

French President Announces 800 New Defense Jobs to Fight Terrorism

PARIS - French President Francois Hollande on Wednesday announced 800 additional posts in the Defense Ministry in a bid to beef up security against terror risks. At a national defense and security council, Hollande decided to boost security units, mainly for cyber defense services, the presidency office the Elysee said. Without giving accurate figures on the government's new spending to bolster security, Hol-



lande decided "to increase accordingly the defense ministry's resources in the military planning law, in particular to finance the costs of operating and equipment associated with these additional staff," according to the press release. France reviewed a planned defense job cuts for 2015-2019 period by keeping 9,000 military and security personnel to support its counter-terrorism mission. (Xinhua)

Number of Child, Adolescent Victims of Torture Increasing: UN

GENEVA - The United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture (UNVFVT) on Wednesday said the number of child and adolescent victims of torture had been increasing, according to figures collected by its network. According to a report issued by UNVFVT on Wednesday, in 2016, an estimated 5,279 child and adolescent victims of torture are expected to be given assistance by organizations funded by it, while in 2015, the organizations reported assisting 3,995 child victims up to

the age of 18. "Under an arrangement allowing UNVFVT emergency funding over the past two years, organizations say they estimate helping 52 children this year while in 2015, no children were among the victims given help," the report noted. "These numbers, as reported by grantees of the UNVFVT, are alarming. Torture is coming back, and coming back with a kind of acceptance," said Laura Dolci-Kanaan, the fund's secretary. Overall, last year UNVFVT provided direct



help through 184 organizations to a total of more than 57,000 adult and child victims in over 80 countries. In 2016, UNVFVT said it would assist an estimated

total of 47,000 victims in over 81 countries through 178 organizations, which typically provide direct medical, psychological, social and legal help to torture victims. (Xinhua)

Japanese PM May Visit Russia in May: Kremlin

MOSCOW - Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe may visit Russia in May, Kremlin said Wednesday. "Yes, this may happen. Such a possibility is being examined," RIA Novosti news agency quoted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying. Earlier in the day, it was announced that Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov would visit Japan on April 15 for talks with his counterpart Fumio Kishida. "We believe that one of the goals of the upcoming ministerial meeting will be the preparation of Russian-Japanese contacts at the highest level, as it has been agreed between the

leaders of the two countries," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova. Russia's Izvestia daily also reported, citing diplomatic sources, that Abe planned to meet Russian President Vladimir Putin on May 6 in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi. In February, Abe's top spokesperson Yoshihide Suga said the Japanese prime minister would make an unofficial visit to Russia to discuss a long-standing territorial dispute between Tokyo and Moscow, while Putin would pay a return visit to Japan later this year. *... (More on P4)... (21)*

OSCE Minsk Group Officials Laud Nagorno-Karabakh Cease-Fire

BAKU - Visiting co-chairs of the Minsk Group under the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) discussed Wednesday the recent military conflict in the disputed region of Nagorno-Karabakh with Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. The group's U.S., French and Russian co-chairs applauded the cease-fire between Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Nagorno-Karabakh region, saying negotiations are underway to encourage the two sides to solve the conflict.

The co-chairs -- Igor Popov of Russia, Pierre Andrieu of France and James Warlick from the United States -- added that negotiation process on the settlement of the conflict must be "more intense." Recent hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan on the contact line in Nagorno-Karabakh flared up overnight Saturday with the two countries blaming each other for triggering the escalation. The Azerbaijani Defense Ministry said Tuesday *... (More on P4)... (22)*

EC Launches Process to Reform Common Asylum System

BRUSSELS - The European Commission (EC) on Wednesday launched the process for a reform of the Common European Asylum System by presenting options for a fair and sustainable system for allocating asylum applicants among European Union (EU) member states. According to a Commission press release, the large-scale, uncontrolled arrival of migrants and asylum seekers has put a strain not only on many member states' asylum systems, but also on the



Common European Asylum System as a whole. The volume and concentration of arrivals has exposed in particular the weaknesses of the Dub-

lin System, which establishes the member state responsible for examining an asylum application based primarily on the first point of irregular entry. The differing treatment of asylum seekers across member states has further exacerbated the problem of irregular *... (More on P4)... (23)*

Tensions Flare in Greek Refugee Camps after Readmissions to Turkey

ATHENS - Tensions flared across organized reception camps and makeshift tent cities in Greece on Wednesday, as thousands of refugees and migrants protested against readmissions to Turkey which started on Monday as part of the EU-Turkey agreement aiming to curb the influx into Europe.



