

Obama Defends U.S.-EU Free Trade Agreement Amid Mass Protest in Germany

BEIJING - U.S. President Barack Obama is defending his transatlantic trade deal on a visit to Germany though tens of thousands of Germans took to the street to oppose the bill. In a joint press conference in the northern German city of Hanover, Obama said it is "indisputable" that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) will make both the EU and U.S. economy stronger and more competitive compared to other regions of the world. "The United States and the European Union need to keep moving forward with the TTIP," he said after



holding talks with German Chancellor Angela Merkel in his final visit to Germa-

ny as the U.S. president. During the trip, Obama opened an industrial tech-

nology fair and held talks with Merkel and other European leaders. However,

Obama's trip, which was intended to lend momentum to flagging efforts to

see the world's biggest trade pact finalized this year, was embarrassed by the march and rally outside Hanover's opera house. A loose coalition of trade unions, environmentalists and consumer protection groups said they drew a crowd of 90,000 to take part in the demonstration. Police mobilized a large force to keep order and put attendance at 35,000. Organizers handed out flags saying "Yes we can stop TTIP," referring to a slogan used during Obama's election campaign. A recent survey found that public support for the ... (More on P4)...(22)

US Sends F-22 Fighters to Reassure NATO Allies Facing Russia

MIHAIL KOGALNICEANU AIR BASE - Two highly advanced U.S. fighters flew to the Black Sea on Monday for the first time since Washington beefed up military support for NATO's eastern European allies who say they face aggression from Russia. President Barack Obama promised in 2014 to bolster the defenses of NATO's eastern members, unnerved by Russia's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea and the Kremlin's

backing for pro-Russian forces in eastern Ukraine. A U.S. KC-135 refueling plane flew with the two F-22 Raptor fighters from Britain to Romania's MihailKogalniceanu air base on the Black Sea. "We're here today to demonstrate our capability to take the F-22 anywhere needed in NATO or across Europe," said Squadron commander Daniel Lehoski. "We want to ... actually fly the aircraft and train with our NATO allies,"



he told a traveling Reuters reporter. The F-22s are almost impossible to detect on radar and so advanced that the U.S. Congress

has banned Lockheed Martin from selling them abroad. The U.S. has deployed 12 of them at a British base in eastern England. (Reuters)

Turkey Says it has Deported 3,300 Suspected Jihadi Fighters

ANKARA - Turkey has deported more than 3,300 foreigners suspected of links to jihadi groups, particularly Islamic State militants, and another 41,000 foreigners have been barred from entering the country as part of its fight against the militant group, a top official said Monday. Turkish profiling teams have also interviewed 9,500 people upon their arrival in Turkey, Ibrahim Kalin, a spokesman for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, told reporters.

Some 2,000 of them were denied entry as a result. Around 2,770 suspects, including 1,232 foreigners, have been caught in police sweeps and 954 of them are being prosecuted, Kalin said. He didn't give further details. Turkish officials have refused to provide a breakdown of the jihadi suspects by nationality or give details on the countries they have been deported back to. Separately, Turkey's state-news agency, ... (More on P4)...(23)

Nearly 100,000 People Affected by Floods in India's Assam

NEW DELHI - Flooding in India's northeastern state of Assam has affected nearly 100,000 people, officials said Monday. On Sunday officials said two people died in the state. "One person died in Tinsukia district due to hailstorm, while as another person was swept away in Charaideo," an official said. Surging waters have also damaged 2,000 hectares of crop land, officials said. India's official broadcaster - All India Radio (AIR) said state's chief secretary has reviewed the

flood situation in Guwahati and instructed the Deputy Commissioners to help the flood-hit people. Downpour in the state over the past week has been among the highest in several decades and has severely affected the normal life. Reports said this month, the state received 344.1 mm rainfall, which is 225.8 mm above normal. Floodwater have submerged large parts of the state forcing authorities to order closure of schools. (Xinhua)

