

Merkel Does Not See EU Expanding Membership Talks with Turkey

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel does not expect the European Union to open negotiations on new policy areas with Turkey in its talks to join the bloc, her spokesman said on Wednesday.

Membership talks have progressed only slowly since they began in 2005 but Merkel has said the EU, which needs Turkey to help tackle the migrant crisis, must engage with Ankara despite concern about its response to a failed coup in July.

Bild newspaper ran a story under a headline



that said Merkel opposed further EU talks with the fellow NATO member and reported that this meant discussions were effectively over.

However, government spokesman Steffen Seibert made clear there was no new stance.

"Chancellor Merkel's position on the accession talks has not changed," he told reporters when asked about the article.

"The EU and Turkey have been negotiating for years without determining the result in advance. Under the current ... (More on P4)...(24)

Trump Picks Anti-Obamacare Health and Human Services Secretary

WASHINGTON - U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on Tuesday chose Tom Price, a six-term Republican congressman who firmly opposes President Obama's health care law, to be secretary of health and human services.

Price, regarded as a policy wonk, "is exceptionally qualified to shepherd our commitment to repeal and replace Obamacare and bring affordable and accessible health care to every American," Trump said in making the formal

announcement. Conservatives lauded the appointment, while abortions rights supporters and other Trump critics denounced it. Price, 62, became an outspoken opponent of the health care law Obama signed in 2010, calling it an "unaffordable" piece of legislation. "Premiums have gone up, not down," Price said recently. "Many Americans lost the health coverage they were told time and time again by the ... (More on P4)...(25)

NATO Deputy Chief Stresses Dialogue with Russia

BRUSSELS - NATO Deputy Secretary General Rose Gottemoeller on Tuesday stressed the importance of continuing dialogue with Russia at a forum in Germany, according to a NATO statement.

Participating in a panel discussion at the Berlin Policy Forum, Gottemoeller outlined the Alliance's dual-track approach of strong defense and dialogue with Russia. She said that in times of tension, dialogue with Russia is even more im-

portant to reduce risks and build confidence.

NATO suspended practical cooperation with Russia in April 2014 in response to the Ukraine crisis, and the NATO-Russia Council was the only channel left open.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has also highlighted that NATO wants dialogue with Russia. "Russia is our biggest neighbor, Russia is there



to stay and especially when tensions run high and especially when we face many different security challenges, it is im-

portant to have dialogue," Stoltenberg told media while attending EU defense ministers meeting on Nov. 15. (Xinhua)

Trump Nominates Elaine Chao as Transportation Secretary

WASHINGTON - U.S. President-elect Donald Trump on Tuesday nominated Chinese-American Elaine Chao as the secretary of transportation, who is set to play a key role in fulfilling Trump's election promise of overhauling U.S. transportation infrastructure. "Secretary Chao's extensive record of strong leadership and her expertise are invaluable assets in our mission to rebuild our infrastructure in a fiscally responsible manner," Trump said in a statement. "The president-elect has outlined a clear vision

to transform our country's infrastructure, accelerate economic growth and productivity, and create good paying jobs across the country," Chao said. According to Trump's transition website, he plans to invest 550 billion U.S. dollars to "build the roads, highways, bridges, tunnels, airports, and railroads of tomorrow." The transportation secretary is a member of the president's cabinet and the nomination needs to be passed by Congress. Chao, who served as the ... (More on P4)...(26)

OPEC Members Meet in Vienna to Debate Cutting Oil Output

VIENNA - The OPEC member states are meeting here on Wednesday to debate cutting its oil output. Some OPEC states are signaling their optimism over reaching a possible deal to cut oil production. Saudi Arabian Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said before the meeting that he hopes if the cartel agrees to secure a output cut, non-OPEC states should also join them. He added OPEC member states were close to striking a deal.

Iran also expressed op-

timism over a production cut, saying sides were ready to compromise and reach a deal.

Tehran has long insisted it should be exempted from the production cut, as it planned to increase its output to pre-sanction levels.