A Pakistani migrant climbed on an electricity pillar threatening to commit suicide inside the Moria hotspot on Lesbos island on Wednesday, Greek national broadcaster ERT reported.

The man was saved with the intervention of Greek police officers, other refugees and migrants and volunteers of NGOs. The incident happened as hundreds of people among the 3,000 detain-

ees at Moria, as well as thousands across Greece were continuing sit-in protests against the EU-Turkey deal and deportations. On Chios island, about 300 refugees and mi-

grants who broke out of a reception center last week staged similar protest across half the island's main port, obstructing the docking of ships. On Tuesday night, vessels *... (More on P4)... (24)*

Turkey, Germany Herald Progress As Migrant Flow to Greece Slows

ATHENS/DIKILI - Turkey and Germany said on Wednesday a deal between Ankara and the EU meant to stem the flow of migrants to the Greek islands was showing signs of success, but many were still trying to cross the sea and the route remained far from sealed off. Three days after the accord came into force, new arrivals on the Greek islands from Turkey dropped to 68 in the 24 hours to Wednesday morning from 225 the previous day, data from the Greek migration ministry showed. Turkish Prime Minis-

ter Ahmet Davutoglu said the decrease was a direct result of the deal with the European Union. A spokesman for the German government, which lobbied skeptical European partners to back the accord, also said things were moving in the right direction. "It is functioning, and the (number of) illegal migrants is in decline," Davutoglu said during a visit to Helsinki. Under the accord, migrants and refugees who cross the Aegean Sea illegally are sent back *... (More on P4)... (26)*

S. African President Announces Date for Local Elections

JOHANNESBURG - South African President Jacob Zuma announced on Wednesday that the next local government elections will be held on August 3 this year. The Minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs David van Rooyen will follow the necessary legal procedure to proclaim the date and undertake any other requirements, Zuma said. "We urge all those who are eligible to vote register to vote and those who have not checked their names to do so on Saturday and Sunday this weekend so that together we continue to re-affirm and deepen our democracy," said the president. *... (More on P4)... (27)*

Over 5,000 Operations Canceled as England Junior Doctors Launch Strike

LONDON - Thousands of junior doctors in England launched their fourth industrial action on Wednesday over a long-running contract dispute, leaving more than 5,100 operations postponed. During the 48-hour strike, only emergency care will be provided. "We deeply regret any disruption this action will cause to patients, but it is because we believe this contract would be bad for the delivery of patient care in the long term that we are taking this action," said Johann Malawana, junior doctor committee

chair of BMA, a trade union of British doctors. This is the second 48-hour strike carried out by BMA junior doctor members, and a third 48-hour strike will be held on April 26 and 27, which will for the first time provide no emergency care. The major sticking point of the series of disputes is focus on weekend pay and extra payments for Saturday service. As no agreement has been reached after several talks in the last months, the British Health Department decided to impose a contract *... (More on P4)... (25)*

Islamic State Attacks Syrian Forces Near Damascus

BEIRUT - Islamic State fighters launched attacks on government-held areas near Damascus overnight in what a Syrian source said appeared to be a response to the group's loss of ground elsewhere. The group said in a statement it had attacked the Tishrin power station, 50 km (30 miles) northeast of the capital. The Syrian military source acknowledged the group had staged assaults, but said all those who took part had been killed. Syrian and allied

forces backed by Russian air strikes have forced Islamic State militants out of the town of al-Qaryatayn, which lies between Damascus and the ancient city of Palmyra, itself recaptured by the government last week. Islamic State has also been losing ground to U.S.-allied Kurdish forces in northern Syria, and in recent days Turkish-backed rebel groups fighting a separate battle against the group north of Aleppo. *... (More on P4)... (28)*

