

NATO Seeks to Allay Concerns at Meeting with Russia

BRUSSELS - NATO will seek to reassure Russia on Monday that its troop deployments to the Baltics and Poland next year are purely defensive, in a rare meeting of the alliance's envoys with those of the Kremlin that is unlikely to resolve long-standing grievances.

The NATO-Russia Council, the forum bringing together North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ambassadors and Russia's top diplomat dealing with the U.S.-led alliance, will convene for only the third time this year with the crisis in Ukraine still the top



concern for Brussels and Washington.

Russia says it is concerned about a NATO military build-up near its borders. "We count on having a frank discussion about the security situation in Europe ... including ... the consequences of NATO reinforcements on the eastern flank," Russia's ambassador to NATO, Alexander Grushko, said on Friday.

With relations already at a low ebb, Russia's devastating bombing campaign in Aleppo, which is not expected to be formerly ... (More on P4)...(13)

Thousands Protest PKK Terror Attacks in Turkey

ANKARA - Thousands of people across Turkey on Sunday gathered in rallies condemning the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) terrorism in the wake of recent deadly attacks, local NTV reported.

The protests came after a suicide car bomb attack on Saturday left 14 soldiers dead and 55 others wounded in the central province of Kayseri.

One week ago, twin bombings claimed by the Kurdistan Freedom Hawks (TAK), PKK's affiliated organization, killed 44 people in Istanbul.

In Diyarbakir, the largest

city in the southeast, people demonstrated in the central Yenisehir district despite the cold weather and marched in the streets holding Turkish flags.

In Hakkari, around 3,000 people in Yuksekova district took to the streets to protest the PKK group.

Hundreds of people in Cukurca, another district of Hakkari, also condemned the attacks and chanted anti-PKK slogans.

Bordering Iraq, Cukurca district usually suffers from intense clashes between security forces and PKK terrorists since the ... (More on P4)...(14)

All 39 People Aboard Crash-Landing Russian Jetliner Alive, 16 Injured

MOSCOW - Russian Defense Ministry experts have recovered flight data recorders of the Il-18 plane that crash-landed in Siberia earlier on Monday, according to the ministry.

"A special Russian Defense Ministry commission is working at the site of the Il-18 emergency landing, and its experts have demounted and recovered onboard recorders for delivery to a specialized laboratory and their inspection," the RIA Novosti news agency quoted a ministry source as saying.

Earlier in the day, the

aircraft, belonging to the Russian Defense Ministry, with 39 people on board, crash-landed near the Tiksi airfield in Russia's Far Eastern Sakha Republic.

All people aboard the ill-fated plane, including 32 servicemen and seven crew members, have survived the crash-landing.

"According to preliminary information, there have been no fatal consequences," the government of the Sakha Republic said in a statement.

The ministry said all people ... (More on P4)...(16)

May Urged to Unilaterally Agree EU Citizens' Stay in Britain after Brexit

LONDON - The leaders of Britain's biggest trade union and business organisation sent a joint letter on Sunday to British Prime Minister Theresa May, calling for a unilateral move to agree EU migrants' stay in the country after Brexit.

In the open letter signed by union chief Frances O'Grady of the Trade Union Congress and Adam Marshall, the director general of the British Chambers of Commerce, the two leaders called on May to end the uncertainty for businesses and millions of

workers by confirming that the government will give current EU migrants a right to stay in Britain after Brexit.

In what was described as a "bold unilateral move," the commitment urged by the two leaders was explained as "both morally right and also in the interests of the British economy."

They also believe that it will send a signal of goodwill to the EU, which will



benefit Britain's negotiating position.

"It's the right thing to do. But it's also about what is right for Britain too. Continued doubt about the status of workers from the rest of the EU is bad for business, and it puts services ... (More on P4)...(15)

Kerry Says War in Yemen Should End in Way Protecting Saudi Security

RIYADH - U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on Sunday stressed that the war in Yemen should end in a way that protects the security of Saudi Arabia, Al Arabiya News reported.

