

EC Proposes Signature, Conclusion of EU-US DPUA

BRUSSELS - The European Commission (EC) on Friday proposed the Council of the European Union (EU) sign and conclude the EU-US Data Protection Umbrella Agreement (DPUA).

The Commission and the United States finalized the negotiations in September 2015, and in February, U.S. President Barack Obama signed the Judicial Redress Act, granting judicial redress rights to EU citizens, opening the way for the Umbrella Agreement's signature, according to the Commission. The agree-



ment would put in place a comprehensive high-level data protection framework

for EU-U.S. law enforcement cooperation, said the Commission. The agree-

ment covers all personal data exchanged between the EU and the United

States for the purpose of prevention, detection, investigation and prosecu-

tion of criminal offences, including terrorism. It would provide safeguards and guarantees of lawfulness for data transfers, and provide EU citizens the same judicial redress rights as U.S. citizens in privacy breach cases. "This is an historic achievement to rebuild trust in transatlantic data flows and to strengthen the fundamental right to privacy," said European Commissioner Vera Jourova. "The Council shall now adopt a decision authorizing the signing of the agreement. Once the ... (More on P4)...(21)

Modi Invited to Address Joint Meeting of U.S. Congress

NEW DELHI - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been invited by Speaker of the American House of Representatives Paul Ryan to address a joint meeting of the U.S. Congress on June 8 when he visits that country, local media reported Friday. "The friendship between the U.S. and India is a pillar of stability in an important region of the world," Ryan told the media in Washington Thursday. "This address presents a special opportunity



to hear from the elected leader of the world's most populous democracy on how our two nations can work together to promote our shared values and to increase prosperity. We

look forward to welcoming Prime Minister Modi to the U.S. Capitol on June 8," he added. If Modi addresses American lawmakers, then he will be the fifth Indian

prime minister to do so and the first after 2005 when then Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had addressed the joint meeting of the U.S. Congress. (Xinhua)

Olympic, UN Values More Important than Ever: UN Chief

GENEVA - As Geneva's United Nations (UN) offices welcomed the Rio de Janeiro Games' Olympic flame Friday, which was lit in Greece last week, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon highlighted the importance of Olympic and UN values in a world where such principles are all too often ensconced. "This is the flame of passion that burns in the hearts of athletes and fans. It is the eternal flame representing timeless values that can never be extin-

guished. And most of all, this flame is a beacon of solidarity with all peoples of the world," he said at the event "Celebrating the Olympic spirit" in the UN's emblematic Human Rights and Alliance of Civilizations Room. Together with other high level representatives including International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach, Brazil's Minister for Sport Ricardo Leyser and President of the Rio 2016 ... (More on P4)...(22)

Finnish NATO Membership would Lead to Crisis with Russia: Government Report

HELSINKI - If Finland joined NATO it would lead to a serious crisis with neighboring Russia, a report commissioned by the Finnish government said on Friday. Membership of the military alliance would strengthen Finland's security but trigger a harsh reaction from the Kremlin, affecting trade between the countries, according to the report prepared for Prime Minister Juha Sipila's center-right government. Militarily-neutral Finland shares a 1,340 km-long

border and difficult history with Russia, its former ruler. The report gave no direct recommendation on whether Finland should seek membership, but said a joint Finnish-Swedish application would be a better strategic option than either Nordic country joining the alliance alone. "This is a question of grand strategy," Finnish Prime Minister Sipila told reporters on Friday. "Small nations do not often change their basic foreign policy guidelines," he ... (More on P4)...(23)

Russia Raps Deployment of Additional U.S. Personnel to Syria

MOSCOW - The deployment of additional U.S. personnel to Syria breached the sovereignty of Syria, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov said on Friday. During a visit to Germany on Monday, U.S. President Barack Obama confirmed that 250 more personnel would be sent to Syria for the fight against the Islamic State (IS) militant group. Reports said that there are already 150 U.S. soldiers deployed in Kurdish areas in northern Syria. "We are concerned over

the fact that the U.S. carries out such actions without coordination with the legitimate government of the Syrian Arab Republic, which is a violation of sovereignty of Syria," Ryabkov said. Nevertheless, he stressed that Moscow and Washington still maintain military cooperation in Syria on a daily basis, according to the Tass news agency. According to news reports, the U.S. personnel are obliged to supervise the implementation of a safe-zone in the northern



part of Syria and oversee the nationwide ceasefire among the opposing groups as well. In response to the U.S. decision on troop deployment in Syria, the Syrian government on Thursday condemned the entry of 150 U.S. soldiers into Kurdish areas in northern Syria as "flagrant aggression" and "outright assault violating the Syrian territories." (Xinhua)