Hungary's PM Orban: 'Islamization' Banned by Constitution

BUDAPEST - Hungary's constitution bans "Islamization" because the document aims to protect Hungarian language and culture, Prime Minister Viktor Orban said Monday. Orban also said the constitution forces the government to oppose any kind of mass migration that would endanger those principles. "To be clear and unequivocal, I can say that Islamization is constitutionally banned in Hungary," Orban said in parliament at an event celebrating the fifth anni-

versary of Hungary's new constitution, now known as the Basic Law. Orban was quoting from the National Avowal, the Basic Law's preamble, which details the country's commitment "to promoting and safeguarding our heritage, our unique language, Hungarian culture" and the protection of "the living conditions of future generations." Hungary maintains that the migrant issue is a matter of national sovereignty. "We have the right to choose whom we want



and don't want to live with," Orban said. Hungary has built razor-wire fences on its southern borders to stop migrants

from passing through to other European nations. Orban has said he wants "zero" migrants in the East European nation. (AP)

Romanian FM Calls on NATO to Strengthen Eastern Flank

BUCHAREST - Romanian Foreign Minister Lazar Comanescu on Monday advocated a robust presence of rotational NATO forces on the organization's eastern flank to respond to current security challenges. Making the remarks at a meeting with visiting NATO Deputy Secretary General Alexander Vershbow, Comanescu also asked NATO to substantiate allied states' efforts to assist and consolidate the defense capabilities of Black Sea partner countries. According to a press statement from the foreign ministry, Comanescu emphasized the importance of the Black



Sea region being included in all the assessment processes of NATO. Vershbow thanked Romania for its active involvement in the NATO consolidation of collective defense and the eastern flank of NATO, as well as the country's determination to secure neces-

sary defense resources. The two officials also discussed the missile defense system in southern Romania, with Comanescu reiterating the country's support for the declaration of the initial operational capabilities of the system at the forthcoming NATO ... (More on P4)...(25)

CSTO Military Reconnaissance Units Practice Fighting ISIS in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - Member nations of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) have wrapped up their first-ever joint military reconnaissance exercises in Tajikistan where they "eliminated" a make-believe ISIS commander who was plotting to seize power in Central Asia. The exercises that took

place in the Romit Gorge involved 1,500 servicemen Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan. The purpose of the exercise was to work out joint operations of the CSTO countries' military reconnaissance units. In one phase, for example, helicopter crews dropped paratroopers close to en-

emy formations and cut off their lines of communication. In another, they used their electronic reconnaissance equipment to target enemy communications points. EurasiaNet.org reports the scenario of the exercise offered ample fodder for cultural and political interpretation. The ... (More on P4)...(24)

US to Send 250 More Personnel to Syria: Obama

HANOVER - The United States will send up to 250 more personnel to Syria for the fight against the Islamic State (IS), confirmed U.S. President Barack Obama on Monday during his visit to Germany. In a speech during his visit to the annual Hanover trade fair, Obama said he had approved the deployment of up to 250 additional U.S. personnel to Syria, including special forces, to keep up the momentum against the IS. The new ... (More on P4)...(26)

Syrian Opposition Welcomes Obama Move to Send Troops

GENEVA - The main Syrian opposition welcomed U.S. President Barack Obama's announcement on Monday that his administration will deploy 250 more troops in Syria to help local militia fight Islamic State militants. Salem al-Meslet, spokesman of the High Negotiations Committee, one of only a few HNC representatives still in Geneva for informal talks with the U.N. Special Envoy on Syria, said in a statement referring to Islamic State ... (More on P4)...(27)

US Approves Billion-Dollar Arms Deal with Australia

WASHINGTON - The United States government on Monday approved a deal for US firms to sell its close ally Australia \$1.22 billion in air-to-air missiles and support equipment. The main contractor for the major shipment will be Arizona-based arms giant Raytheon, which produc-

es the AIM-120D medium-range missile. Up to 450 of the weapons will arm the Royal Australian Air Force's FA-18 Hornet and F-35 Lightning fighters and the EA-18G Growler electronic warfare jet. This will give the "RAAF additional air-to-air in-

tercept capability and increase interoperability with the US Air Force," the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency said. Australia is a key US ally in the Asia Pacific region and has contributed to forces to allied counter-terror operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. (AFP)

