

Governments Certain to Seal Paris Climate Deal: U.N. Climate Chief

BARCELONA - Governments are certain to sign a global climate deal in Paris in six months' time even though most countries have yet to outline how they plan to cut emissions, the United Nations' climate chief said on Tuesday.

Almost 200 governments are due to meet at a conference in Paris from Nov. 30 to Dec. 11 to agree on a deal to slow global warming. "Governments are actually very well on track... there is no doubt that this agreement will be forged in Paris," Christina Figueres, head of



the U.N. climate change secretariat, said in an interview at a carbon market event in Barcelona. Figueres' comments come just a week after French President Francois Hollande said

he was worried about a lack of progress towards a climate deal in the French capital. So far, just 37 of 196 U.N. member states have submitted plans to the United Nations, outlining their actions to slow global warming beyond 2020. The plans, known as Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) in U.N. jargon, are meant to be the building blocks for a deal in Paris. "We expect many more critical ones to come in over the next few weeks and months and ... (More on P4)...(24)

Syria Says Carries Out Deadly Air Raid on IS Stronghold

BEIRUT - The Syrian air force hit an Islamic State-controlled air base in Raqqa province on Tuesday, killing more than 140 militants, state media said, striking the jihadist group in its Syrian stronghold a week after it seized Palmyra from the government.

The city of Raqqa is seen as the de facto capital of the "caliphate" Islamic State has declared in Syria and Iraq. The group has made notable gains in both countries this month, capturing both Ramadi in Iraq and Palmyra in Syria. It was not possible to independently verify the reported attack on the Tabqa air base, which Islamic State seized in August, killing scores of captive government soldiers.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a group monitoring the war, said a U.S.-led coalition waging a separate campaign against Islamic State had targeted the same area on Monday. Islamic State's takeover of Palmyra, also known as Tadmur, marked the first time the group had seized a city directly from government control. The other population centers it holds were mostly taken from rival insurgent groups in Syria's civil war. Palmyra is strategically significant for reasons including its location at a crossroads of highways in the center of Syria leading both to Homs and Damascus, President Bashar al-Assad's seat of power. (Reuters)

North Korea Leader Hails 'Miracle' Missile Test

PYONGYANG - North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un has hailed the recent test of a submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) -- which was viewed with wary skepticism outside the reclusive state -- as a miraculous leap forward. The North's official KCNA news agency reported Tuesday that Kim hosted a gathering of the scientists and technicians who were behind the test that was announced with great fanfare earlier this month.

It said Kim congratulated them for producing an "eye-opening miracle" and a "historical event" that had left the country with a powerful strategic weapon.

A fully developed SLBM capability would take the North Korean nuclear threat to a new

level, allowing deployment far beyond the Korean peninsula and the potential to retaliate in the event of a nuclear attack. But experts have questioned the authenticity of the recent test, saying photos of the launch had been digitally manipulated and suggesting the missile was probably fired from a sunken platform rather than a submarine.

Although the North clearly is set on developing a working SLBM, the expert consensus was that it remains years from acquiring such a capability. Whether the test was exaggerated or not, South Korea said Tuesday it had requested a UN investigation into whether it constituted a sanctions violation. (AFP)

Pro-Government Fighters Push Rebels out of Yemen City

ADEN - Yemeni fighters allied with exiled President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi have retaken the city of Daleh after pushing out Huthi rebels, local chiefs said on Tuesday. The insurgents backed by troops loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh had seized Daleh last month as they expanded southwards, triggering deadly confrontations with Sunni tribes and southern fighters. The pro-Hadi forces made their advance two months into a Saudi-led air campaign aimed at

restoring the president to power. "The whole city of Daleh is now under the control of the Popular Resistance Committees," an umbrella group of southern factions, local chief Saleh al-Mansub said. "All the military bases and strategic positions in the city are in the hands of the Popular Resistance Committees," said another local chief, Ali al-Assmar. Troops loyal to Saleh in the region had sided with the rebels. On Tuesday, pro-Hadi soldiers ... (More on P4)...(27)

