

NATO FMs Agree to Step up Cooperation with EU

BRUSSELS - NATO foreign ministers agreed to step up cooperation with the European Union, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on Tuesday at a press conference following the ministerial meeting. He mentioned three new areas where the two blocs will strengthen cooperation: military mobility, information sharing in the fight against terrorism, and promoting women's role in peace and security. "Moving our forces and equipment quickly is vital for our security. This means we need procedures for rapid border crossing, as well as sufficient transport assets and robust infrastructure," said Stoltenberg. "And our aim is to make mili-



tary mobility a new flagship for the NATO-EU cooperation," he added. As for the fight against terrorism, Stoltenberg said NATO and the EU decided to strengthen the exchange of information and to coordinate counterterrorism support for partner countries. "We are taking cooperation between NATO and the EU to a new level," NATO chief said. Talking about the EU's efforts to strengthen European defense through permanent structured cooperation and the European defense fund, Stoltenberg said, "These steps can lead to increased defense spending, more modern capabilities, and fairer transatlantic burden sharing." (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

China to Create More Opportunities for the World: Xi

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping said Wednesday that the country will create more opportunities and make a greater contribution for the world. Xi made the remarks in a congratulatory letter to the 2017 Fortune Global Forum, which opened in the south China city of Guangzhou Wednesday. In his letter, Xi said China will develop the open economy to a higher level, promote the Belt and Road Initiative, and push for a new pattern of all-round opening up. Looking forward, he said China will enjoy robust development momentum, the people will have a greater sense of gain and the country will be more integrated into the world. The president said China's economy has the

foundation, condition and impetus to maintain stable growth and sound momentum. He reiterated that China will not close its door to the world, and it will only become more and more open, with its business environment becoming more open, transparent and regulated. China will continue to forge global partnerships, expand the common interests with others countries, further liberalize and facilitate trade and investment, and push for an economic globalization that is more open and inclusive, more balanced, more equitable and beneficial to all, Xi said. Xi welcomed global businesses to invest in China to share the opportunities brought by the country's reform and development. (Xinhua)

Arab League to Hold Emergency Meeting Saturday over Jerusalem

CAIRO - The Arab League (AL) decided to hold an emergency meeting at the level of foreign ministers on Saturday to discuss the Arab action regarding the possible U.S. recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital city, official MENA news agency reported on Wednesday. The decision is made in response to Palestine's request that has been supported by Jordan. "The meeting will discuss the necessary Arab actions towards the possible change of the U.S. position that affects the status

of Jerusalem as well as its legal and historical position," MENA quoted the Palestinian memorandum as saying. The decades-long Palestinian-Israeli conflict emerged since the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories and the Western-backed creation of Israel in 1948. Israel is blamed by the international community for the deadlock of the peace process due to its settlement expansion policy, which is rejected even by its strongest ally, the United States. (Xinhua)

Trump's Jerusalem Move Expected to Inflare Middle East, End Two-State Solution

AMMAN - U.S. President Donald Trump's plan to relocate the U.S. embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem is expected to further inflame the Middle East and end hopes for a two-state solution, experts said Wednesday. Jordan, which signed a peace deal with Israel in 1994, has been exerting intensified efforts to highlight the dangers of such a step if announced by the U.S. administration. The country called for an emergency meeting at the level of the Arab League and the Organization of

the Islamic Conference to warn of the serious consequences of such a move that would end a decades-long U.S. policy towards the issue. "If Trump goes ahead with the decision, I expect that we will witness more chaos in the region...The issue of Jerusalem is of concern not only to the Palestinians but the whole Arabs and Muslims," Mohammad Shboul, an independent political analyst, told Xinhua on Wednesday. Stressing that Jordan is directly involved in the



Palestinian issue, he said Jordan is the custodian of the holy Islamic and Christian sites in East Jerusalem, which envisages as the future capital of the Palestinian state. "The relocation of the embassy means an end to the two-state solution, which stipulates the creation of an independent Palestinian state that lives side by side with Israel," said Al Shboul. (Xinhua)

