



ice hockey Page 15



Page 9

CENTCOM CHIEF: N-FREE IRAN HELPS REGIONAL SECURITY

White House pumps potential from deal



In this photo released by the official Facebook page of the Syrian Presidency, Syrian President Bashar Assad, left, walks next to Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, vice president and prime minister of the UAE and the Ruler of Dubai, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, March 18. (AP)

Assad in UAE

UAE Vice President and Prime Minister, and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum met visiting Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad at Al Marmoom Rest House in Dubai on Friday.

Welcoming President Bashar's visit, Sheikh Mohammed expressed sincere wishes for peace, security, stability and prosperity to prevail in sisterly Syria and the entire region, according to UAE news agency (WAM).

The meeting dealt with the overall relations between the two countries and the prospects of expanding cooperation in a way that fulfills the aspirations of the two brotherly peoples, achieves their comprehensive development goals, and enhances the chances of peace and stability in Syria and the region in general.

The two sides also reviewed the current situation in Syria, as well as various developments on the Arab and international scene, and all topics of common interest. (KUNA)

NewsWatch

GENEVA: Kuwait has expressed its grave concern about the fate of all those missing as a result of the conflict in Syria.

This was in a speech delivered by Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN and Other International Organizations in Geneva Ambassador **Jamal Al-Ghunaim**, before the 49th session of the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), which runs from Feb 28 to April one.

Under international law and in line with UN Security Council (UNSC) Resolution 2474, parties to armed conflict bear the primary responsibility to take all possible measures to determine the fate of people reported missing as a result of hostilities, to communicate with families during the search process, Al-Ghunaim added.

Kuwait urges the UN Secretary General to put an end to the practice of arbitrary detention as well as enforced disappearance of tens of thousands of people, to respond to the urgent calls of families across Syria who seek to reveal the fate and whereabouts of the missing, he confirmed. (KUNA)

DUBAI: The Saudi-based Gulf Cooperation Council on Thursday invited warring sides in Yemen for talks aimed at ending the civil war in the Arab world's most impoverished country, a conflict now in its eighth year.

However, Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have already rejected Riyadh — the Saudi capital where the GCC is headquartered — as venue for talks. A Saudi-led coalition has been at war in Yemen since 2015, seeking to restore the internationally recognized government to power. The Saudis have been trying to oust the Houthis from key territories, such as the capital of Sanaa, which the rebels control.

The Houthis said they would not attend talks in Riyadh, saying Saudi Arabia cannot be a mediator or host since it's a party in the war. (AP)

WASHINGTON: A U.S. Navy veteran who was jailed in Iran for nearly two years sued the Iranian government on Thursday for \$1 billion, alleging that he was kidnapped, held hostage and tortured.

The federal lawsuit describes in unsparring detail the "prolonged and continuous" abuse that **Michael White** says he suffered behind bars, including being beaten and punched, whipped on his feet, deprived of food and drink, and pressured to falsely confess that he was a spy for the U.S. government. (AP)

"Mr. White endured this trauma for nearly two years, never knowing if or when he would be released and reunited with his family, repeatedly promised that his conditions would improve soon, only to be crushed psychologically when they did not," the lawsuit states. (AP)

Turkish bridge links Europe and Asia

ANKARA, March 19, (AP): The president of Turkey, South Korea's prime minister and other officials inaugurated a massive suspension bridge Friday over the Dardanelles Strait that connects the European and Asian shores of the key waterway.

With a 2,023-meter (6,637 feet) span between its towers, the "1915 Canakkale Bridge" becomes the world's longest suspension bridge, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said.

It connects the town of Gelibolu, located in the European side of Turkey's northwestern province of Canakkale, with the town of Lapseki on the Asian side. The bridge allows travelers to cross the Dardanelles - which connects the Aegean Sea with the Sea of Marmara - in just six minutes compared to the previous 1-1/2 hours by ferry, the president said.

"Turkey has overtaken Japan, which has the longest bridge in the world in terms of the midspan, and has taken the first place," Erdogan said during the inauguration ceremony.

The inauguration was timed to coincide with the 107th anniversary of Turkey's World War I naval victory over a joint British and French fleet attacking the Dardanelles. The failure of the naval campaign led to the ill-fated 1915 landings on the Gallipoli peninsula by the allies led by Britain and France along with troops from Australia and New Zealand.

"The 1915 Canakkale Bridge will



Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan poses for photos in front of the 1915 Canakkale Bridge, in Canakkale, western Turkey, March 18. The bridge links the Asian side of Turkey with European side over Dardanelles Strait. South Korean Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum also attended the opening ceremony. (AP)

leave this history of collision and conflict behind and will be a bridge between East and West, starting a new era of peace and prosperity." South Korean Prime Minister Kim Boo-kyum said during the ceremony, in reference to the Canakkale region's historic battlefields.

The bridge, which was built by a consortium of Turkish and South Korean compa-

nies, will also strengthen the bonds between Turkey and South Korea, Kim said.