Saudi-Led Coalition Forces Kill 800 Al-Qaida Militants in Yemen

RIYADH - Saudi-led coalition announced on Monday a joint military operation against al-Qaida in Yemen, in a bid to support the power of elected Yemeni government, Saudi Press Agency reported. In the first hours of the commencement of the

operation, more than 800 al-Qaida members and a number of their leaders were killed and that the rest of them in the attack area fled. The command of the coalition forces, mainly from Arab countries said in a statement that the operation was being carried out

by Yemeni army and elements of Saudi and United Arab Emirates special forces. The statement added that this comes as part of the joint international efforts to defeat the terrorist groups in Yemen and support the Yemeni elected ... (More on P4)...(28)

Nieghbor News

Chinese Vice President Meets Arab Countries Political Leaders

BEIJING - Chinese Vice President Li Yuanchao met the political leaders from some Arab countries on Monday. At present were 36 representatives from about 30 political parties of 16 Arab countries, who had attended a dialog with the Communist Party of China (CPC) from April 21 to 22 in northwest China's Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region. Li said Arab countries are an important force in the global political arena, noting that President Xi Jinping's visit to the Middle East in Janu-

ary promoted China-Arab ties to a new stage. Li said Arab countries play a vital role in the Belt and Road Initiative and he hoped party-to-party communication would contribute more to China-Arab cooperation. Former Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf said he hoped the Belt and Road construction would promote development and stability in the Arab region. This year marks the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between China and Arab states. (Xinhua)

Pak, Indian Foreign Secretaries to Meet on Sidelines of Heart of Asia

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Foreign Secretary Aizaz Chaudhry will leave for India on Tuesday (Today) to participate in a meeting of senior officials during the Heart of Asia - Istanbul Process in New Delhi. Pakistani Foreign Office (FO) Spokesman Nafees Zakaria said Aizaz, who will be leading the Pakistani delegation, is expected to hold an informal bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the conference with the Indian team, among others. Aizaz will meet Indian Foreign Secretary Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, The Hindu reported, citing government sources. In what was termed as

a 'major breakthrough' at the Heart of Asia ministerial meeting in December last year, Pakistan and India, ending a two-year-long stalemate, announced the resumption of the Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue (CBD). Following Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'surprise' visit to Lahore just weeks after the Heart of Asia conference - move that appeared to promise better relations between the neighbouring countries in the coming year - a meeting between the Indian and Pakistani foreign secretaries to restart the CBD was derailed after the Pathankot attack. (Agencies)

Amirsho Miraliyev Elected to Head the Association of Banks of Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - Amirsho Miraliyev, formerly head of the Supervisory Board of Open Joint-Stock Company (OJSK) Sohibkorbonk, has been elected to head the Association of Banks of Tajikistan (ABT), replacing Izatullo Lalbekov. ABT deputy head Rahmatsho Sayimov says Izatullo Lalbekov has left the position of the head of the ABT on his own initiative. Amirsho Miraliyev, who is from President Rahmon's native Dan-

ghara district in the southern province of Khatlon, was born on December 20, 1946. In 1970, Miraliyev graduated from the Tajik Agricultural Institute, and in 1998, he graduated from the Leningrad Higher Party School. In 1994-2000, Miraliyev served as State Adviser to the President for Personnel issues. From February 2000 to February 2001, he was deputy of Tajikistan's lower house (Majlisi Namoyandagon) of parliament. (Asia-Plus)

Iran won't Forget Sanctions Era Allies: First VP

TEHRAN - Iranian First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri reiterates the country's foreign policy on the expansion of ties with the international community, saying Iran will never forget its allies during years of sanctions. "South America and important countries in this region, including Uruguay, have always been among the Islamic Republic of Iran's friends and the Iranian government and nation have always respected nations in this region," Jahangiri said during joint talks between senior delegations of Iran and Uruguay, co-chaired by him and Uruguay's Vice President Raul Sendic Rodriguez in Tehran on

Monday. He expressed hope the current visit by Uruguay's vice president to Tehran would lead to stronger mutual relations. He added that the nuclear agreement, dubbed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), reached between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries last July, proved the Islamic Republic's diplomatic capacity to solve issues and clear misunderstandings with international community. The JCPOA created a "new opportunity" for Iran and the South American countries, particularly Uruguay, to improve their trade and economic relations. (PressTV)