Syrian Army Announces "Regime of Silence" in Certain Hotspots

DAMASCUS - The Syrian army announced on Friday that a "regime of silence" state will be observed in hotspots near the capital Damascus and the northwestern province of Latakia after midnight. "In order to uphold the agreed-upon cessation of hostilities system, a state of regime of silence will be observed as of 1 a.m. Saturday in areas in the Eastern Ghouta area east of Damascus, and the northern countryside of Latakia," the army said in a statement. The army statement said the this pacification system will continue for 24 hours east of Damascus, and 72 hours north of Latakia. The aim of it, the army continued, is to cut the road before the



armed groups, which are trying to continue the state of tension and instability. Earlier in the day, Russia and the United States have reportedly agreed to enhance the cessation of hostilities deal in northern Latakia and suburbs of Damascus. Still, the northern province of Aleppo, which is witnessing an extreme state of violence

and constant shelling was not included in the deal. The aim appears to be the international powers' will to consolidate and salvage the already-shaky truce, or cessation of hostilities, which has went into force in late February, but has largely been threatened in recent weeks with an upsurge in the military show ... (More on P4)...(24)

EU Membership Gives Britain Economic Strength: Merkel

BERLIN - Remaining in the European Union will ensure that Britain remains a prosperous and economically successful country, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Friday, adding that a U.S.-EU free trade deal would also bring economic benefits. "One must realistically

say which advantages membership of the European Union has and what advantages the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership has, and what is being negotiated now is also clear," Merkel said. "Everybody says this from his perspective. I say it from my perspective.

We want an economically strong and prosperous Britain in the European Union," she added during a news conference with Latvian Prime Minister Maris Kucinskis. Kucinskis said he hoped that a referendum in June on Britain's EU membership would not weaken the bloc. (Reuters)

Italy Struggles to House Migrants in Third Year of Mass Arrivals

CALTAGIRONE - When police arrested Lamin Darboe's father two years ago, the 16-year-old had to quit his studies and work on his uncle's farm in Gambia. Desperate to go back to school, he stole his uncle's bull to pay his way to Europe. "I sold his bull ... before he found out, I was

gone," said Darboe, who still does not know how his father fell foul of the law. "I want to have a future, and become someone responsible in the future," he said at an old villa in the hilltop Sicilian town of Caltagirone that now shelters 50 minors. Darboe is just one of thousands of migrants

who have risked the deadly boat journey from North Africa to Italy this year, piling pressure on a shelter system that is bursting at the seams even before the expected summer spike in arrivals. About 27,000 boat migrants have reached Italy since Jan. 1, slightly ... (More on P4)...(25)

UN Rights Chief Condemns 'Shameful' Global Response on Syria

GENEVA - Major powers backing warring sides in Syria appear to have become "accomplices" in the bloodshed, the UN rights chief said Friday, blasting as "shameful" the failure to pursue justice for victims in the war-ravaged country. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a statement that renewed

violence in Syria, including strikes on markets and medical facilities, showed a "monstrous disregard for civilians lives by all parties to the conflict". But he directed especially tough criticism towards the powerful countries influencing the conflict. "The persistent failure of

the Security Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC) is an example of the most shameful form of realpolitik," Zeid said. "In the minds of many, the world's great powers have in effect become accomplices to the sacrifice of ... (More on P4)...(28)

Neighbor News

Russian Surnames Officially Banned in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - Authorities in Tajikistan have officially banned patronymics and surnames with "Russian" endings, such as "-ov," "-ev," "-ovich" and "-ovna," the RBC news website reported Friday.

