

# UN Chief Calls for Ending Illegal Exploitation of Natural Resources

UNITED NATIONS - The UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon Sunday called on the international community to combat environmental crime and end the illegal exploitation of natural resources, both in peacetime and during war. Ban made the appeal in a message on the International Day for Preventing the Exploitation of the Environment in War and Armed Conflict. To achieve the vision of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, "we must recognize that we have a duty of care towards the environment in peacetime and during war," Ban said in the mes-



sage. The UN chief noted that poor governance of the environment and natural resources can contribute to the outbreak of conflict. "Conversely, there are many examples of natural resources serving as cata-

lysts for peaceful cooperation, confidence-building and poverty reduction," he said, adding that how governments manage the natural resources in aftermath of violent conflict, natural resources, such as land, timber, minerals, oil and gas, are often the primary assets that governments need to support livelihoods and economic recovery," he said. The UN is working to establish guidelines that can better support environmental preservation, particularly in protected areas and environmentally sensitive sites, he added. (Xinhua)

## Fake Tweets Endanger Integrity of U.S. Presidential Election: Computer Scientists

LOS ANGELES - U.S. computer scientists say that the presence of software robots can negatively impact online democratic political discussion and endanger the integrity of the presidential election in the country. According to a recent paper published on the journal First Monday, computer scientists, by leveraging bot detection algorithms, have found that a surprisingly high percentage of the U.S. political discussion taking place on Twitter was created by

software robots, or social bots, with the express purpose of distorting the online discussion regarding the elections. "Many recent papers have demonstrated how people's opinions are swayed by what they read online, (and) bots can contribute to that effect," Emilio Ferrara, the author of the study, wrote to Xinhua. A "bot," short for software robot, is a type of automated computer



software. A social bot is programmed to control a social media account. By tweeting, retweeting, sharing contents, making com-

## FBI Chief Says No Change in Conclusion over Hillary Clinton's Email Server Probe

WASHINGTON - Two days before the U.S. Election Day, FBI Director James Comey informed U.S. House members that FBI has not changed its July advice not to charge Democratic presidential nominee Hillary Clinton over her use of personal email server during her stay in the State Department. "Based on our review, we have not changed our conclusions that we expressed in July with respect to Secretary Clinton", Comey said in a letter to several

key members of Congress released on Sunday. The news is immediately seen as a strong boost for Clinton's campaign morale. Comey said the FBI had been working around the clock and finished its review over all new emails from Anthony Weiner's laptop and found nothing to change its position. Weiner is estranged husband of Huma Abedin, one of Clinton's top aides. "We are glad to see he has found - as we were ... (More on P4)...(27)

## Germany Boosts Aid to U.N. in Africa to Deter Europe-Bound Migration

BERLIN - Germany on Monday pledged a 61-million-euro (\$67.44 million) hike in funding for U.N. relief operations in Africa so that fewer of its people undertake perilous odysseys to Europe, which has struggled to absorb an influx of migrants since last year. The extra funding lifts Germany's total contribution to the U.N. refugee agency UNHCR to 298 million euros for 2016, Foreign Ministry officials said. Its total humanitarian budget for 2016 was

1.28 billion euros, up from just 105 million euros in 2012. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier announced the increase during a meeting with U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi in Berlin. Countries targeted by Germany's move are ridden by chronic conflict, disastrous climate change and poverty. Many of their citizens continue to make desperate journeys through ... (More on P4)...(28)

## UN Envoy Urges all Yemeni Parties to Engage in Peace Roadmap

SANAA - Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the United Nations special envoy to Yemen, left Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa on Monday, after four-day official visit to discuss a new UN-sponsored peace roadmap. "I received positive response from Houthi group and their ally of former President Ali Abdullah Saleh's party," Ould Cheikh told reporters upon his departure. "I called all Yemeni parties to engage in the peace roadmap. Political settlement is the only solution to

ended the war," he said. Ould Cheikh gave no further details or outlined the roadmap. But official sources in Houthi group had said that the proposal would sideline internationally recognized President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, dismiss Hadi's deputy Ali Mohsen al-Ahmar, and transfer power to a new consen-



sual vice president and forming a new national unity government, which broadly includes Houthis and Saleh's loyalists. Saleh welcomed the new UN proposal as "a good basis for negotiations," in a post on his official twitter. ... (More on P4)...(29)

