

1,850 Killed, Over 500,000 Displaced in Yemen: UN

GENEVA - The United Nations said Tuesday that some 1,850 people had been killed and more than 500,000 displaced as a result of the conflict raging in Yemen since late March.

As of May 15, 1,849 people had been killed and 7,394 had been injured, the UN humanitarian agency said citing numbers from Yemen health facilities. The UN has repeatedly stressed that many of those injured and killed do not pass through health facilities, meaning the actual toll could be higher.

The announcement



came as witnesses reported that Saudi-led warplanes hit Yemeni rebels and their allies in Sanaa, in the first strikes on the rebel-held capital since the end of a five-day humanitar-

ian truce on Sunday.

The Saudi-led coalition has waged an air war on the rebels since late March in an effort to restore the authority of ousted President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, who is now based in Riyadh. "The humanitarian pause in Yemen was not long enough to reach all those in need of food," Elisabeth Byrs, spokeswoman for the UN World Food Programme, told reporters. She said WFP had managed to deliver food to only 400,000 people during the pause, just

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Russia Tried to Kill Captured Russian Soldiers: Ukraine

BRUSSELS - Ukraine Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said on Monday that Russia had tried to kill the two Russian servicemen Kiev says it has captured in east Ukraine.

Klimkin, speaking in Brussels after trade talks, declined to give details of how Russian forces had tried to kill the pair. Ukraine's mili-

tary reported on Sunday that it had detained two Russian servicemen, but the Kremlin reiterated on Monday that there were no regular Russian troops fighting in east Ukraine. Ukraine and NATO accuse Moscow of supporting pro-Russian separatists with troops and military supplies. (Reuters)

Merkel, Hollande Push for Accelerated Talks with Greece

BERLIN - The leaders of Germany and France said on Tuesday that talks between Greece and its international lenders must be accelerated to free up further loans to Athens and that they would meet the Greek prime minister at an EU summit in Riga this week.

"I'd say the talks need to speed up, rather than that they are going too fast, and we hope the relevant forum - the Brussels Group - can make clear progress

because the agreement in February was that a program should be set up by the end of May," said Chancellor Angela Merkel at a news conference with President Francois Hollande.

Hollande agreed that the talks with Greece needed to be "accelerated", adding: "We all have the same stance which is that Greece must stay in the euro zone." The two had taken part in a meeting on climate change in Berlin. (Reuters)

Syrian Rebels 'Seize Largest Remaining Army Base in Idlib'



BEIRUT - Rebels including Al-Qaeda's local affiliate seized the Syrian regime's largest remaining military base in northwestern Idlib province on Tuesday, a monitor said.

The loss of Al-Mastumah base leaves only a few positions in regime hands in the province, which lies along the border with Turkey and neighbours the government stronghold of Latakia province on the Mediterranean coast.

"All regime forces have withdrawn from Al-Mastumah, the largest regime base in Idlib, leaving it completely in the hands of opposition fighters," Rami Abdel Rahman, head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, told AFP. He said the capture of the base followed a huge blast inside and heavy clashes, though the cause of the explosion was not immediately clear. Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Nusra Front, a key player in the Army of Conquest grouping

that has seized much of Idlib in recent weeks, announced Al-Mastumah's capture online. "With the help of God, Al-Mastumah was completely liberated after Al-Nusra Front stormed it from the south," Al-Nusra said on its official Twitter account. Abdel Rahman said regime troops withdrawing from the base were leaving towards Ariha, now one of the last government bastions in Idlib. State television said the army was "taking defensive positions" outside of Ariha, implying that army units had withdrawn from Al-Mastumah itself. The base's capture comes after the rebel grouping, known in Arabic as Jaish al-Fatah, seized Idlib's provincial capital on March 28 and the nearby city of Jisr al-Shughur last month. The Army of Conquest had since edged closer to Al-Mastumah, where regime forces fled after withdrawing from Idlib city. (AFP)