Speaking at a press conference with his Saudi counterpart Adel Al-Jubeir, the visiting U.S. secretary of state urged all political parties to go back to the negotiating table to reach an agreement.

A UN plan on Yemen is not final and is negotiable, Kerry said, noting that the main goal of ending the war in Yemen

is to reach a political settlement to deal with the humanitarian crisis there.

The top U.S. diplomat added that the U.S., like Saudi Arabia, objects the Iranian interference in Yemen.

Meanwhile, Al-Jubeir said that any agreement in Yemen should focus on the Gulf initiative and the UN resolution, urging the world for firm steps to stop the Iranian interference in regional issues.

Kerry's re-



marks highlighted the U.S. stance to end a Saudi-led coalition's war in Yemen, which will enter its third year in March, causing a devastating crisis among civilians in the conflict-hit areas. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

China, Norway Agree on Normalization of Ties

BEIJING - China and Norway have reached consensus on normalization of ties, according to a meeting between Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Norwegian Foreign Minister Borge Brende Monday in Beijing.

Li said the two countries' foreign ministers had candid and in-depth talks, and reached an agreement on the normalization of bilateral ties.

China hopes to work together with Norway to open a new chapter in bilateral ties, and push forward a sustained, healthy and stable relationship, Li said.

China-Norway relations deteriorated due to controversy around the Nobel Peace Prize in 2010 and events connected to the Prize.

Li said China appreciates the new Norwegian government's adherence to the one-China policy and its wish to improve and develop ties with China.

The two economies are highly compatible, Li said, adding China is ready to negotiate with Norway on an FTA, to send out a clear signal of trade and investment liberalization. (Xinhua)

Pakistani PM to Visit Bosnia and Herzegovina

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will be undertaking an official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina from December 20 to December 22, at the invitation of the Chairman of the Council of Ministers (Prime Minister), Dr. Denis Zvidvic, an official announcement said on Monday.

Apart from delegation level talks with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers, the prime minister will meet the chairman and members of the Bosnia and Herzegovina's leaders and members of the lower and upper houses of the Parliamentary Assembly of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Pakistan's foreign ministry said.

The prime minister will also address a Business Forum and meet with members of the Foreign Trade Chamber and Foreign Investment Promotion Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The prime minister will exchange views with the Bosnian leadership on regional and international issues of mutual concern.

Both countries will review the entire range of bilateral relations with a special focus on political, trade and economic ties, inter-parliamentary linkages and enhancing cultural and educational relations, a foreign ministry statement said. (Xinhua)

UK Must Look in Mirror Instead of Accusing Iran: Foreign Ministry



TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi says the United Kingdom needs to take a retrospective look at its past destructive actions of sabotage in the region.

Speaking at the annual summit of the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council in Bahrain's capital Manama on December 7, British Prime Minister Theresa May said that Britain would help the GCC states "push back" against what she claimed to be Iran's "aggressive regional actions."

Qassemi reacted to the remarks in his press briefing on Monday, saying, "These countries, which broach [such claims], can place a mirror in front of themselves to see their past in it and then decide what countries are responsible for the region's [current] grave situation."

Such remarks will have no impact on the Islamic Republic's foreign policy, he said, adding that the country's policy vis-à-vis the region is clear and there is no need for concealment. (Presstv)

Putin to Meet Central Asian Counterparts



BAKU - The heads of Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Armenia will meet in Saint Petersburg on Dec. 26, Russian presidential press-service reported Monday.

Within the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council the heads of Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Armenia will sum up the first two years of the Eurasian Economic Union's activity and outline the guidelines for its further development.

It is planned to sign EAEU Treaty on the Customs Code within the meeting. Moreover the heads of EAEU member countries will approve the main directions of the international activity of the Union for 2017, and consider various aspects of cooperation with key trade and economic partners.

Moreover a meeting of the CSTO Collective Security Council will take place in Saint Petersburg on Dec. 26.

