

Obama to Try to Allay Gulf Nation Leaders' Fears about Iran

WASHINGTON - Leaders of Gulf nations unnerved by Washington's nuclear talks with Iran and Tehran's meddling across the Mideast are looking to President Barack Obama to promise more than words and weapons at Thursday's Camp David summit. They want commitments from Obama that the United States has their backs at a time when the region is under siege from Islamic extremists, Syria continues to unravel, Iraq is volatile and Yemen is in chaos. "I think we are looking for some form of security guarantee, given the behavior of Iran in the



region, given the rise of the extremist threat. We definitely want a stronger

relationship," said Yousef Al Qtaiba, the United Arab Emirates' ambassa-

dor to the United States. "In the past, we have survived with a gentleman's

agreement with the United States about security. I think today, we need

something in writing. We need something institutionalized." What are the expectations for Obama's meetings with Gulf Cooperation Council countries - Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and Oman? Weapons sales. A renewed call for a coordinated missile defense system. More joint military exercises. Better cooperation on cybersecurity, as well as maritime and border security. Making the countries' defense systems work in concert. "I don't believe there's a single GCC country that doesn't think a defense shield... (More on P4)...(19)

Neighbour News

Iran Urges UN to Intervene and Halt War in Yemen

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official has called on the UN special envoy to Yemen to intervene and halt Saudi war on Yemen and prevent a humanitarian catastrophe from taking place in the impoverished state. "The Islamic Republic of Iran expects Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the UN secretary general's envoy to Yemen, to immediately travel to this country and take action for halting strikes and preventing the intensification of humanitarian catastrophe," Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said in a Sunday telephone

conversation with UN Under-Secretary-General and Emergency Relief Coordinator Valerie Amos. The Iranian official denounced Saudi Arabia's airstrikes against Yemeni infrastructure and civilian targets in the northwestern province of Sa'ada and the northern province of Amran over the past two days. He said destruction of airports, which had been prepared to handle relief aid supplied by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and international aid organizations, is a "blatant violation of international and humanitarian laws." (Agencies)

Turkish Premier Crosses into Syria to Visit Ottoman Tomb

ANKARA, Turkey - Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has crossed into Syrian territory to pay a surprise visit to the tomb of the grandfather of the founder of the Ottoman Empire.

In February, Turkey sent hundreds of troops into Syria to move the tomb - which was besieged by Islamic State militants - closer to the Turkish border and to evacuate dozens of Turkish soldiers who were guarding it. It was

the first major military incursion by Turkey since the Syrian conflict began in March 2011.

Davutoglu's office said the Turkish leader visited the shrine on Sunday. It now lies some 250 meters (yards) from the Turkish border in Syria's Ashma region. The private Dogan news agency said Davutoglu crossed into Syria in a convoy of armored vehicles, protected by helicopters. (AP)

Yemen Truce Efforts Gather Pace as Rebel Heartland Hit



SANAA - Yemen cease-fire efforts gathered pace Sunday after more than six weeks of Saudi-led air strikes, with rebels saying they would respond "positively" and their allies accepting a US-backed truce plan. The renegade troops, who helped the Shiite Huthi rebels seize much of the country, said they had agreed to the five-day humanitarian truce that Riyadh has offered starting Tuesday. The rebels did not refer explicitly to the Saudi offer, but expressed "readiness to deal positively with any efforts, calls or measures that would help end the suffering". Amid the truce moves, a ship chartered by the UN's World Food Programme docked in the western port of Hodeida, bringing precious fuel to boost aid deliveries. The deliv-

ery aimed at "opening up a new humanitarian lifeline for civilians impacted by the conflict" in Yemen, where drastic fuel shortages have hurt aid operations, the WFP said. The MV Amsterdam brought 300,000 litres of fuel and supplies for humanitarian organizations, while a second vessel would bring an additional 120,000 litres later on Sunday. The WFP's Yemen director Purnima Kashyap said the fuel will mean aid can reach "hundreds of thousands of people in need of urgent food assistance". The United Nations has expressed deep concern about the civilian death toll from the bombing campaign and the humanitarian impact of the air and sea blockade that Saudi Arabia and its allies have imposed on Yemen. (AFP)

Syrian Troops Attack Town Recently Captured By Militants

BEIRUT - Syria's state media is reporting that government forces are attacking Muslim militants on the outskirts of the northwestern town of Jisr al-Shughour.

