

► US attempt to prevent changes in Middle East to fail: analyst

Reopening of Iran embassy in Saudi Arabia marks a milestone

By GT staff reporters

The reopening of the Iran Embassy in Saudi Arabia, which marked a milestone accomplishment for the two countries' reconciliation brokered by China, may lead to solutions of a series of rifts in the region and improve the geopolitical environment in the Middle East, Chinese analysts said on Wednesday.

The event, which coincides with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken's visit to Saudi Arabia on the same day to steady bilateral relations and fend off China's increasing influence, demonstrates that the new view on security proposed by China and other developing countries is growing popular among regional countries, who are seeking to be the real owners of the region to avoid becoming proxies of some Western countries and the US, observers said.

A ceremony was held inside Iran's new embassy compound in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday with dozens of diplomats and officials attending the reopening of

the diplomatic mission for the first time in seven years, Reuters reported.

Iran and Saudi Arabia reached a landmark agreement brokered by China in March to restore diplomatic ties and reopen their respective embassies.

The reopening of the Iran Embassy in Saudi Arabia after seven years of closure marks a milestone for the region and highlights regional countries' increasing efforts at strategic independence to become the real owners of the region, Sun Degang, director of the Center for Middle Eastern Studies at Fudan University, told the Global Times on Wednesday.

The positive trend in the Middle East also shows how China's proposal on global security and developing countries' views of regional security and global governance have taken root and yielded achievements as regional countries chose to promote security via cooperation and communication, said the expert.

Analysts hailed the ice-breaking resumption of diplomatic relations be-

tween Iran and Saudi Arabia and expected it to promote the resolution of a series of geopolitical conflicts and greatly improve the geopolitical environment in the Middle East. The US has been anxious about the current reconciliation in the Middle East as its allies are not closely following its baton but shaking hands with US' "enemies."

On Tuesday, Blinken met with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. The US top diplomat was also set to meet other senior Saudi officials in Riyadh, the capital, and the coastal city of Jeddah, Reuters reported.

The real goal for Blinken and other US senior officials who recently visited Saudi Arabia, including White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan, is to prevent geopolitical changes in the Middle East – from the resumption of diplomatic ties of Iran and Saudi Arabia to the return of Syria to the Arab League, said Ding Long, a professor with the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University.

China-Russia joint aerial patrol for 1st time extended to 2nd day over West Pacific

By Liu Xuanzun and Guo Yuandan

The sixth joint aerial strategic patrol by the Chinese and Russian militaries was extended to a second day over the West Pacific on Wednesday, marking the first time such an operation was carried out in two phases in two directions, as China-Russia military cooperation continues to deepen, experts said.

The militaries of China and Russia wrapped up the second phase mission of the sixth joint aerial strategic patrol above the western waters of the Pacific Ocean on Wednesday, China's Ministry of National Defense said in a press release.

Based on an annual cooperation schedule between the two militaries, the joint patrol was launched on Tuesday, with two Chinese H-6K bombers and two Russian Tu-95 bombers covering areas over the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea, escorted by fighter jets.

The previous five joint aerial strategic patrols, which were held since 2019, were all carried out within a single day, observers said.

By holding the joint patrol in two phases in two different directions, the operation has become more challenging and demanding in terms of operation planning and the rendezvous of aircraft, Fu Qianshao, a Chinese military aviation expert, told the Global Times on Wednesday.

It requires Chinese and Russian forces to practice constantly to cooperate perfectly, given that the two countries fly different aircraft and use different navigation and control systems, and the operations are being carried out over the far sea, Fu said.

Chinese military expert and TV commentator Song Zhongping told the Global Times on Wednesday that the two phases might feature different missions.

The mission objectives in the Sea of Japan and the East China Sea are likely different from those in the West Pacific, Song said.

The extended patrol displayed the ever-deepening military cooperation between China and Russia, which is very important to safeguarding of peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region, both experts said.

► High historical value



Wang Xuan (center), a representative of Chinese victims of Japan's germ warfare during the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), donates 11,378 precious archival items to an exhibition hall in Jinhua, East China's Zhejiang Province on June 7, 2023. Many of the donated items are first-hand original investigation materials with high historical value, including tapes, disks, research books and overseas documents. Photo: VCG

First nationwide Village BA tournament aims to promote rural revitalization

By GT staff reporters

China's hottest grassroots basketball game is set to expand its reach to villages nationwide. The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs and the General Administration of Sport announced on Wednesday that the country's first village basketball competition will be held starting from June, aimed not only at enriching the leisure activities of rural residents but also at promoting rural revital-

ization and the construction of a strong agricultural nation.

The grassroots basketball tournament, originating in Taipan village, Southwest China's Guizhou Province, has become a phenomenon since last year. Audiences hailed it as the "Village Basketball Association," or "Village BA," putting it on par with the National Basketball Association, the highest level of basketball competition in the world.

Recent data showed that

there had been more than 5,000 village basketball matches by the end of March this year in Guizhou, with nearly 180 village teams taking part.

The game has also gone viral across the country in a short period of time, attracting more than 20,000 spectators per game and more than 100 million online views.

It captivates people's attention not only with the exciting matches but also with the primitive basketball court nestled

in a remote village valley surrounded by farmland. There, local residents, dressed in traditional costumes, cheer for the athletes by knocking on iron pots and bowls as well as performing folk songs and dances as half-time shows.

"This is the charm of basketball itself, which not only allows people to enjoy the sports but also spreads local customs and traditions to the entire country and even the world," wrote a netizen on the Chinese social

media platform Sina Weibo.

"With the organization and promotion of the central government, Village BA is bound to become increasingly fun and enjoyable," Luo Taotao, a 24-year-old Village BA player in Guizhou, who also works as a physical education teacher in a local primary school, told the Global Times on Wednesday.