Within the meeting the presidents of these five countries plus Tajikistan will discuss cooperation within the organization and its ongoing activities. It is planned to exchange views on key issues of global and regional agenda, including fight against terrorist and extremist threats and drug and weapons trafficking. (Trend)

EU Extend Russia Sanctions by another 6 Months

BRUSSELS - The European Union has extended its sanctions against Russia for six more months to keep pressure on Moscow to respect the fragile peace agreement in Ukraine.

Monday's official decision came in the wake of last week's summit where leaders already endorsed the move. It means restrictive measures targeting Russia's financial, energy and defense sectors, as well as goods that can be used for both civilian



and military purposes, remain in force until at least July 31. The EU imposed sanctions against Russia in July 2014 over Russia's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula, and added to them after Russia backed separatists in eastern Ukraine. (AP)

WHO Moves to Protect Children from Unhealthy Food, Drinks

MANILA - The World Health Organization for the Western Pacific launched on Monday a new tool to protect children from unhealthy food and drink that cause obesity and other serious health problems.

The tool, called the regional profile model, will help governments and policymakers to more easily identify food and non-alcoholic beverages that should not be marketed to children.

"Nutrient profiles rank foods by their nutritional composition," the WHO said in a statement.

"As such, they are critical tools for the implementation of restrictions on the marketing of food and beverages to children." Across the Western Pacific

Region, the WHO said marketers of unhealthy food and beverages target children. These food and beverages are high in calories, saturated and trans fats, salt and sugar, the consumption of which are driving exploding rates of obesity and other health problems in many countries across the region.

"Children are constantly bombarded with clever marketing campaigns that use advertising, promotion and sponsorship techniques pioneered by the tobacco and alcohol industries," said Shin Young-soo, WHO regional director for the Western Pacific.

He said marketing plays a major role in shaping the children's diet, preferences and consumption patterns. (Xinhua)

London's Mayor Appoints Former EU Commissioner Mandelson to Advise on Brexit

LONDON - London's mayor Sadiq Khan appointed former EU Trade Commissioner Peter Mandelson to a panel of business and financial leaders advising on Brexit which also includes the City of London's policy chief and the head of the London Stock Exchange.

Londoners overwhelmingly backed remaining in the European Union in the June 23 referendum and Khan, the most senior Labour Party politician to hold power in Britain, has vowed to defend the capital from any Brexit-related hit.

Fellow Labour Party politician Mandelson, a minister under ex prime ministers Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, was in charge of EU trade policy between 2004 and 2008, including during fraught talks over textile quotas with China known as the "Bra Wars."

Khan said the panel would provide insight and expertise as he pushes to protect key policy areas during monthly meetings with Brexit minister David Davis.

"Securing privileged access to the single market, maintaining a world-class financial sector and ensuring London can continue to attract global talent are all recurring themes from my conversations with business," said Khan. Just over a dozen members will advise the mayor including the British chair of Spanish bank Santander, the Chairman of the Canary Wharf Group and the City of London's policy chief. (Reuters)

Agrarian Party of Turkmenistan Nominates Presidential Candidate

ASHGABAT - The Agrarian Party of Turkmenistan has nominated Durdygylch Orazov, head of one of its regional branches, as a presidential candidate, the state news agency of Turkmenistan said.

Durdygylch Orazov is chairman of Mary province committee of the Agrarian Party of Turkmenistan.

The Agrarian Party has sent documents to the Central Election Commission for registration of its presidential candidate.

All three parties have nominated their candidates to run in presidential elections scheduled for February 12, 2017.

The ruling Democratic Party of Turkmenistan nominated incumbent President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov.

The Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan nominated Bekmyrat Atalyev for president. In accordance with the revised Constitution of Turkmenistan adopted on 14 September 2016, the presidential term was increased from 5 to 7 years. The age threshold of 70 years was removed for presidential candidates. (AKI Press)