The "1915 Canakkale Bridge" cost 2.5 billion euros (\$2.7 billion) to build but Turkey will save 415 million euros (\$458 million) per year from a reduction of fuel consumption and carbon emissions, Erdogan said. He announced the bridge's toll will be 200 Turkish lira (\$13.60).

Action taken over pricing

KUWAIT CITY, March 19: As part of its proactive measures aimed at curbing price hikes, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry is in the process of issuing ministerial decisions prohibiting the export and re-export of a number of basic and primary commodities that the Kuwaiti market needs at the current stage, especially in light of the Russian-Ukrainian war, which has caused a hike in the prices of many commodities and raw materials globally, reports Al-Anba daily.

According to reliable sources, the Minister of Commerce and Industry Fahad Al-Shariaan is in the process of issuing decisions to ban the export and re-export of vegetable oils in order to avoid the expected shortage of this product globally due to the current crisis in global food supply chains.

Another item covered by the decisions is the scrap needed by the iron factories in Kuwait.

EU optimistic

WASHINGTON, March 19, (Agencies): Reaching a deal with Iran on its nuclear program would be good for the US national security and the global security, the White House has stated.

"If we can achieve a diplomatic solution where we prevent Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon, despite the efforts by former President Trump to pull us out of the deal, allowing Iran to move closer to acquiring a nuclear weapon, that would be good for our national security and good for global security around the world," the White House Spokesperson Jen Psaki said in a press briefing.

She vowed that the US would carefully consider the facts and circumstances of any US return to the nuclear deal to determine the legal implications.

"We're committed to ensuring the requirements are satisfied, so certainly we would abide by that," she affirmed.

Commander of the US Central Command (CENTCOM) Gen. Frank McKenzie said his country is willing to work with Iran provided that the latter is not nuclear-armed.

Stability

"Iran continues to be "the greatest threat to regional security and stability," he told reporters at CENTCOM HQ in MacDill Air Force Base Tampa, Florida.

"They (the Iranians) furnish weapons, support and direction to proxies across the region who engage in acts of terror and undermine local governments, all advancing Iranian interests," he affirmed.

"Iran's ballistic missile threat has continued to advance and expand with greater ranges and accuracy.

"CENTCOM has continued to watch Iran and its proxies as we act as a deterrent to Iranian attacks on US interests," Gen. McKenzie noted, adding, "The number one objective of the United States with regard to Iran is that Iran not possess a nuclear weapon."

"So I think any solution that closes that path to them contributes to regional security, because we'd all like to work with an Iran that is not a nuclear-armed Iran," he stated, noting, "The best way to get to there is probably through a negotiated agreement."

"Now, that does not solve Iranian proxies. It doesn't solve the compelling problem of Iranian ballistic missiles, land attack cruise missiles and small unmanned aerial vehicles, and we need to recognize that. That's a separate problem," he explained.

"But I do think having the ability to take the nuclear option off the table has to contribute to regional security," he affirmed.

Mutually

"But I think anything that - where Iran agrees not to possess a nuclear weapon that is verifiable through a process that would be jointly and mutually agreed upon, I think that's a good thing.

"There are other significant problems in the theater that agreement will not address," Gen. McKenzie said adding, "We're going to need to be able to address those, preferably through negotiations but also through deterrence.

The European Union (EU) has expressed optimism that the talks in Vienna on the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), or the Iran nuclear deal, will lead to positive results.

"We are optimistic. If we were not optimistic we would abandon the efforts," EU lead spokesperson for foreign affairs and security policy, Peter Stano, told a news conference in Brussels today.

He noted that EU High Representative Josep Borrell as the coordinator of JCPOA is investing a lot of time together with his team to get the process moving towards concrete results which means bringing the JCPOA back to its full delivery.

"The efforts are still ongoing. Last Friday we announced a pause which was necessary in order to clarify issues which were not related to the deal," he said.



This satellite image provided by Maxar Technologies on Friday, March 18, 2022 shows damaged high rise apartment buildings in Chernihiv, Ukraine. (AP)

Moscow unleashes supersonic missiles

Russian strikes hit Ukrainian capital

LVIV, Ukraine, March 19, (Agencies): Russian forces pressed their assault on Ukrainian cities Friday, with new missile strikes and shelling on the capital Kyiv and the outskirts of the western city of Lviv, as world leaders pushed for an investigation of the Kremlin's repeated attacks on civilian targets, including schools, hospitals and residential areas.

The early morning barrage of missiles on Lviv's edge was the closest strike yet to the center of the city, which has become a crossroads for people fleeing from other parts of Ukraine and for others entering to deliver aid or fight.

In city after city around Ukraine, hospitals, schools and buildings where people sought safety have been attacked. Rescue workers were still searching for survivors in the ruins of a theater that served as a shelter when it was blasted by a Russian airstrike Wednesday in the besieged southern city of Mariupol.

Ludmyla Denisova, Ukrainian parliament's human rights commissioner, said Friday that 130 people had survived the theater bombing.

