

BAGHDAD (Dispatches) – At least two paramilitary Hashd al-Shaabi fighters were martyred and another wounded Sunday in a clash with Daesh terrorists in Iraq's eastern province of Diyala, a provincial security source said.

The clash erupted during an operation carried out by a Hashd al-Shaabi brigade to hunt down Daesh terrorists and destroy their hideouts in rugged areas in Diyala's provincial capital Baquba, some 65 km northeast of Baghdad, Issa Hamid, from the provincial operations command, told Xinhua.

I appreciate an old man's cautious opinion more than the valor of a young man. I wonder at a man who loses hope of salvation when the door of repentance is open for him.

Amir al-Momeneen Ali (AS)

Saudi-Led Airstrikes Pound Yemeni Capital

20,000 People Protest in Beirut Amid Arab League Summit



Yemenis inspect the damage at the Queen Arwa University following a Saudi airstrike in the capital, Sanaa.

SANAA (Dispatches) – The Saudi-led Arab coalition has conducted a series of airstrikes in the Yemeni capital of Sanaa, local media report.

A spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition claimed its warplanes attacked seven military facilities used for drone operations in Sanaa, which is held by rival Houthi fighters. Medical workers and residents told

Reuters at least two civilians were killed, and others injured, and that the raids also damaged homes.

Al-Masirah TV said on Sunday that the coalition had conducted 24 air strikes on Sanaa since Saturday evening, including four on the air base. It said a plastics factory was also hit, causing a large fire. Footage showed a large crater next

to the factory, and damaged homes nearby.

“The raids were very violent, the likes of which we have not seen for a year,” Sanaa resident Arwa Abdul Karim told Reuters. “The house shook so much we thought it would fall on our heads.”

Yemen's Human Rights Ministry condemned the stepped-up attacks on

the capital, saying the raids came at a time when the city was hosting many people, who have fled the Saudi-led strikes in other parts of the country.

It said the “escalation” was in violation of international human rights law, calling on the United Nations to take a position and condemn the bombings.

Yemen's popular Houthi Ansarullah movement, which has been defending the country against the Riyadh-led invaders, described the aerial attacks as a joint “U.S.-Saudi” act of aggression.

“The U.S. has directed and prepared for these operations in Sana'a and other areas,” said Ali al-Quhoom, a member of Ansarullah's Political Bureau.

The coalition has killed tens of thousands in the Arab world's poorest country, trying unsuccessfully to restore power to Yemen's former Riyadh-allied government.

The U.S. has been lending generous arms and logistical support to the coalition, turning a deaf ear to numerous calls by international rights groups to drop that policy.

This latest escalation could jeopardize the ongoing United Nations peace efforts that brought the two sides together in Sweden for the first time last year, where they reached an agreement on a truce in the lifeline port city of Hudaydah.



About 20,000 people participated in mass rallies organized by the Lebanese Communist Party in Beirut on Sunday to protest the authorities' economic policy amid the Arab League Economic and Social Development Summit.

BEIRUT (Dispatches) – About 20,000 people participated in mass rallies organized by the Lebanese Communist Party in Beirut on Sunday to protest the authorities' economic policy amid the Arab League Economic and Social Development Summit.

“We organized this demonstration before the Arab League summit [was scheduled], but when the date of the summit was announced and it coincided with the rally, everything turned out even better. Our demonstration has become a message to those [Arab League] leaders who are now meeting [at the forum], because in many Arab countries, the socio-economic situation is even worse than in Lebanon, and people are taking to the streets [there],” a member of the communist party's political bureau told Sputnik.

According to the organizers, the number of demonstrators had surpassed their expectations, with several non-governmental organizations and other political forces joining the protests as well.

The protesters, notably, accused the country's authorities of deliberately causing a financial crisis in Lebanon, also allowing unjustified price hikes and low wages.

The Arab League summit began in Beirut on Thursday with a session of a committee of specialized del-

egations. Almost all leaders of the league member-states, except for the Mauritanian president and the Qatari emir, refused to participate in the event, sending other high-level representatives instead.

Lebanese President Michel Aoun urged world powers on Sunday to step up efforts for Syrian refugees to return home, regardless of any political solution to the war there.

Aoun told an Arab economic summit in Beirut that Lebanon had suggested solutions for safe returns for the meeting to agree.

Since conflict broke out in Syria in 2011, more than 1 million people have fled across the border to Lebanon, where aid agencies say most live in extreme poverty.

The United Nations says it is not yet safe to return.

Lebanese officials have called for refugees to go home after Syria's President Bashar al-Assad reclaimed most of the country with Russian and Iranian help.

Divisions among Arab states over Syria, and internal disputes in Lebanon, have undermined the summit before it began, with several leaders staying away.

A key point of contention has been whether to bring Syria back into the Arab League, more than seven years after its membership was suspended

Afghan Leader Ghani Officially Registered as Presidential Candidate

KABUL (Dispatches) – Incumbent Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced on Sunday that he had officially registered as a candidate for the upcoming presidential election.

“I am honored to register my nomination alongside @AmrullahSaleh2 & @VPdanesh for July elections. As a team of state builders, our focus will remain to be on building a strong, self-reliant state. In that effort, we won't compromise the state's legitimacy in service to our people,” Ghani said via his official Twitter feed.

