

Russia to Consider Sending Troops to Syria

MOSCOW - Russia will consider sending troops to Syria if it receives a request from Damascus, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday. "If there is a request, then in the framework of bilateral contracts, it will be discussed and considered. For now, it is rather difficult to speak hypothetically," Peskov said. Russia has long been supplying weapons and military equipment to Syria, which Moscow said "is done under the existing bilateral contracts and in full conformity with international law," and is aimed at "ensuring



Syria's defense capabilities" to fight against the Islamic State and other

terrorist groups in the region. Moscow has also sent soldiers and mili-

tary experts to service the military equipment and teach Syrian servicemen

to use it, but it has ruled out their participation in combat operations so far.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry earlier told Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov about Washington's concerns over reports of alleged Russia's military buildup in Syria. The Russian Foreign Ministry said Thursday that Moscow is prepared to provide Washington with information on its military cooperation with Damascus. Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said late Thursday that there are no Russian troops fighting alongside the Syrian army in the war-torn country. (Xinhua)

New Zealand, Australia DMs Committed to Iraq Training Mission

WELLINGTON - The Defense Ministers (DM) of New Zealand and Australia reaffirmed their joint military commitment to Iraq at an annual meeting in Auckland Friday. New Zealand Defense Minister Gerry Brownlee and his Australian counterpart Kevin Andrews said the bilateral defense relationship remained as important as ever, including in the joint mission to train Iraqi security forces in the fight against Da'esh (Islamic State). "Given the current challenging international environment, we are firm in our agreement that the joint Australian

and New Zealand contributions to the Building Partner Capacity (BPC) mission in Iraq are critical for restoring Iraqi military capability and supporting longer term stability in Iraq," Andrews said in a joint statement issued after the meeting. "We highly value New Zealand's partnership on the BPC mission and we will continue to work closely as we review our respective contributions and mission milestones." They also discussed security issues in the Asia-Pacific region, noting joint efforts alongside other countries to sup... (More on P4)...(24)

U.S. Sees Military Talks with Russia on Syria as Important Next Step

LONDON - U.S. President Barack Obama believes that holding military talks with Russia on Syria is an important next step and hopes they will take place very shortly, Secretary of State John Kerry said on Friday.

Russia, which is building up a military presence in Syria, was quick to say that Moscow was also ready for talks with the United States.

At a meeting in London with United Arab Emirates Foreign Minister Abdullah bin Zayed, Kerry said the U.S. president hoped that talks would "help define some of the different options available

to us as we consider next steps in Syria". "Our focus remains on destroying ISIL (Islamic State militants) and also on a political settlement with respect to Syria, which we believe cannot be achieved with the long-term presence of (President Bashar al-) Assad," Kerry told reporters. "We're looking for ways in which to find a common ground." The United States opposes Russia's support for Assad, and the Pentagon last year cut off high-level discussions with Moscow after its annexation of Crimea and intervention in Ukraine. But Russia's buildup at Syria's Latakia airbase



raises the possibility of air combat missions in Syrian airspace. Heavy Russian equipment, including tanks, helicopters and naval infantry forces, have been moved to Latakia, U.S. officials say. Earlier, a Syrian military source said that troops had started to use new types of air and ground weapons supplied by Russia. Kerry said the United States wanted to find "a diplomatic way forward". "Everybody is seized by the urgency. We have been all along but the migration levels and continued destruction, the danger of potential augmentation by any unilateral moves puts a high premium on diplomacy at this moment," he added. (Reuters)

EU Reaffirms Commitments to Scaling up Mobilization of Climate Finance

BRUSSELS - The European Union (EU) environment ministers reaffirmed on Friday that the EU and its member states have and remain committed to scaling up the mobilization of climate finance in the context of meaningful mitigation actions and transparency of implementation, before December's United Nations climate conference in Paris. The com-

mitments were aimed to contribute their share of developed countries' goal to jointly mobilize 100 billion U.S. dollars per year by 2020 from a wide variety of sources public and private, bilateral and multilateral, including alternative sources of finance. The EU reiterated its strong support for the Green Climate Fund, and looked forward to early allocation of initial fund-

ing. It also underlined that the Paris Agreement's provisions on climate finance need to be dynamic, and able to adapt to changing realities and needs by reflecting all parties' evolving capabilities and responsibilities. In fact, developed countries continued to fail to clarify how they would meet their promises made in 2009 to provide developing countries 100

billion dollars per year by 2020, one of the main challenges facing Paris climate talks. French President Francois Hollande warned early September there were real risks of stakeholders not reaching a global and restrictive accord on climate change, stressing "there will be no agreement if there is no firm commitment on finance. (Xinhua)

