombing Kills Scores

BEIRUT - Islamic State group jihadists demolished a notorious government prison in the historic Syrian city of Palmyra on Saturday, as barrel bombs dropped by regime helicopters killed more than 70 civilians in Aleppo.

In neighbouring Iraq, government forces retook an area west of the city of Ramadi, which IS overran earlier in May.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said IS planted explosives that "largely destroyed" the

Palmyra jail, which was for decades a symbol of abuses meted out on regime opponents.

Opponents of President Bashar al-Assad welcomed on social media the destruction of the long-feared prison at Palmyra, which IS seized 10 days ago after government forces pulled out.

In rebel-held areas of Aleppo province including the city itself, "at least 71 civilians were killed, and dozens wounded when regime helicopters ... (More on P4)...(25)"

## EU Criticizes 'Unjustified' Russian Travel Blacklist

BERLIN - Russia has imposed an entry ban on 89 European politicians and military leaders, according to a list seen by Reuters, a move that has angered Europe and worsened its standoff with the West over Moscow's role in the Ukraine conflict.

The list, which the Russian foreign ministry compiled and handed to a European Union delegation in Moscow this week, includes outspoken critics of Russia as well as military and intelligence officials. A

similar list exists for U.S. citizens, a ministry official told Reuters media. Since Russia annexed Crimea in March 2014, the EU has imposed economic sanctions, visa bans and asset freezes on scores of Russian and Ukrainian citizens and organizations.

Moscow denies Western accusations that it is supporting pro-Russian separatists battling government forces in Ukraine, where 6,200 people have died in the fighting. A spokeswoman for EU ... (More on P4)...(26)

## Russian Aircraft Head off U.S. Destroyer in Black Sea: RIA

MOSCOW - Russian military aircraft were scrambled to head off a U.S. warship that was acting "aggressively" in the Black Sea, state news agency RIA reported on Saturday, but the Pentagon denied any unusual behavior.

RIA quoted an anonymous source in Russia's armed forces in Crimea as saying that the guided missile destroyer USS Ross was moving along the edge of Russia's territorial waters and heading in their direction.

"The crew of the ship acted provocatively and

aggressively, which concerned the operators of monitoring stations and ships of the Black Sea Fleet," RIA quoted the source as saying.

"Su-24 attack aircraft demonstrated to the American crew readiness to harshly prevent a violation of the frontier and to defend the interests of the country."

Pentagon spokeswoman Eileen Lainez said the USS Ross was "well within international waters at all times, performing routine operations."

"The U.S. Navy operates ... (More on P4)...(27)"

## Kerry, Zarif Fail to Make Breakthrough in Nuclear Talks

GENEVA - Tehran rejected a key Western demand for site inspections Saturday and differences remained after US Secretary of State John Kerry and his Iranian counterpart held talks to secure a nuclear deal.

With a deadline a month away, a senior Iranian negotiator said the Geneva talks between Kerry and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif failed to bridge the differences between Tehran and world powers.

"The differences are still there," Abbas Araghchi, deputy head of Iran's negotiating team, said at

the end of the meeting. Araghchi, quoted by state television's website, said the negotiations would "resume next week at the level of deputies and experts", rather than have the Kerry-Zarif talks go into a second day as expected.

The latest talks in the run-up to a June 30 deadline came amid heightened diplomatic moves to try to end a 12-year standoff and put a nuclear bomb beyond Iran's reach.

Kerry and Zarif huddled for six hours in a leading hotel with their delegations and top European ... (More on P4)...(28)

## Neighbour News

### Iran Nuclear Talks on Right Track: Majlis Speaker

TEHRAN - Speaker of Iran's parliament (Majlis), Ali Larijani, says the Islamic Republic and the P5+1 group of global powers are moving forward with negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program on the right track.

Addressing a gathering of Iranian governors in Tehran on Sunday, Larijani added that the country's international position is closely linked to the nuclear issue.

"A clear path has been mapped in the country on this issue," he said, expressing hope that efforts underway by the Iranian nuclear negotiating team would come to fruition.

Kerry held talks in Geneva, Switzerland, on Saturday following a round of three-day talks at the deputy level in Vienna. (Agencies)

Noting that all aspects of the nuclear issue are being constantly monitored, he said a well thought-out plan is pursued in the nuclear talks with the P5+1 countries. Iran and the P5+1 group of countries - the United States, Britain, France, China, Russia and Germany - are seeking to finalize a comprehensive deal on Iran's nuclear issue.

The two sides have been working on the text of the potential deal ever since they reached a mutual understanding on its parameters in the Swiss city of Lausanne on April 2. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif and US Secretary of State John Kerry held talks in Geneva, Switzerland, on Saturday following a round of three-day talks at the deputy level in Vienna. (Agencies)

### Uzbekistan, South Korea to Build Gas Chemical Facility

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan - Uzbekistan and South Korea's GS Engineering & Construction have inked a memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the construction of a gas chemical complex worth US\$4.5 billion, a representative of Uzbekistan's government circles

envisages the creation of capacities for the production of olefins from methanol.

The gas chemical complex is planned to be built by the GS Engineering & Construction and Uzbekistan's National Holding Company Uzbekneftegaz.

The GS Engineering & Construction is one of the general contractors for the construction of the Ustyurt Gas Chemical Complex at Uzbekistan's Surgil field. (Agencies)

### China Trying to Reach 13 People Near Mers Patient

GUANGZHOU - Authorities in south China's Guangdong Province are still trying to reach 13 people who had close contact with the country's first Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) patient.

The commission said more medical specialists were sent to Huizhou on Sunday to help with the treatment.