Synthetic Drugs Market Expanding in East-SE Asia, Oceania: UN

BANGKOK - The demand for synthetic drugs in East and Southeast Asia and Oceania continues to rise, while rapid economic integration is creating new opportunities for transnational criminal groups to expand the illicit drug trade, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said in a report released here on Tuesday. The report analyzed recent trends and developments of the synthetic drugs market

in the region, comprising both amphetamine-type stimulants (ATS) and new psychoactive substances (NPS), which are designed to mimic the effects of substances under international control. East and Southeast Asia and Oceania is one of the world's largest synthetic drug markets, and is dominated by methamphetamine in crystalline or ice and tablet forms, according to the UNODC. The illegal synthetic drug trade in the region

is also expanding and diversifying with increasing availability of NPS, the UNODC said. Methamphetamine seizures in East and Southeast Asia and Oceania almost quadrupled from about 11 tons in 2008 to almost 42 tons in 2013, said the report, which was produced by the UNODC Global Synthetics Monitoring: Analyses, Reporting and Trends (SMART) Program. Over this period, crystalline methamphetamine seizures in the

region almost doubled to about 14 tons in 2013, while methamphetamine tablet seizures rose at a more rapid rate resulting in an eight-fold increase, from about 30 million tablets seized in 2008 to more than 250 million tablets seized in 2013, the report showed. "This significant increase might be partly the result of effective law enforcement measures, but also points to expanding production and trafficking to and ... (More on P4)...(25)

Irish PM, UN Chief Discuss Human Rights, Overseas Aid

DUBLIN - Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny on Tuesday met with UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and discussed issues like human rights, overseas aid and climate change. "The secretary general's visit is timely -- celebrating 70 years of the United Nations, and 60 years of Irish membership. Ireland has always been a champion of the UN and we strongly support secretary general Ban in his leadership," Kenny said after the meeting. "I reminded the secretary general that since our first deployment in Lebanon in June 1958, we have an unbroken record of 57 years UN peacekeeping activity," he said.

"Ban's visit reinforces Ireland's historical contribution to the UN as well as providing a platform to look to our continued role in the future," he added. For his part, Ban said he appreciated Ireland's decision to send the Irish naval vessel LE Eithne to the Mediterranean to assist the Italian authorities in the humanitarian rescue operations.

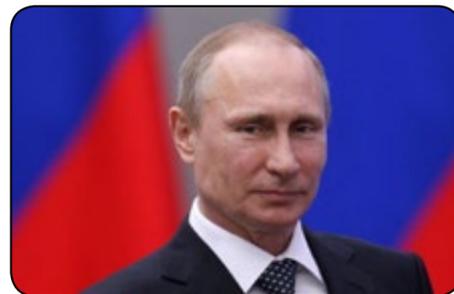
"This should be shared collectively by European countries. It should not be borne by one or two countries that are affected," the UN chief said.

"I'm urging European leaders to address this issue in a more comprehensive way and collective way," Ban said. "Without compassion you cannot do this. We have to first of all do our best to save lives." Ban described Ireland as "very peaceful, beautiful, very clean, very committed and very friendly," saying that other countries could emulate Ireland's good example. (Xinhua)

Russia Should Not Cut Itself off from Foreign Investment: Putin

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Tuesday the country should not cut itself off from foreign investment and technologies. "We should not, on any account, cut ourselves off" from the kind of foreign investment and technology that can drive economic growth, Putin told a conference of business people.

After annexing Ukraine's Crimea region in March 2014, Russia was hit



with Western sanctions that limited its access to foreign capital and technologies, especially for

the banking, energy and defense sectors. Russia imposed retaliatory sanctions. (Reuters)

Japan to Join U.S., Australia War Games Amid Growing China Tensions

SYDNEY - Japan will join a major U.S.-Australian military exercise for the first time in a sign of growing security links between the three countries as tensions fester over China's island building in the South China Sea. While only 40 Japanese officers and soldiers will take part in drills involving 30,000 U.S. and Australian troops in early July, experts said the move showed how Washington wanted to foster cooperation among its security allies in Asia. The Talisman Sabre bien-

nial exercises, to be held in locations around Australia, will encompass maritime operations, amphibious landings, special forces tactics and urban warfare. "I think the U.S. is trying to get its allies to do more," said Euan Graham, director of the International Security Program at the Lowy Institute in Sydney. "There is an obvious symmetry between Japan as the upper anchor of the Western Pacific alliance and ... Australia as the southern anchor."

All three nations have said they were concerned

about freedom of movement through the seas and air in the disputed South China Sea, where China is creating seven artificial islands in the Spratly archipelago, a vital shipping corridor.

