**Kerry to Explore Putin’s Flexibility on Ukraine, Syria**

**WASHINGTON - U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry plans to meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Sochi on Thursday to discuss the situation in Ukraine and Syria, officials said. It would be the highest-level U.S.-Russian meeting in nearly a decade, and has been in the making for weeks.**

**US, Saudi Arabia Play Down Rift**

**VIENNA - U.S. and Saudi officials dismissed any rift between the two countries seen in recent weeks as a challenge to U.S.-Iran nuclear talks. The countries agreed to establish a “hot line” in their embassies in Europe.**

**Iran Stress Test Deadlines, Nuclear Talks Pass**

**WASHING TON - Secretary of State John Kerry said on Tuesday that the Iranian regime has not met any deadlines set by the United States or its European and P5+1 partners to reduce its nuclear program.**

**“What Does Moscow Want?”**

**BRUSSELS - The former Soviet republics of Georgia, Armenia and Ukraine are moving inextricably closer to the rest of a Russian state that they long considered at best demographically alien to them.**

**IS Demolishes Ruins to Lift Occupation: Iraq**

**BAGHDAD - The violent Islamic State group has demolished ancient Iraqi ruins in its major stronghold of Mosul, officials said Tuesday. The group has been destroying ancient sites as far back as the 1940s, and in recent weeks has started taking areas in and around the Islamic State’s so-called “caliphate.” The group’s destruction of ancient sites is a violation of international law, experts say.**

**Nepal Earthquake Kills Dozens, Triggers Panic**

**KATHMANDU - A 7.3 magnitude earthquake struck southeastern Nepal, shaking the capital Kathmandu and destroying thousands of homes and buildings. The quake was followed by a powerful aftershock, raising concerns about landslides and further damage. Rescue efforts were underway to search for survivors.**

**Uzbekistan to Sell State Assets to Foreign Investors**

**TASHKENT - Uzbekistan plans to sell state assets to foreign investors in an effort to boost the country’s ailing economy. The government has set aside around $1 billion worth of assets for privatization.**

**Ad Bad to Provide $6b for Infrastructure Projects**

**KARACHI - The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), which some see as a challenge to the World Bank, has approved $160 million for two power projects in Pakistan.**

**Iran, Iraq Labor Ministers Sign Cooperation MoU**

**TEHRAN - Labor ministers of Iran and Iraq have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on mutual respects in the field of trade, labor and employment. Under the agreement, the two countries will take active part in bilateral and multilateral meetings.**

**China, Russia Start Search for Remains of WWII Soviet Union Soldiers**

**HARBIN - A month-long search for the remains of Soviet Union soldiers who died fighting Japanese soldiers in Harbin, China, started on Monday. About 500 soldiers were later confirmed to be Soviet Union soldiers.**

**US Skeptical of N.Korea Test Launch Claim: Officials**

**WASHINGTON - North Korea launched a ballistic missile from a submarine as a provocative challenge to the United States and South Korea, a senior U.S. defense official said Monday.**

**Gulf Leaders to Meet in Beijing**

**VIENNA - A summit of Gulf leaders will be held in Beijing this weekend for talks with Chinese leaders in Beijing this weekend.**

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