## Russia Says Ceasefire in Syria's Aleppo in Place Unless Militants Attack

MOSCOW - The Kremlin said on Monday Russia's air force would stick to the ceasefire in Syria's Aleppo unless militants launch an offensive. "The (Russian) president deems a regime when Russian air forces don't carry out strikes on eastern Aleppo as reasonable if militants don't start combat action," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. (Reuters)

## Israel to Miss French Peace Conference, Wants Direct Talks

JERUSALEM - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu says Israel will not attend a French conference aimed at resolving conflict with the Palestinians. Netanyahu's emissaries stated his position on peace talks to French Envoy Pierre Vimont on Monday. His office said they told Vimont "true progress in the peace process ... will come only through direct negotiations ... any other initiative only pushes the region further away from this process." It said Vimont was told that Israel will not participate in the French conference at the end of the year. U.S. mediated peace talks collapsed in 2014. Netanyahu has repeatedly called on Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas to meet for talks. Abbas has refused unless Israel ends settlement construction and conducts a prisoner release that Netanyahu canceled. The Palestinians have welcomed the French proposal. (AP)

## Negotiations at Critical Stage as Cyprus Talks Kick off: UN Chief

MONT PELERIN, Switzerland - UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said Monday that Greek and Turkish Cypriot leaders had reached a "critical juncture in their talks" as negotiations addressing territorial disputes opened here also on Monday. "The two leaders have expressed their hope that this meeting will pave the way for the last phase of the talks in line with their shared commitment to do their utmost in order to reach a settlement within 2016," Ban told reporters in a press conference. "The prospect of a solution in Cyprus is within their reach. Expectations in both communities are high,"



the diplomat added. The hope is that UN-mediated talks will pave the way towards reunification of the island by the end of the year. Cyprus has been divided in two since 1974 after a Greek coup spurred Turkey to send forces to the northern part of the small Mediterranean state. While the southern Greek Cypriot side is recognised by the international community and is a member of the European Union, only Ankara officially recognises the break-away northern region. ... (More on P4)...(30)

## Syrian Armed Forces Launch Offensive on IS "Capital," Mosul Battle Ahead of Schedule

DAMASCUS/AMMAN - The Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) announced Sunday the start of an offensive on the Islamic State (IS) military group's de facto Syrian capital of al-Raqqa, while the military operation against the IS in Iraq's Mosul is ahead of schedule. "The major battle to liberate al-Raqqa and its surroundings has begun," SDF spokesperson Jihan Sheikh Ahmed told a press conference held in Ain Issa, some 50 km north of the city. Operation "Wrath of the

Euphrates" under the air cover of the U.S.-led anti-terror coalition involves some 30,000 fighters and began on Saturday night, Ahmed said. The SDF forces would first seize areas around al-Raqqa before taking the city, advancing on three fronts -- from Ain Issa and Tal Abyad to the north of al-Raqqa and from the village of Makman to the east. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the SDF has captured six villages in al-Raqqa ... (More on P4)...(31)