Before the meeting, OPEC members agreed in principle to enable a possible production cut. However, there are gaps between the main



countries over the quota of the production if an output cut is implemented. Saudi Arabia said the

global oil market could improve even if the meeting fails to agree upon an output cut. (Xinhua)

MEPs Approve EU Help Scheme for Growth Enhancing Reforms

BRUSSELS - A scheme offering members of the European Union (EU) technical help with growth-friendly structural reforms was backed by the Regional Development Committee in the European Parliament on Tuesday. As part of the November 2015 European Semester package, the European Commission proposed a regulation establishing the Structural Reform Support Program 2017-2020.

The scheme, with a total budget of almost 142.8 mil-



lion euros (151.76 million U.S. dollars), would provide technical assistance to improve national institutional and administrative capacities to carry out structural reforms.

According to the scheme, EU member states and their national, regional and local authorities would be provided support in policy areas such as public financial ... (More on P4)...(27)

Russian Forces in Crimea Put on Alert before Ukrainian Missile Tests: TASS

MOSCOW - Russian air defense forces in Crimea have been placed on high alert on the eve of planned Ukrainian missile tests near the Black Sea peninsula, the TASS news agency cited a Crimean military source as saying on Wednesday.

Moscow has protested against the plans to carry out the tests near Crimea, which Russia annexed from Ukraine in 2014. Ukraine says the tests, slated for Dec. 1 and 2, are legitimate and will be conducted within the framework of international obligations and treaties.

"Ukraine's firing exercises are a kind of public relations ploy aimed at creating a nervous situation, but in any case the military perceive this as a real and potential threat and Russian ... (More on P4)...(28)

Mosul Food, Water Reserves Dwindle as Fighting Cuts off Supplies

MOSUL/BAGHDAD, Iraq - The United Nations issued a fresh warning on Wednesday about the humanitarian situation in eastern Mosul where the U.S.-backed Iraqi army is locked in heavy fighting with Islamic State militants.

More than six weeks into the offensive against Islamic State's last major city stronghold in Iraq, the army is trying to dislodge militants dug in among civilians in the eastern districts, the only side Iraqi troops have been able to breach.

"The situation in eastern Mosul city close to the front lines remains fraught with danger for civilians. Mortar and gunfire continue to claim lives," the U.N. humanitarian coordinator's office said. "The limited supplies of food and water are running out, amid concerning reports of food insecurity emerging from the city."

Water was cut to 650,000 people - or 40 percent of total residents in the city when a pipeline was hit during fighting - a local official said on Tuesday. With winter setting in, aid workers say a full siege is developing around the city and poor families are struggling to feed themselves as prices rose sharply.

The longer the conflict drags on, the more civilians will suffer as they are also exposed to violence from the militants bent on crushing any opposition to their rule. (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

China Says it Wants Smooth Military Ties with Trump

BEIJING - China said on Wednesday it wanted to develop smooth military-to-military ties with the new U.S. administration of Donald Trump.

While the world's two largest economies are frequently at odds over issues like the disputed South China Sea, both have been trying to improve trust between their armed forces to reduce the risk of misunderstanding in any encounters. This month, China

and the United States staged a three-day humanitarian relief military drill as part of that trust-building exercise.

New concern looms with Trump's election as U.S. president. He lambasted China on the campaign trail and has suggested Japan and South Korea be allowed to develop nuclear weapons. Asked about Trump's election, Chinese Defense Ministry spokesman ... (More on P4)...(30)

Iran will Increase Enrichment to 190k SWU if JCPOA Breached: MP

TEHRAN - Iran will increase its uranium enrichment capacity if the US renews sanctions against the Islamic Republic and violates the landmark nuclear agreement between Tehran and the P5+1 group of countries, a senior Iranian lawmaker says.

"In case of the extension of sanctions [against Iran] and violation of the JCPOA (the nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), we will raise uranium production and enrichment to 190,000 SWU (separative work units)," the chairman of the Iranian Parliament's Committee on National Security and Foreign Policy, Alaeddin Boroujerdi, said on Tuesday.