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At UN, Pakistan Slams 'Nuclear Doublespeak'

UNITED NATIONS - Pakistan has assailed the double standards practiced by some states, which preach nuclear disarmament but fail to take necessary steps themselves. Speaking in a session of the UN Disarmament Commission, a subsidiary of the General Assembly, Ambassador Maleeha Lodhi said that a handful of nuclear weapon states advocate abstinence for others but are unwilling to give up their large inventories of nuclear weapons or their modernisation. "This doublespeak has only aggravated the sense of insecurity among other states," she told the 35-member

commission. "Instead of fulfilling their legal disarmament obligations, these States have almost exclusively pursued non-proliferation with messianic zeal," the Pakistani envoy added. "This gap between legality and reality has eroded the global faith in the mutually reinforcing nature of these processes." Hinting towards the US-India nuclear pacts, Ambassador Lodhi said that some nuclear weapon states have also concluded discriminatory nuclear cooperation agreements and helped grant waivers in an unfortunate departure from long held non-proliferation principles. (Agencies)

Ayatollah Khamenei Reiterates US 'Unreliable'

TEHRAN - Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says the American officials have proven to be unreliable, noting that some Western governments are following in the footsteps of the US government. Addressing a group of senior Iranian officials on Wednesday, Ayatollah Khamenei described the US as a symbol of dishonesty and peskiness, saying: "We cannot trust the Americans, and besides the Americans, some other Western governments are like that. Therefore we have to rely on our own capabilities and the American official' positions and performance endorse such a view." The Leader noted that Almighty God would as-

sist the Iranian nation, if it embraces sincerity in its actions. "In the course of personal and social life, there are always ups and downs and hardship and ease, but the important thing is that under all these circumstances, the main course and orientation must not be forgotten," said Ayatollah Khamenei. In another part of his speech, the Leader called on officials to take the necessity of supporting domestic production seriously, saying, "Production in both industrial and agriculture sectors must be given serious attention." The Leader of the Islamic Revolution added that Iranian officials have always been united despite their differences of views. (PressTV)

China Ready for Nuclear Power Cooperation: Premier

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said Wednesday that China is willing to cooperate with various countries in the peaceful use of nuclear energy on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. He made the remarks in a congratulatory message sent to the 20th Pacific Basin Nuclear Conference, which opened on Wednesday in Beijing. "The Chinese government attaches great importance to the development of nuclear power in a safe and efficient manner," said Li, adding that the country has created generation III nuclear power reactors, built a number of plants and established a compara-

tively complete nuclear science and technology industry system. The peaceful use of nuclear energy plays an irreplaceable role in securing the energy supply, promoting economic growth, addressing climate change and improving people's lives, he said. The premier said he hoped attendees at the nuclear conference could share their insights and contribute to the development of the industry. The current conference, co-hosted by the Chinese Nuclear Society and the Pacific Nuclear Council, has attracted more than 800 attendees from more than 40 countries. (Xinhua)

Tajikistan Holds First Bilateral Political Consultations with Kuwait

DUSHANBE - The first bilateral political consultations between Tajikistan and Kuwait took place in Dushanbe on Wednesday, according to the Tajik MFA information department. Co-chaired by Tajik First Deputy Foreign Minister Nizomiddin Zohidi and Kuwaiti Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs, Ali Suleiman Al-Saeed, the consultations reportedly focused on issues related to state and prospects of further expansion of bilateral political, economic, cultural, investment and humanitarian cooperation between the two countries. The delegations, in par-

ticular, discussed expansion of the legal foundation of bilateral relations between Tajikistan and Kuwait and cooperation between them in frameworks of regional and international organizations. They also coordinated the plan of joint actions aimed at further expansion of mutually beneficial cooperation, holding of high-level meetings, attraction of Kuwaiti investments, and implementation of social and economic development projects in Tajikistan. Besides, the two sides exchanged views on a number of international *... (More on P4)... (29)*