UN's New Sustainable Development Goals Rest on Climate Action: UN Official

UNITED NATIONS - An ambitious climate change agreement is needed if UN member states hope to meet the Sustainable Development Goals by the year 2030, the UN's most senior climate change official told press here Thursday. "Without an ambitious climate agreement we will not be able to reach the sustainable development goals," said Janos Pasztor, UN

assistant secretary-general on climate change. The Sustainable Development Goals are a set of 17 economic, social and environmental goals covering everything from hunger to gender equality. World leaders are expected to adopt the goals unanimously at a summit to take place here from Sept. 25 to 27. Likewise, Pasztor added, the world will not... (More on P4)...(25)

Russia Eyes Deeper Aerospace Cooperation with China



BEIJING - Russian firms and research institutions at the Aviation Expo in Beijing were keen to work more closely with China on aerospace projects. An agreement will be signed between the two governments by the end of this year on the development of long-range wide-bodied airliners, said Yury Slyusar, president of the United Aircraft Corporation (UAC), Russia's largest aircraft maker. The Russian company plans to sell 100 aircraft in China and Southeast Asia in the next three years. Russia will most likely work with China on aero-engines, said Vladimir Palkin, assistant of general director with Central Institute of Aviation Motors, Russia's only research body for on aviation motors. Both countries need to develop aero-engines to fill gaps in their aviation industry, Palkin said. One of the exhibitors wants to sell its heavy rocket engines in China. "If the two governments come to an agreement, our company will be a good partner, since Russian engines lead the world in efficiency, reliability and environmental protection," said Vladimir Sudakov, information department chief with NPO Energomash. Russia is the world's top nation in spacecraft launches. According to an agreement signed in May, China and Russia will work closely together in aviation. (Xinhua)

Indian PM Takes Dig at Main Opposition over Poverty Eradication

NEW DELHI - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi Friday took a dig at the country's main opposition Congress party over poverty eradication and said education is the best way to fight the social evil. "For years we have only heard the slogan of poverty eradication. It is a tradition to talk about the welfare of the poor day and night. But there has been very little change in the lives of the poor," Modi said, but stopping short of naming the Congress party.

The prime minister, addressing a rally at his parliamentary constituency of Varanasi in the northern state of Ut-

tar Pradesh, said more efforts are needed to eradicate poverty in the country. "Our efforts to remove poverty over the years have not yielded the results we desired. The speed (of removing poverty) needs to improve. What they (previous governments) have not done in 50 years, I will do in 50 months. With technology, poor can earn more," he said. Modi also stressed on education, saying, "It's the best way to fight poverty." "I urge all of you (in this gathering), whatever circumstances are, ensure that your children receive education. Education is the best (and even the least expensive) way to fight poverty," he said. (Xinhua)

Australian Chief of Army Makes Introductory Visit to Singapore

SINGAPORE - Australia's Chief of Army Angus Campbell met with Singapore's Minister for Defence Ng Eng Hen at the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) on Friday during his introductory visit to the city state, according to MINDEF. Lieutenant General Campbell is on a three-day visit to Singapore starting from Thursday to Saturday. He also met with Singapore's Chief of Defence Force Major-General Perry Lim and

Chief of Army Brigadier-General Melvyn Ong, after inspecting a guard of honor at MINDEF. Campbell's visit underscores the close and long-standing defence relations between Singapore and Australia, said MINDEF. The two armies, which share a history of operational cooperation, interact regularly through bilateral training exercises, professional exchanges, and cross-attendance of professional courses. MINDEF said both armies will be working together... (More on P4)...(26)

Political Motives to Blame for Regional Divides: Zarif

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says "political motives" have triggered divisions in several crisis-hit countries in the Middle East. He made the comments in a Wednesday visit to Bangladesh, where he met with a number of top officials, including President Abdul Hamid, Premier Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister Abul Hassan Mahmud Ali.

"What has created divisions in Yemen, Syria and Iraq is not sectarianism, but political motives," Zarif said in his meeting with the Bangladeshi prime minister.