He added that the "retaliatory measure" will be carried out in line with legislation passed by the Iranian Parliament. On January 16, Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, France, Britain, China and Russia - plus Germany started to implement the JCPOA which they signed in July 2015.

Under the JCPOA, Iran undertook to put limitations on its nuclear program in exchange for the removal of nuclear-related bans imposed against Tehran.

Iranian lawmakers ... (More on P4)...(31)

Pakistan's First Production and Entertainment Conference will Kick off on Dec 3

KARACHI - The country's first national production and entertainment trade conference - FocusPk16 - is set to open its door on Saturday for a two-day event at the Beach Luxury hotel.

This is being organized by the Federation of Pakistan Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FPCCI) - led by the FPCCI-Standing Committee on Production and Entertainment committee's chairperson Atiqah Ohdo.

Speaking at a press conference on Tuesday, Ms Odho said that the conference was going to be a real game changer in the industry. "This is being done for you and for anyone who is interested in this business," she said, adding that it was time for the financial sector to take the entertainment industry seriously.

"FocusPk16 shall be filling in a wide gap in our industry where we have ... (More on P4)...(32)

Turkmenistan Appoints Ambassador to Luxembourg

BAKU - Turkmenistan has appointed Ata Serdarov as its ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary to Luxembourg, according to the Turkmen president's decree published on Wednesday.

At the same time, the diplomat will continue to lead the Turkmen diplomatic mission in Belgium. Turkmen President

Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received Luxembourg's Minister of Foreign and European Affairs Jean Asselborn in Ashgabat in early September.

The parties exchanged views on cooperation in such areas as transport, industry, agriculture, as well as in the banking and financial sector. (Trend)

Uzbekistan, Russia Sign Military Cooperation Agreement

TASHKENT - The Defense Ministers of Russia and Uzbekistan signed an agreement on development of military and technical cooperation and Plan of bilateral cooperation between the military departments for 2017, the press service of the Russian Ministry of Defense said. The deal was inked by Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu and his Uzbek counterpart Kabul Berdiyev.

"Situation near the borders of Uzbekistan once again raises the question about the necessity of cooperating within the CSTO and SCO in order to maintain peace and security in the region," said Sergei Shoigu. "The situation we have been observing shows that the risks are not reduced but increased. This is caused by appearance of such organizations as the Islamic state and Jabhat al-Nusra (banned in Russia) and, certainly, their activities. This relates to weapons and new methods of warfare," explained the head of the Russian defence department. Shoigu expressed his confidence that the countries have prospects and possibilities to strengthen military and technical cooperation in the ... (More on P4)...(33)

UNSC Imposes new Sanctions on North Korea

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations Security Council imposed new sanctions on North Korea on Wednesday that aim to cut the Asian state's annual export revenue by more than a quarter in response to Pyongyang's fifth and largest nuclear test in September.

The 15-member council unanimously adopted a resolution that cuts North Korean coal exports by 60 percent with an annual cap of \$400.9 million or 7.5 million metric tonnes, on sales. It also bans the export of copper, nickel, silver, zinc and statues. (Reuters)

Around 20,000 Flee their Homes in Aleppo over Past Three Day: ICRC

GENEVA - It is estimated that more than 20,000 people have been forced to leave their homes in Aleppo over the past 72 hours, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said Tuesday.

It added that around 60,000 people fled the war-torn area since August of this year. In a media statement issued Tuesday night, ICRC said that some people live in shelters, some in mosques, schools, or tents, while others found refuge in unfinished or damaged buildings or being hosted by families who are already under great strain. "So many people have been forced to flee two or three times as the bullets and bombs got closer," the statement



said, adding that the west of Aleppo has seen more than 40,000 people flee areas of active fighting. In the east, intensified attacks on the neighborhoods of Masakan Hanano, Jabal Jabro and Sakhour reportedly led 20,000 people to flee in different directions in search ... (More on P4)...(29)