Amrullah Saleh, who has been serving as the country's interior minister for around a month, resigned on Saturday to run alongside Ghani as the candidate for the first vice president. Sarwar

Danesh, in turn, will seek re-election as the country's second vice president.

At least ten other politicians have registered for the race so far, according to local media.

At the end of last year, the Afghan Independent Election Commission said that the election would be held on July 20, three months later than initially planned. Sunday marked the last day when candidates could enter the presidential race.

Former Afghan prime minister, warlord Gulbuddin Hekmatyar on Saturday announced that he will run in the country's presidential elections in July 2019, Afghanistan's ITV channel reported.

The channel reported, citing Hekmatyar, that the former insurgent would run for the presidency

as an independent candidate.

Hekmatyar noted that the current Afghan government was a reason for the continuing war in the country, and the system must be changed in a peaceful way.

Announcing his candidacy, Hekmatyar pledged to restore peace and security and said the current government had failed to end the war with the Taliban.

“Our country's situation requires a powerful central government lead by an elected president supported by the majority of people,” he told a news conference in Kabul.

On December 30, the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan announced that the country's presidential election, initially scheduled for April 20, would be pushed back to July 20

due to the problems the country faced during the parliamentary elections in October 2018 and the preparation of talks on a peace agreement with the Taliban.

In September 2016, the Afghan government signed a peace agreement with Hekmatyar's Hezb-e Islam faction, which has waged a violent insurgency against the government for the past 15 years. Since 2001 Hezb-e Islami has launched attacks on both U.S. and Afghan forces.

Hekmatyar headed a notorious opposition faction against the Afghan government during the 1979-1989 war. He served as prime minister in the mujahideen government when another war raged from 1992 to 1996, before defecting to help the Taliban take over the country.

Memos Show:

Zionist Regime Began Nuclear Weapons Program Without Telling Knesset

WEST BANK (Dispatches) – The Zionist regime began work on the Dimona nuclear reactor in 1958 without informing members of the cabinet or the regime's parliament, Israeli historian and Haaretz contributor Adam Raz revealed, citing a trove of primary documents he reportedly received from a secret source at an academic event.

The papers, which include notes, memorandums, drafts and summaries by senior regime officials of the time, including Israel Galili, an adviser to prime ministers Levi Eshkol and Golda Meir, Eshkol himself, cabinet member Yigal Allon and IDF commander Moshe Dayan, military chief-turned prime minister Shimon

Peres, and senior diplomat Abba Eban, helped Raz piece together important details about the clandestine project.

The papers revealed that Galili had several concerns about the nuclear program, known as “the enterprise,” including its potential to cause then-Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser to attack the regime to try to take out a “justified target.” Finally, he feared that the program could incite Cairo to start work on its own nuclear program.

The documents also indicated that the cost of the Dimona reactor, estimated at about \$53 million by Peres in April 1962, was revised upwards by Alon to “three times” the \$60 million

discussed by the cabinet in 1964. An undated note, presumably written sometime between 1963 and 1966, indicated that the real cost may have been as much as \$340 million (about \$2.75 billion in present day dollars, accounting for inflation).

“If it were known in advance that it would cost \$340 million – would we have voted for Dimona?” the note, written by Eban to Galili, reads.

The documents showed that after Eshkol succeeded David Ben-Gurion as prime minister in 1963, the new PM's foreign minister, Golda Meir, proposed admitting the existence of the program in a bid to get support from America's Jews.

Severe Fuel Shortage Leads to Closure of Hospitals in Gaza

GAZA STRIP (Dispatches) – Palestinian health officials in Gaza Sunday warned of an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe after five major hospitals in the Gaza Strip stopped working due to a severe shortage of fuel.

Mohamad Abu Selmeya, director of Al-Rantisi Children's Hospital for cancer patients in Gaza, told a news conference that his hospital suffers from a severe fuel shortage that disabled the hospital to generate the electricity.

“This would certainly have a disastrous impact on the health services that we provide to the patients,” said Abu Selmeya.

The shortage of electricity in the Gaza Strip has been ongoing since 2006.

“Stopping medical services in these hospitals deprives thousands of patients of getting daily medical services all over the Gaza Strip,” he added.

The Ministry of Health in Gaza had issued an urgent appeal to all those concerned on “the need to get out of the state of silence

and take serious steps to solve the crisis and protect the rights of treatment of patients” in the Gaza Strip.

The ministry needs about 300,000 liters of fuel per day to be distributed to 13 hospitals and 53 primary care centers in the impoverished enclave.

The ministry announced on Thursday that Beit Hanoun hospital, which provides services to some 340,000 Palestinians in northern Gaza Strip, has stopped providing services due to the acute fuel crisis.

The Gaza Strip suffers from a deficit in its electricity supply needs, forcing the Gaza Electricity Distribution Company to rely on a schedule of eight hours of electricity.

The Zionist regime has imposed a tight blockade on the Gaza Strip, home to nearly 2 million people since mid-2007 after Hamas violent takeover of the enclave following rounds of internal fighting with forces loyal to the Palestinian Authority.