British PM Voices Confidence on Brexit Deal



LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May on Wednesday voiced confidence in striking a deal that would allow Britain to open negotiations on post-Brexit trade ties with

the EU despite this week's setback. "We are at the point of progressing to the next stage," May told parliament in London, after Northern Ireland's Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)

blocked a proposed agreement on the Irish border being discussed in Brussels on Monday. "We will ensure that there is no hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. We will do that while we respect the constitutional integrity of the United Kingdom and we will be able to do that while we respect the internal market of the United Kingdom," she said. The DUP is Northern Ireland's biggest party. It is pro-British and backs Brexit. It has been propping up May's government in Lon-

don ever since a general election in June in which she lost her Conservative parliamentary majority. The DUP said it only saw a draft copy of the proposed deal on Monday. The party opposed the agreement because it said it wanted no "regulatory divergence" between Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK. "Now we need to look at the text, make it clear what we cannot agree with and try to work through all of that," DUP leader Arlene Foster said on Tuesday. (AFP)

India Successfully Testfires Surface-to-Air Akash Missile

NEW DELHI - India has successfully testfired its supersonic surface-to-air Akash missile from a military base in the eastern state of Odisha. The missile, with an indigenous radio frequency seeker, was launched from the Integrated Test Range at Chandipur in the state's Balasore district on Tuesday, the Defense Ministry said. "The radars, telemetry and electro-optical systems along the coast (of Bay of Bengal) have tracked and monitored all the health parameters of the missile," it added. Akash is being inducted

as a short-range missile into the Indian Army. And this is the first that such a missile with an indigenous seeker has been testfired, the Ministry said. Developed by the state-owned Defense Research and Development Organization, the 70-kg missile has a range of 27 km and can carry a 60-kg warhead at speeds of up to Mach 2.5. The missile has the capability to target aircraft up to 30 km away and can neutralize aerial targets like fighter jets, cruise missiles and air-to-surface missiles. (Xinhua)

Tillerson Says No Normalization of NATO Ties with Russia

BRUSSELS - U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson told a NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Brussels on Wednesday that the Western allies agreed there was "no normalization" of ties with Russia. "We had a lot of discussion at this NATO meeting ... over what is the proper engagement with Russia and I think there is broad consensus among all the NATO members that there is no normalization of dialogue with Russia today," he told reporters. However, highlighting how the West depends on Russia in efforts to address the multiple conflicts in the Middle East, Tillerson said Washington saw it as Moscow's task to make sure Russia's ally Damascus takes part in U.N.-led peace talks on Syria. (Reuters)

SPD Leader Promises to Push Germany to Embrace Macron

BERLIN - Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) will do everything in their power to ensure that Berlin embraces the European ideas of French President Emmanuel Macron, SPD leader Martin Schulz said on Wednesday. Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives are hoping to form a coalition with the SPD after failing to get a three-way coalition with the liberal Free Democrats and Greens off the ground. The SPD will debate the idea of once again joining such a coalition at a congress on Dec. 7-9. Schulz criticized Merkel indirectly for not embracing Macron's ideas, which include closer cooperation in defense, migration and a deeper integration of the euro zone. "What are our possibilities, our options, our instruments for ensuring that Germany embraces these French ideas," Schulz said at an SPD conference in the party's Berlin headquarters. (Reuters)

US Cannot Make up for Regional Blunders by Accusing Others: Iran

TEHRAN - Tehran has rejected US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson's recent claims on Iran's regional role as unfounded, saying such fabrications cannot help undo Washington's "strategic blunders" in the region. Speaking at a joint press conference with the European Union (EU)'s foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini in Brussels on Tuesday, Tillerson accused Iran of carrying out a number of "destabilizing actions in the region." "These issues and activities of Iran cannot be ignored and cannot go unanswered, and we intend to continue to take action to ensure Iran under-



stands this is not acceptable to us, and we look forward to working with European partners in that regard as well," he said. Reacting to the allegations, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi said, "Repeating baseless and false allegations would not help make up for the strategic and

big mistakes made by the US vis-à-vis Iran and the region over the past decades," he said. "Leveling accusations against other countries would be no cure for the pains as well as deep and old scars left from America's aggressive policies and excessive demands in the region," he added. (Presstv)