Iraq and Syria have been engaged in battles with the Daesh (ISIL) terrorist group, which has committed gross human rights violations in the areas under its control in the two Arab countries. Saudi Arabia has also been launching airstrikes against Yemen over the past several months in a bid to undermine the Houthi-Ansarullah movement and restore power to the fugitive former Yemeni President AbdRabbuh Mansur Hadi, a staunch ally of Riyadh. In Bangladesh,

Zarif also hailed the friendly relationship between Sunni and Shia Muslims in the South Asian country as an ideal example. The top Iranian diplomat further expressed the Islamic Republic's readiness to enhance relations with Bangladesh in all areas and called for the removal of obstacles in the way of mutual trade. Elsewhere in his remarks, Zarif described the Iranian energy sector as a "trustworthy partner" for the Southeast Asian country. (PressTV)

Neighbour News

China Appreciates U.S. Repatriation of Corruption Fugitive

BEIJING - A Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Friday said that the repatriation of Yang Jinjun, one of China's most wanted economic fugitives, showed progress in China-U.S. anti-graft cooperation. "China appreciates the U.S. cooperation in this [investigation]," spokesperson Hong Lei told a regular press briefing. Yang, suspected of corruption and bribery, is the first of the 100 persons on the "red notice" to be repatriated to China from the U.S. since China's "Sky Net" operation was launched in April. The Sky Net anti-graft operation named 100 economic crime suspects who were evading arrest by hiding abroad. The repatriation

of Yang shows that China's operation is gaining more and more support from the international community, said Hong. It also shows that China will do everything in its power to bring these people to justice, he added. Yang's forced repatriation has laid the ground work for future U.S.-China cooperation in this regard, said Hong. The U.S. is a popular destination for Chinese fleeing investigation, as the two countries do not have an extradition treaty.

However, Hong said there had been a move in recent years for law enforcement and judicial departments to coordinate on cross-border corruption cases. (Xinhua)

Riyadh Responsible for Mecca Crane Collapse

TEHRAN - Iran has reiterated that the Saudi government is responsible for the recent construction crane crash incident in the holy city of Mecca that claimed the lives of over 100 pilgrims. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Arab and African Affairs Hossein Amir-Abdollahian on Friday criticized the negligence on the part of relevant Saudi authorities and their failure to ensure the necessary protection for pilgrims. The construction crane fell on the city's Grand Mosque in early September, killing nearly 110 people and injuring about 400 more. According to the figures released by Iran's Hajj and

Pilgrimage Organization, 11 Iranian pilgrims were among the deceased and 32 of the injured were also Iranian nationals. Amir-Abdollahian offered his condolences to the families of victims, saying the bodies of seven of the Iranian pilgrims are to be transferred to the country later on Friday.

He said Iran will continue to send pilgrims to Saudi Arabia on Umrah (lesser pilgrimage) only if the safety and security of Iranian pilgrims are guaranteed and the two Saudi officers who abused two Iranian pilgrims in the city of Jeddah earlier this year are brought to justice. (PressTV)

UK Provides Disaster Relief to Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - The abnormally hot climatic temperature across Tajikistan during this summer resulted in a sequence of natural disasters. The eastern part of the country, the Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO), was among the hardest hit regions. In the second half of July and the beginning of August, the rapid melting of glaciers coupled with precipitation in the highlands of GBAO triggered mudflows, landslides and floods that claimed human lives, destroyed over one hundred residential buildings, crippled vital public and commercial infrastructure and substantially reduced the coping capacity of over 1,000 affected people. UK Embassy in Dushanbe says UK Government

through Department for International Development (DFID) provides £140,000 to assist the population affected as a result of major mudflows and floods that occurred in several districts of Gorno-Badakhshan Autonomous Oblast (GBAO), Tajikistan. In the country level DFID provides £95,000 to Focus Humanitarian Assistance (FOCUS), an affiliate of the Aga Khan Development Network. This support contributes to the replenishment of emergency stockpiles, a risk assessment of further floods and for channel construction ensuring safe water management. The proposed humanitarian relief will allow covering 100 families (approximately 600 individuals). (Asia-Plus)

US Drone Strike Kills Six in South Waziristan Agency

ISLAMABAD - At least six suspected terrorists were killed in a United States (US) drone strike in South Waziristan Agency (SWA) on Friday. Sources said two missiles were fired from the Un-manned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), killing at least six suspected militants and destroying their hideout in the Sarokai tehsil of SWA. Those killed in the strike are yet to be identified. South Waziristan is among Pakistan's seven tribal districts near the Afghan border which are rife with home-grown insurgents and are alleged to be strongholds of Taliban and Al Qaeda operatives, among others. Based

on averages within the ranges provided by the New America Foundation, the Long War Journal and the Bureau of Investigative Journalism, there have been an estimated 522 US targeted attacks in Pakistan, Yemen and Somalia since Sept 11, 2001, which have killed 3,852 people, of whom 476 were civilians. In March, Pakistan successfully tested its first indigenous armed drone named Burraq, and its laser guided missile named Barq. The drone had the ability to fly in all types of weather conditions and strike its targets with pinpoint accuracy. (Agencies)