NATO Meets Russians in Brussels, Urges Ukraine Withdrawal

BRUSSELS - NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg and Russia's foreign minister met Tuesday for the first time in three months, and Stoltenberg said he restated the "very strong NATO position" against Moscow's annexation of Crimea and its support for rebels in eastern Ukraine. Speaking later to journalists, Stoltenberg said he called on the Russians to withdraw their forces from Ukraine



and to stop backing the armed insurgency in that country's east. Moscow flatly denies

Western accusations it is aiding or supplying anti-government forces in Ukraine. Before the

meeting in Brussels, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said he would "listen to what they tell us," but placed the blame on NATO for the worsening of relations with his government since the onset of the Ukraine crisis. "We never walk away from contacts," said Lavrov. It was the first meeting between the alliance chief and Russia's top diplomat since talks in Munich ... (More on P4)...(26)

Kerry to Attend Nigeria Presidential Inauguration

LAGOS - US Secretary of State John Kerry will lead the US delegation to the inauguration of Nigerian president-elect Muhammadu Buhari in Abuja next week, the White House said Tuesday. Buhari will be sworn in on May 29 after defeating outgoing president Goodluck Jonathan in the first Nigerian election that saw the opposition candi-

date defeat an incumbent. The White House said the other members of the US delegation would be announced in the coming days.

A large number of African and Western leaders are expected to attend the ceremony. Kerry visited Nigeria in January in the run-up to the vote and issued a clear warning that the strength of future US

cooperation would be tied to the success of the polls. The historic election was widely praised by domestic and foreign observers, with analysts saying it had solidified democracy in Africa's most populous country, top economy and leading oil producer. Jonathan's Peoples Democratic Party had controlled the federal ... (More on P4)...(27)

Iraq Deploys Tanks as IS Tightens Grip on Ramadi

BAGHDAD - Iraqi security forces on Tuesday deployed tanks and artillery around Ramadi to confront Islamic State fighters who have captured the city in a major defeat for the Baghdad government and its Western backers. After Ramadi fell on Sunday, Shi'ite militiamen allied to the Iraqi army had advanced to a nearby base in preparation for a counterattack on the city, which lies in Anbar province just 110 km (70 miles) north-

west of Baghdad. As pressure mounted for action to retake the city, a local government official urged Ramadi residents to join the police and the army for what the Shi'ite militiamen said would be the "Battle of Anbar". Sunni Islamic State fighters had set up defensive positions and laid landmines, witnesses said. As the group tightened its grip on the city, Islamists went from house to house in search of members of the police and armed forces

and said they would set up courts based on Islamic Sharia law. They released about 100 prisoners from the counter-terrorism detention center in the city. Saeed Hammad al-Dulaini, 37, a school teacher who is still in the city, said: "Islamic State used loudspeakers urging people who have relatives in prison to gather at the main mosque in the city center to pick them up. I saw men rushing to the mosque to receive their prisoners." (Reuters)

Georgia's Leader Warns of Russian Expansion

TBILISI, Georgia - Georgia's president said Tuesday that Russia is poised to use its armed forces to expand further into former Soviet states and called on the West never to accept any Russian aggression. Russia's 2008 war with neighboring Georgia and its seizure of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014 showed that Moscow is ready to exploit any instability in countries it still considers in its sphere of influence, President Giorgi Margvelashvili said in an interview with The Associated Press. "They are the fastest and the first to bring in their tanks," he said, speaking near-fluent English. "So that's why we can say that half of the Eurasian conti-



ment is living under constant threat. If they have some kind of unstable environment in their country, their sovereign country, the neighbor will be quick to solve the problem through Kalashnikov(s)." Georgia, which aspires one day to join the 28-nation European Union and NATO, is a member of the EU's Eastern Partnership,

which holds its annual summit this week in Riga, Latvia. Other members are Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine. About 300 U.S. troops are in Georgia this month holding joint exercises, and NATO is opening a training center in Georgia later this year. Georgia has been a reliable contributor of ... (More on P4)...(28)

Neighbour News

Iran Can Become Major Producer of Nuclear Fuel

TEHRAN - A senior official at the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) says the country enjoys adequate potential to become one of the major countries that are capable of producing fuel for nuclear power plants. Addressing the 4th National Conference on the Application of Nuclear Technology in Agriculture in the Iranian city of Karaj on Tuesday, AEOI's deputy director for international, legal and parliamentary affairs, Behrouz Kamalvandi, said Iran has necessary knowledge, determination and resources to achieve this goal.