Some security experts say China might impose air and sea restrictions in the Spratlys once it completes construction work that includes at least one military airstrip. China has said it had every right to set up an Air Defence Identification Zone but that current conditions did not warrant one. (Reuters)

Israeli PM Proposes Discussing Borders of Settlement Blocs with Palestinians

JERUSALEM - Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has voiced his willingness to discuss the borders of Jewish settlement blocs in future peace talks with the Palestinians, an Israeli newspaper reported Tuesday. Haaretz reported that Netanyahu made the proposal during a meeting with European Union foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini who visited the region last week. This is the first time that

the right-wing Israeli leader has expressed his readiness to discuss the size of Jewish settlement blocs and their borders since he started his fourth term as Israel's prime minister last month. David Baker, Netanyahu's spokesman, declined Tuesday to make comments on the report. According to the report, Netanyahu clarified that such discussions would outline exactly where Israel could continue con-

struction. "It's clear that there are areas that will remain under Israeli control under any agreement, just as it is clear there are areas that will remain under Palestinian control under any agreement," Netanyahu was quoted as telling Mogherini. "Therefore, we can advance toward understandings on which areas we can continue building since it would remain un ... (More on P4)...(26)

Neighbour News

Iran to Receive Russian S-300 Missile "Soon": Abdollahian

TEHRAN - Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian said that Iran has had "successful" negotiations with Russia on delivery of S-300 air defense system in near future, IRIB state TV reported on Tuesday. All issues around the delivery of system to Iran are progressing well and the delivery of S-300 to Iran will happen at the soonest possible opportunity, Amir-Abdollahian said on Monday during a press conference in Russian capital of Moscow. On April 23, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov said that Russia would

not deliver S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems to Iran any time soon although Russia recently lifted a ban on selling the missile. "This is not a matter of the nearest future," Ryabkov said, adding that "I cannot forecast anything regarding the timing (of S-300 delivery), but it is clear that situation has changed after the decision made by the Russian president." In early April, President Vladimir Putin signed a decree to lift the ban on sales of S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems after Iran and six world powers, including Russia, reached a framework accord on parameters of Iran's controversial nuclear program. (Xinhua)

Chinese Vice President Meets Slovakia's Parliament Speaker

BEIJING - Chinese Vice President Li Yuanchao met with Slovakia's Parliament Speaker Peter Pellegrini on Tuesday at the Great Hall of the People in downtown Beijing. Li said there is great opportunity for the development of China-Slovakia ties. He suggested the two sides take care of each other's core interests and major concerns, enhance political trust,

and boost trade and industrial cooperation to make sure the bilateral relationship will grow in a sustained, healthy and stable way. Pellegrini said the Slovak side looks forward to closer practical cooperation with China on infrastructure construction, culture, education and tourism in pursuit of new outcomes for Slovakia-China friendship. (Xinhua)

IFC Helps Tajikistan Expand Ways to Finance Small Businesses

DUSHANBE - The International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private-sector arm of the World Bank, is helping the Tajik government expand access to finance, including using movable assets as loan collateral, the IFC office in the country said Tuesday. The IFC improves access to finance for entrepreneurs and small businesses in order to spur job creation and economic growth. In Tajikistan, many entrepreneurs and small businesses lack traditional collateral, like land. Using movable assets such as equipment or accounts receivables as collateral will help them obtain financing, the office said. Meanwhile, the office noted that the IFC is

supporting the Tajik government's effort to develop the appropriate legal and institutional framework. "There is an urgent need to create a favorable framework for movable collateral lending to increase access to financing," said Valeriy Kim, deputy chairman of the Association of Banks of Tajikistan. The IFC hosted in Dushanbe on Monday a conference followed by a series of training sessions on movable asset-based lending for financial and non-bank financial institutions. The move is part of a World Bank project aimed at strengthening the financial infrastructure in central Asia. The project is funded by the government of Switzerland. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Shows Concerns for Plight of Minority Muslim Community in Myanmar

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan on Tuesday expressed serious concerns for the plight of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and called for peaceful existence of all communities in the country. The UN General Assembly in December last year passed a resolution, showing "serious concern" for the government's treatment of the Rohingyas and said the international community is united in promoting change in Myanmar's treatment of its minorities. "The government of Pakistan has been consistently expressing deep concern at the plight of minority Muslim community in Myanmar. The current displacement of a large number of Muslims, who are adrift on boats in the Indian Ocean, without access to food and drinking water, is worrisome," the Foreign Ministry said. "Pakistan strongly believes that peaceful coexistence of all communities in Myanmar, with provision of

fundamental rights like citizenship, freedom to practice religion, education and security, is essential to peace, progress and prosperity of the country," a statement said. The Foreign Ministry said at the 28th session of Human Rights Council in March 2015 that Pakistan in its capacity as OIC Group Coordinator for Human Rights and Humanitarian Issues in UN, Geneva stressed the need for Myanmar government to grant citizenship and other rights to Rohingya Muslims. Pakistan is also supporting an OIC resolution titled "The Situation of the Muslim Community in Myanmar," which will be presented to the Council of Foreign Ministers on May 27-28, 2015 in Kuwait. It urges the authorities of Myanmar to take all necessary measures to restore stability and launch a comprehensive reconciliation process in Rakhine State. (Xinhua)