## Syrian Kurds Push Ahead in their Offensive toward Raqqa



BEIRUT - Backed by U.S. airstrikes, Kurdish-led Syrian fighters clashed on Monday with Islamic State militants north of the city of Raqqa in Syria as they pushed ahead in their offensive aiming to retake the city that has been the de facto capital of the extremist group since 2014. Members of a coalition of Kurdish and Arab fighters known as the Syria Democratic Forces have been on the offensive in the area since late Saturday, aiming to initially isolate and encircle Raqqa. The United States, France and Britain said they would provide air support for the offensive, which was announced at a news conference on Sunday in Ein Issa, north of Raqqa. But the announcement lacked details on how the SDF, dominated by Kurds, plans to oust the militants from the city, home to nearly 200,000 mostly Sunni Arabs and an estimated 5,000 IS fighters. The battle of Raqqa could be long and costly; IS fighters are expected to fight until the end since its loss could be an existential threat. It would mean the extremist group would have no full control of any large cities in Syria, just as Iraqi forces are pushing forward against IS-held Mosul, Iraq's second largest city. Earlier this year, it took SDF fighters more than two months to capture the Syrian town of Manbij, which is far smaller than Raqqa. (AP)

## Nieghbor News

### Chinese, Russian PM Meeting to Inject Impetus into Bilateral Ties: Ambassador

MOSCOW - The upcoming meeting between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev will give a new impetus to the development of bilateral relations, Chinese ambassador to Russia Li Hui said. "This is a great event for Sino-Russian relations this year," Li said in an interview with Xinhua ahead of the 21st regular meeting between the Chinese and Russian government heads, scheduled for Monday in Russia's second largest city of St. Petersburg. The current China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination is mature and stable, and it has become a model for

relations between major powers, Li said. According to the ambassador, these relations feature mutual respect and equality in the political sphere, as well as comprehensive mutual benefit and win-win cooperation in the economic sphere. They also demonstrate mutual trust and awareness of shared responsibility in the field of security, and see exchange of experience and mutual promotion of development in the cultural sphere, he added. The efforts undertaken by China and Russia have increased bilateral trade by 1.8 percent to 31.72 billion U.S. dollars in the first half of this year, Li said. (Xinhua)

### Iran Says EU Office in Tehran "Unlikely" in Near Future



TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qasemi said Monday that reality did not live up to expectations for opening a European Union (EU) office in Tehran in the near future. "The issue of an EU office in Iran has been mooted by Europeans since a year ago, and we are now studying it. We have no definite time for opening the office," Qasemi said during his weekly press conference. There still is no "precise and comprehensive view" regarding opening such an office in Tehran, but a new round of ne-

gotiations between Iran and the EU will kick off on Wednesday between deputy ministers, he was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency. "Negotiations with the EU are broad, long, time-consuming and complicated, however, we consider the talks per se as positive in finding common grounds for cooperation," he said. Iran's Foreign Ministry has previously proposed plans for "comprehensive negotiations" with the EU which focus on various topics, including human rights issues in Iran. (Xinhua)

### Pakistan Army Conducts Night Field Manoeuvre Exercise

ISLAMABAD - The troops of Pakistan Army conducted night field manoeuvre exercise to validate operational plans besides enhancing preparedness. Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif visited exercise area around Kharian-Gujanwala and witnessed troops engaged in the ongoing Army Field Exercise, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) stated on Monday. The COAS was briefed in detail about objectives and conduct of the Exercise from newly inducted hi-tech net ena-

bled virtual war room. He later also witnessed field manoeuvre at night. Army field exercise is being conducted in Central and Southern Command to validate operational plans and enhance own preparedness. Infantry and Mechanised columns of the central command with their requisite supporting troops and Punjab Rangers are carrying out the exercise. The COAS appreciated an excellent standard of training, professional skills and high morale of the participating troops. (Monitoring Desk)

### China Ratifies Treaties with Tajikistan, Sri Lanka

BEIJING - China's top legislature on Monday approved a China-Tajikistan extradition treaty and a criminal judicial assistance treaty between China and Sri Lanka. The two treaties were reached after friendly negotiations and they accord with the basic principles of Chinese law, China's interests and actual needs, according to a statement from the National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee. The extradition treaty

is aimed to improve extradition cooperation between China and Tajikistan and crack down on transnational crime, said Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin while making an explanation to the NPC Standing Committee. Exchanges between China and Sri Lanka in personnel, trade, culture and tourism have become closer in recent years, and cooperation in judicial assistance needs to be strengthened, Liu said. (Xinhua)