"Iranian officials pursue development of the country and, without a doubt, they will be able to achieve this goal, through firm de-

termination," the official noted, adding that the Islamic Republic is currently facing no limitation in the area of research and development. Kamalvandi stated that Iran is currently among 10 countries in the world that are capable of enriching uranium, adding that the country has broken the monopoly that some countries had on the use of nuclear technology. "We are living in a world where sciences have been monopolized and are only made available to countries" that are in line with world powers, Kamalvandi said, adding that although the Islamic Republic is able to produce nuclear fuel, it abides by international regulations in this regard and allows no diversion in its nuclear program. (Agencies)

US Appreciates Pakistan's Sacrifices against Terrorism

ISLAMABAD - United States Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) Daniel Feldman expressed deep appreciation for the efforts made by Pakistan in its efforts to root out terrorism and extremism and honored the sacrifices made by its forces and citizens. Feldman in a meeting on Tuesday with the adviser to the prime minister on national security and foreign affairs, Sartaj Aziz, acknowledged Pakistan's success in the fight against extremism.

The US SRAP was accompanied by Ambassador Richard Olson. The discussions between Feldman and Aziz covered Pakistan-US bilateral

relations and the situation in the region.

Sartaj Aziz noted the positive direction of ongoing cooperation between the two countries especially in the areas of defence, energy, and the economy, and also underscored the comprehensive measures taken by Pakistan to counter terrorism and extremism in the region.

The adviser briefed the US SRAP about the improvement in Pak-Afghan relations, and the current status of the country's relationship with India. The meeting was held in the wake of a series of US drone strikes in North Waziristan which killed suspected militants. (Agencies)

China, Tajikistan to Deepen Law-Enforcement Cooperation

BEIJING - Chinese State Councilor and Public Security Minister Guo Shengkun met with a delegation of senior cadres from the Tajikistan Ministry of Internal Affairs on Tuesday. The delegation, headed by Deputy Internal Minister Abdullo Navjuvonov, has been attending law-enforcement training program in China since May 11.

The training is an implementation of Chinese President Xi Jinping's proposal for pushing forward law-enforcement cooperation under the Shanghai Cooperation

Organization, Guo said, calling on the two sides to make joint efforts in this regard. Guo hoped the two sides will improve cooperation, improve exchanges of law-enforcement experience and further pragmatic security cooperation so as to make contributions to regional security, stability and construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt. Navjuvonov said the Tajikistan side is willing to constantly deepen law-enforcement and security cooperation with China in various fields. (Xinhua)

Uzbekistan-ILO Sign MoU

TASHKENT - According to the Uzbekistan's Ministry of Labor and Social Protection of, Tashkent hosted the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Republic of Uzbekistan and the International Labour Organization (ILO), with annexed program on decent work in the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2014-2016. The signatories of the document from the Uzbekistan's side were the leaders of the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, the Federation Council of Trade Unions and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, from the ILO side - the head of the ILO Office for Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Under the Memorandum and Programme a cooperation between Uzbekistan and the ILO envisaged in such priority areas as: - Strengthening social partnership in Uzbekistan to implement the fundamental principles and rights at work; - Expansion of

opportunities for decent employment; - Improving working conditions and social protection. At the event, he noted that the signing of the Memorandum, which became the result of a constructive dialogue, consultations and meetings, will further enhance the mutual understanding between Uzbekistan and the ILO. Namely promotion of international labor standards, the promotion of employment through the implementation of active labor market policies, the development of entrepreneurship, strengthen labor protection and extend coverage of social protection. UNDP Resident Representative and Head of the EU delegation in Uzbekistan expressed willingness to contribute to activities of Uzbekistan and the ILO, which will focus on the practical implementation of the program on decent work in the Republic of Uzbekistan for 2014-2016. (Monitoring Desk)