The man, 44, flew from the ROK to Hong Kong on Tuesday and entered Huizhou City with doctors saying his situation has worsened, the provincial health and family planning commission said Sunday. Meanwhile, the number of people who had been in close contact with the patient rose to 77 in Guangdong, the commission said. Among them,

64 have been quarantined while 13 others, including 11 passengers on a bus boarded by the man, have remained out of contact. None of the quarantined has showed any abnormality.

The commission said more medical specialists were sent to Huizhou on Sunday to help with the treatment.

The man, 44, flew from the ROK to Hong Kong on Tuesday and entered Huizhou City via Shenzhen. He had close contact with MERS patients at home and expressed discomfort as early as May 21. The patient is the son of the third confirmed MERS case in the ROK and the brother of the ROK's fourth confirmed case. (Xinhua)

### Nawaz Sharif Expresses Concern over Mian Iftikhar's Arrest

ISLAMABAD - Expressing his concern over the arrest of Awami National Party leader Mian Iftikhar Hussain, Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has sought a report on the matter. According to Geo News, the prime minister has sought report from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa IGP, Intelligence Bureau (IB) and other law enforcement agencies. In his remarks over the arrest, Nawaz Sharif said political personalities should be treated with respect. Local bodies election took an ugly

turn when violence across Khyber Pakhtunkhwa devoured eight people and left 80 others injured on Saturday. On Sunday, the former KP information minister, who lost his only child at the hands of Pakistani Taliban during ANP reign in the country's north-western province, was arrested after the killing of a PTI worker during a rally outside his office. The police have yet to ascertain whether the deceased was hit by shots from Hussain's guard or PTI's gunmen. (Agencies)

## Houthis in Talks with U.S. Officials in Oman: Yemen Govt.

DUBAI - Senior figures from Yemen's dominant Houthi group are holding talks with U.S. officials in Oman to advance efforts to resolve the conflict in Yemen, the Riyadh-based Yemeni government said on Sunday.

A Saudi-led coalition began air strikes in Yemen in March in a campaign to restore Yemeni President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to power. Hadi fled in March, after the Iranian-backed Houthi rebels seized the capital Sanaa in September and then thrust into central and south Yemen.

Nearly 2,000 people have been killed in the conflict since March 19, according to the United Nations.

"We have been informed



that there are meetings, at American request, and that a private American plane carried the Houthis to Muscat," Rajeh Badi, a spokesman for Yemen's government in exile told Reuters by telephone from the Saudi capital Riyadh. The Yemeni government was not party to the talks, Badi said.

There was no immediate comment from the Houthis and from U.S. officials. If confirmed, the Oman meeting would be the first between the Houthis and the United States, Saudi Arabia's main foreign ally, since the start of the war. The United States has said it was providing arms and intelligence to Saudi Arabia during its campaign in Yemen. (Reuters)

## Saudi-Led Yemen Coalition Still Using Cluster Bombs: HRW

DUBAI - Human Rights Watch on Sunday published new evidence alleging a Saudi-led coalition is using internationally banned cluster bombs in Yemen, urging it to stop such attacks that were harming civilians. The New York-based watchdog said it documented the use of three types of cluster munitions in Yemen, where Saudi-led warplanes have pounded positions of Shiite rebels and allies loyal to former president Ali

Abdullah Saleh since March 26. "The Saudi-led coalition and other warring parties in Yemen need to recognise that using banned cluster munitions is very likely to harm civilians," said HRW's senior emergencies researcher Ole Solvang. "These weapons can't distinguish military targets from civilians, and their unexploded submunitions threaten civilians, especially children, even long after the fighting," she added in a statement. The organisation

said the banned munitions had wounded civilians including a child in attacks on northern stronghold of the Houthi rebels, pointing out that a HRW team had visited Saada province this month. Two of three people wounded in one attack from the air were likely to have been civilians, while the source of ground-fired cluster bombs that wounded four other civilians, including a child, was not determined, HRW said. (AFP)

### German Foreign Minister to Visit Gaza

RAMALLAH, West Bank - Germany's foreign minister says he will visit the Gaza Strip - a rare trip to the Hamas-ruled territory by a Western leader. In meetings with Israeli and Palestinian officials Sunday, Frank-Walter Steinmeier said he was concerned about the situation in Gaza, which is struggling to recover from a devastating war with Israel last year.

Steinmeier told Israel's President Reuven Rivlin that "concrete steps" are needed to improve daily life in Gaza. In the West Bank, he called for ... (More on P4)...(29)

## Iraq to Stay out of Iran-Saudi Conflicts: Abadi

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi sought to reassure Saudi Arabia Sunday that Iraq is not a "gateway for Iran" and will not take part in regional conflicts between the two countries.

"Iraq is not a gateway for Iran," Abadi said in an interview with Iraqiya state TV.

"We do not want to enter in to regional conflicts, and if there are regional conflicts between Saudi Arabia and Iran," Baghdad will not be involved, the premier said.

Iran -- which like Iraq is mostly Shiite Muslim -- and Sunni-majority Saudi Arabia are involved in political and military battles for influence in countries around the Middle East.

Ties between Baghdad and Riyadh have steadily improved since Abadi took office last year after reaching a low ebb under his predecessor Nuri al-Maliki, who accused Saudi Arabia of backing militants in Iraq while it criticised him as sectarian.

Saudi Arabia has named an ambassador to Iraq

and announced in January that it would reopen an embassy in the country for the first time in 25 years.

But Baghdad has much closer and longer-standing ties with neighbouring Iran, which is playing a major role in Iraq's battle to regain swathes of territory from the Islamic State (IS) jihadist group. Tehran has provided weapons to Iraq, and Shiite militias that are among Baghdad's most effective forces have close operational and ideological ties to Iran. (AFP)