Supersonic missiles

Russian forces have fired supersonic missiles to destroy Ukrainian military targets, the Russian Ministry of Defense declared on Saturday.

The ministry spokesperson, Igor Konashenkov, said in a statement that the forces unleashed the missiles to demolish underground depots containing missiles and bombs in the region of Ivano-Frankivsk in western Ukraine.

The forces have also employed Bastion missiles for hitting radars and eavesdropping systems in Odessa, he said, adding that Russian jet fighters bombed and destroyed, over past 24 hours, 69 Ukrainian military targets including four command centers, four missile S-300 and Buk-M systems, 12 warehouses containing missiles and artillery shells, 43 troop concentration locations, other military hardware and 12 drones.

The Russian forces, since kickoff of the "special military operation" in Ukraine, has destroyed 1,438 tanks, 196 pilotless aircraft, 145 rocket launchers and 1,237 military vehicles.

Russians push deeper

Russian forces pushed deeper into Ukraine's besieged and battered port city of Mariupol on Saturday, where heavy fighting shut down a major steel plant and

local authorities pleaded for more Western help.

The fall of Mariupol, the scene of some of the war's worst suffering, would mark a major battlefield advance for the Russians, who are largely bogged down outside major cities more than three weeks into the biggest land invasion in Europe since World War II.

"Children, elderly people are dying. The city is destroyed and it is wiped off the face of the earth," Mariupol police officer Michail Vershnin said from a rubble-strewn street in a video addressed to Western leaders that was authenticated by The Associated Press.

Russian forces have already cut the city off from the Sea of Azov, and its fall would link Crimea, which Russia annexed in 2014, to territories controlled by Moscow-backed separatists in the east. It would mark a rare advance in the face of fierce Ukrainian resistance that has dashed Russia's hopes for a quick victory and galvanized the West.

Ukrainian and Russian forces battled over the Azovstal steel plant in Mariupol, Vadym Denysenko, adviser to Ukraine's interior minister, said Saturday. "One of the largest metallurgical plants in Europe is actually being destroyed," Denysenko said in televised remarks.

Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to Ukraine's president, said the nearest forces that could assist Mariupol's defenders were already struggling against "the overwhelming force of the enemy" or at least 100 kilometers (60 miles) away. "There is currently no military solution to Mariupol," he said late Friday. "That is not only my opinion, that is the opinion of the military."

Zelenskyy defiant

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has remained defiant, appearing in a video early Saturday shot on the streets of the capital, Kyiv, to denounce a huge Friday rally in Moscow that Russian President Vladimir Putin attended.

Zelenskyy said Russia is trying to starve Ukraine's cities into submission but warned that continuing the invasion would exact a heavy toll on Russia. He also repeated his call for Putin to meet with him to prevent more bloodshed.

"The time has come to restore territorial integrity and justice for Ukraine. Otherwise, Russia's costs will be so high that you will not be able to rise again for several generations," he said.

Putin lavished praise on his country's military during the rally, which took place on the anniversary of Rus-

sia's 2014 annexation of Crimea. The event included patriotic songs such as "Made in the U.S.S.R.," with its opening line of "Ukraine and Crimea, Belarus and Moldova, it's all my country."

"We have not had unity like this for a long time," Putin told the cheering crowd.

The rally took place as Russia has faced heavier-than-expected losses on the battlefield and increasingly authoritarian rule at home, where Russian police have detained thousands of antiwar protesters.

Estimates of Russian deaths vary widely, but even conservative figures are in the low thousands. Russia had 64 deaths in five days of fighting during its 2008 war with Georgia. It lost about 15,000 in Afghanistan over 10 years, and more than 11,000 over years of fighting in Chechnya.

Police of the Kyiv region said seven people were killed and five were wounded in a mortar attack on Friday in Makariv, a town roughly 50 kilometers (30 miles) west of the capital. They said the attack destroyed homes and damaged other buildings.

Humanitarian corridors

Ukrainian and Russian officials agreed to establish 10 humanitarian corridors for bringing aid in and residents out of besieged cities - one from Mariupol and several around Kyiv and in the eastern Luhansk region, Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Iryna Vereshchuk said Saturday.

She also announced plans to deliver humanitarian aid to the southern city of Kherson, which Russia seized early in the war. Ukraine and Russia have held several rounds of negotiations aimed at ending the conflict but remain divided over several issues, with Russia pressing for its neighbor's demilitarization and Kyiv demanding security guarantees.

In a call with German Chancellor Olaf Scholz on Friday, Putin said Ukraine was trying to "drag the negotiations by making a series of new, unrealistic proposals," according to the Kremlin. British Foreign Secretary Liz Truss, meanwhile, accused Putin of using the talks as a "smokescreen" while his forces regroup. "We don't see any serious withdrawal of Russian troops or any serious proposals on the table," she told the Times of London.

The British Department of Defense said in its latest intelligence assessment that the Kremlin "has been surprised by the scale and ferocity of Ukrainian resistance" and "is now pursuing a strategy of attrition" that is likely to involve indiscriminate attacks.