Putin Inches toward Declaring His Re-Election Bid

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin inched closer Wednesday to declaring his intention to seek re-election in next March's vote, telling an enthusiastic audience that he would take their support into account while weighing the decision. Speaking at a meeting with young volunteers, Putin was asked if he would run and said that public trust would be a key factor in his decision. He said he would decide shortly if he will seek another six-year term in the March 18 vote, adding -

to massive applause - that he would take the audience's support into consideration. "The motive behind the decision could only be a desire to improve living conditions for our people, make our country more powerful, better protected and forward-looking," Putin said. "It's only possible to achieve those goals if there is public trust and support. The decision will be made in the nearest future, and while making it I will take today's conversation with you and your reaction into account." (AP)

Hungarian EU Parliament Member Indicted for Alleged Spying

BUDAPEST, Hungary - A Hungarian member of the European Parliament has been indicted for allegedly spying on the European Union, Hungarian prosecutors said Wednesday. Prosecutors didn't identify which country Bela Kovacs was purportedly spying for, but earlier said that Hungary's counterintelligence service had been alarmed by his regular contacts with Russian diplomats and monthly visits to Moscow. According to the indictment, "the parliamentary representative carried out his spying activities in the interests of a foreign state and on behalf of the secret services," prosecutors said. Charges filed by the Chief Investigative Prosecutor's Office against Kovacs, from the far-right Jobbik party, also include fraud totaling 21,076 euros (\$24,900) stemming from the fictitious employment of interns in the EU parliament in 2012 to 2013.

Kovacs, who has been a member of the EU parliament since 2010, worked and studied in Russia for many years. The case first came to light in mid-2014, when prosecutors asked the European Parliament to lift Kovacs' immunity, though at the time the reason was classified. The request was approved in October 2015, when a separate request was filed to lift his immunity in the fraud case. Kovacs denied the charges, saying he welcomed the opportunity to clear his name in court. He said he was immediately leaving his party. (AP)

Iran 'will Not Tolerate' Trump Jerusalem 'Violation': Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani blasted his US counterpart Donald Trump's plan to recognize Jerusalem as the Israeli capital on Wednesday, saying it would not be tolerated. Rouhani also spoke with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan by phone, describing Trump's announcement as "wrong, illegitimate, provocative and very dangerous", according to an account posted on the Iranian government's website. He also agreed to attend a special summit of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the main pan-Islamic body, on December 13, which Erdogan called to discuss the issue. Rouhani had earlier been

speaking at an international conference in Tehran promoting Islamic unity and marking the anniversary of the birth of Islam's Prophet Mohammed (PBUH). Iran "will not tolerate a violation of Islamic sanctities," he said in reference to Trump's Jerusalem announcement. "Muslims must stand united against this major plot." Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei also spoke at the event, saying the US move was the result of "paralysis and incompetence". "The Islamic world will undoubtedly stand against this plot and the Zionists will receive a big blow from this action and dear Palestine will be liberated," Khamenei said. (AFP)

Ashgabat, Moscow Mull Co-Op in Int'l Arena

ASHGABAT - Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has met in Moscow with Turkmen Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a message. During the conversation that took place on the sidelines of the meeting of the Council of the Caspian Littoral States' Foreign Ministers, high assessment

was given to the level of Russian-Turkmen relations developing on the principles of strategic partnership. The ministers discussed certain issues of the bilateral agenda and cooperation in the international and regional arenas, the message noted. Following the meeting, a program of cooperation between the ministries of the two countries for 2018 was signed. (Trend)