State TV said says government forces have closed all roads leading to the town, which was captured by Muslim militants late last month. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the Syrian air force conducted 22 air-

strikes on Sunday alone - mostly near the national hospital south of town where government troops are entrenched and under siege. President Bashar Assad vowed on Wednesday that "God willing, the army will soon reach those heroes besieged in Jisr al-Shughour hospital." Jisr al-Shughour is west of the city of Idlib, the provincial capital, which fell to militants in late March. (AP)

Ukraine Peace 'Moving Forward' Despite Problems: Putin

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin said after talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Sunday that the peace process in eastern Ukraine was progressing despite difficulties.

Merkel reaffirmed her support for the peace efforts and repeated her calls to Putin to use his influence with pro-Russian separatists battling Kiev government forces to end a conflict in which more than 6,000



people have been killed since April 2014. "There is every reason to believe the Minsk

process is moving forward, though with problems," Putin told a joint news conference

with Merkel, referring to the peace deal signed in February in the Belarussian capital. "With all the problems in east Ukraine, it has nevertheless become quieter," he said, adding that direct dialogue between the Kiev government and the separatists was crucial for peace. Relations between Russia and Germany, which have multi-billion-dollar trade and energy... (More on P4)...(20)

Germany Urges Russia to Put More Pressure on Ukraine Rebels

MOSCOW - German Chancellor Angela Merkel has called during a visit to Moscow for Russia to do more to persuade separatists in eastern Ukraine to abide by a cease-fire that has been strained in recent weeks. Speaking alongside Russian President Vladimir Pu-

tin at a press conference, Merkel said the past week's creation of groups to negotiate a lasting settlement of the dispute provided a "glimmer of hope" but that progress was lacking elsewhere. Ukraine says more than 8,000 people have died in the conflict that began

in April 2014. Merkel was the only prominent European leader to visit Russia over the weekend to mark the 70th anniversary of the surrender of Nazi Germany. On Sunday, she laid a wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier by the walls of the Kremlin. (AP)

Cameron Empowers Outspoken Ally Gove in New Cabinet

LONDON - Newly re-elected British Prime Minister David Cameron restored one of his most outspoken and combative allies to a leading cabinet role by naming Michael Gove as justice secretary on Sunday. Gove was last year shunted into the role of chief whip, responsible for keeping party members in line, in what was seen as a demotion from his previous role as education secretary.

Cameron's Downing Street office confirmed Gove's appointment and also said Chris Grayling, the previous justice sec-

retary, would now be leader of the House of Commons, a cabinet job that involves supervising the government's legislative agenda. Nicky Morgan, Gove's successor as education secretary, remains in that role, while former junior minister for work and pensions Mark Harper will replace Gove as chief whip, Downing Street said.

One of the most radical figures in Cameron's Conservative party, Gove drove education reform by encouraging the creation of "free schools", directly funded by govern-

ment but independent of local councils unlike other state schools. He is seen by the Conservative leadership as a brave and visionary reformer, but his education program was far from universally popular. Many in the teaching profession objected, and his flagship free schools policy has drawn criticism that it diverted state funding to places that did not need it the most. Gove's abrasive style also stirred controversy and last year's reshuffle sparked speculation that he might have been seen as... (More on P4)...(21)

N.Korea's Show of Force Greeted US Diplomatic Overture

WASHINGTON - North Korea greeted a U.S. diplomatic overture with a fresh show of force, seemingly testing the Obama administration's resolve for new nuclear talks. After three years of diplomatic deadlock, the U.S. appears open to preliminary discussions to assess North Korea's intentions and the prospects of ridding the country of nuclear weapons. Then came Saturday's claim that North Korea successfully test-fired a newly developed ballistic missile from a submarine. Not long after that announcement, South Korean officials said the North fired three anti-



ship cruise missiles into the sea off its east coast. The State Department said launches using ballistic missile technology are "a clear violation" of U.N. Security Council resolutions. Washington urged North Korea "to refrain from actions that further raise tensions in the region and focus in-

stead on taking concrete steps toward fulfilling its international commitments and obligations." Just this past week, a South Korean envoy had visited Washington and Beijing as countries involved in long-stalled aid-for-disarmament negotiations with the North mulled... (More on P4)...(22)