In an interview aired on Tajikistan's Radio Svoboda service, deputy head of the state registry office Dzhaliiddin Rakhimov said the law was signed by President Emomali Rahmon in March. Rakhimov said that many citizens want to keep the Russian versions of their children's names. However, he said

the authorities are making an effort to explain to the public that the main goal of the new law is to make sure that all surnames in the country are written in Tajik in order to avoid having children "separate in two groups, one of which will be proud of their Tajik names while the other will have to carry foreign ones." "In Tajikistan, names and the way they are written is done in accordance with culture, national traditions and the Registry of Tajik national names, approved by the government," he said. (Agencies)

Iran Urges UN to Push Washington to Release Iran's Assets

TEHRAN - In a letter to the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Iran's foreign minister said that his country will take "every lawful measure" against a court ruling that allows the seizure of parts of Iran's assets in the United States, Press TV reported on Friday.

The Iran reserves the right to respond to the decision made by the U.S. Supreme Court, Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif wrote in the letter on Thursday. "The Islamic Republic of Iran holds the United States government responsible for this outrageous robbery, dis-

guised under a court order, and is determined to take every lawful measure to restore the stolen property," the letter was cited as reading. Zarif urged the UN chief to press Washington to release all frozen Iranian assets in the U.S. banks. Last week, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled the transfer of nearly two billion U.S. dollars to the American victims of terrorist attacks, including the 1983 truck bombing of a Marine Corps barracks in Beirut, Lebanon. Investigators of the court concluded that Iran was responsible for that attack, which Iran has denied. (Xinhua)

US Congress Blocking Funds to Pakistan for F-16 Purchase: Report

WASHINGTON - The United States (US) administration is withholding funds earmarked for Pakistan's purchase of eight F-16 fighter jets, BBC Urdu reported, citing an unnamed senior US State Department official. The State Department official told BBC Urdu on condition of anonymity that the Obama administration is still willing to sell the fighter jets to Pakistan, but will not contribute US funds towards the deal. The US administration took this step with di-

rections from US Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Chairman Bob Corker because only Congress has the authority to dispense or withhold the funds, the official said. As a result of this move, Pakistan may have to foot the bill of \$700 million for the eight fighter jets. As per the earlier arrangement, Pakistan would have paid \$270 million while the US would grant the remaining \$430 million for the purchase. (Agencies)

China, Russia Voice Concern over Deployment of Missile Defense System in ROK

BEIJING - China and Russia on Friday voiced "serious concern" over reports that the United States planned to deploy a missile defense system in the Republic of Korea (ROK). "Relevant countries should respect the stance and legitimate concerns of China and Russia," said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang

Yi, in a joint press briefing with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov after their talks in Beijing. The ROK and the United States have been discussing the deployment of the U.S. Terminal High Altitude Area Defence System (THAAD) in the ROK. Wang said both China ... (More on P4)...(29)

Iran Starts Parliamentary Run-Off Elections

TEHRAN - The second round of the 10th Majlis (parliament) elections in Iran began on Friday to choose parliamentarians for the remaining 69 vacant seats. On Wednesday, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei called on the nation to actively participate in the run-off elections as they did in the first round of elections on Feb. 26. In the first round of the elections, 221 out of the 290 seats were filled and the fate of 69 others will be decided in the run-off contests with 138 candidates in 21 provinces out of 31. According to data ... (More on P4)...(26)

13 Feared Dead as Helicopter Crashes in W. Norway

OSLO - Eleven dead bodies have been found after a helicopter carrying 13 people crashed Friday off the western coast of Norway, rescue services said. The Super Puma helicopter with 11 Norwegians, one Briton and one Italian on board crashed near the island of Turoy, en route from "Gullfaks B", an oil platform in the North Sea operated by state-owned oil and gas company Statoil, to Bergen, the Joint Rescue Coordination Center of Southern Norway (JRCC) said. A rescue ... (More on P4)...(27)

of persons who control Off-Shore Companies based on documents leaked from Law Firm MossackFoncesca. The issue of Panama Papers became a subject of debate in Pakistan as the name of Prime Minister was wrongly included by the ICIJ and was ... (More on P4)...(30)

ICIJ Admits Error, Removes Name of Nawaz Sharif

KABUL - A Spokesman of the Government of Pakistan has said that the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists (ICIJ) has admitted that it had erroneously included the name of the Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Nawaz Sharif while publishing details