Bombings Kill At Least 14 in Baghdad

BAGHDAD - Separate bombings in and around the Iraqi capital on Sunday killed at least 14 people, officials said, as authorities tightened security measures in Baghdad ahead of a major Shiite religious event that draws thousands of vulnerable pilgrims. The deadliest attack took place in the town of Tarmiyah when a car bomber struck a police and army checkpoint, killing five security force members and wounding 10, a police officer said. The town is about 50 kilometers (31 miles) north of Baghdad. Another car bomb killed three civilians and wounded eight at an outdoor market in Taji, about 20 kilometers (12 miles) north of Baghdad, the officer added. (AP)

Gaddafi's Son Saadi Appears in Libyan Court on Murder Charges

TRIPOLI - Muammar Gaddafi's son Saadi who fled abroad during Libya's 2011 revolution and was extradited from Niger last year appeared in a Tripoli court on Sunday at the start of a trial on murder charges but the judge adjourned his case until July.

Saadi, who had a brief career as a soccer player in Italy and had the reputation of a playboy during his father's long rule, appeared in the Tripoli courtroom wearing a blue jumpsuit and watched the proceedings from behind bars.

"The trial of Saadi Gaddafi has been adjourned today by the court of south Tripoli until... (More on P4)...(23)

China Urges Pentagon to "Rationally" View Military Strength

BEIJING - China's Foreign Ministry on Sunday voiced strong opposition to a Pentagon report on China's military development and security, calling on the U.S. to have "an objective and rational understanding" of China's military strength. "We urge the U.S. to abandon its Cold War mindset, take off its colored glasses, and have an objective and rational understanding of China's military development," spokeswoman Hua Chunying said, referring to a report released on Saturday by U.S. Department of Defense. She called on the U.S. to stop issuing such biased report and refrain from any words and deeds that undermine bilateral relations and trust between the two military so as to maintain the healthy and stable growth of military relationship. Hua expressed "strong opposi-

tion" to the U.S. report, which ignores facts, make speculations and continues to play up the so-called China threat and lack of military transparency and casts doubts on China's normal defense building and strategic plan, Hua said. She particularly criticized the report for pointing finger at China's moves to protect territorial sovereignty and security interests in the South China Sea. The spokeswoman reiterated China's adherence to a peaceful development path and defensive military strategy, which is a firm force in maintaining peace and stability in Asia-Pacific and the world at large. China's defense building is aimed at safeguarding national independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, which is entitled to every sovereign state, Hua added. (Xinhua)

Foreign Delegations Arrive to Receive Bodies of Naltar Victims

ISLAMABAD - High-level delegations from Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia and Norway have arrived in Islamabad to receive the bodies of victims killed in Friday's helicopter crash in Gilgit-Baltistan's Naltar Valley. According to a statement released by the Foreign Office, the delegation from Philippines headed by the Under Secretary of Philippines Ministry of Foreign Affairs including the spouse and son of the late ambassador reached Islamabad today. The delegation from Malaysia consists of senior officials and daughter of the Malaysian ambassador. "Transportation of the mortal remains to the respective countries of the deceased would be finalized after consultation

with the families and officials of the embassies concerned and after completion of all formalities," the FO said in a statement. Ambassadors of Indonesia and the Netherlands, who received burn injuries, were moved to Special Burns Unit in Kharian. The Malaysian envoy and the ambassador of Poland and his wife were, meanwhile, being treated at a local hospital. The bodies of Ambassador of Philippines Domingo D Lucenario Jr, Ambassador of Norway Leif Larsen and the wives of ambassadors of Malaysia and Indonesia were airlifted from Naltar to Rawalpindi and have been placed in the morgue of Combined Military Hospital (CMH). (Agencies)

Turkmenistan Believes in Trans-Caspian Pipeline Project

ASHGABAT, Turkmenistan - The needs of Europe's countries in energy resources will increase twice by 2030, and this causes their interest in Turkmenistan, which is regarded as one of the main suppliers of gas to the integrated European market, according to forecasts, said the message of Ministry of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of Turkmenistan. The message said that the construction project of a 300-kilometer Trans-Caspian gas pipeline is considered to be a promising one, which will enable to transport 30 billion cubic

meters of gas to Europe via Azerbaijan. Since the mid-twentieth century, the world has accumulated a long experience in the construction of marine gas pipelines, which have proven themselves in terms of operational reliability, the message said. For example, sales of gas to Europe (about 45 percent of gas imports) have been implemented for more than 25 years using this technology. This includes the nord Stream, a gas pipeline between Russia and Germany... (More on P4)...(24)