

British PM Says Brexit White Paper to be Published Thursday

LONDON - The British government is to publish a "White Paper" on Thursday detailing its strategy for leaving the European Union (EU), Prime Minister Theresa May told parliament on Wednesday.

The document is a summary of the Government's plans, usually published for information and for a prompt discussion before a formal parliamentary bill is introduced. Last week, May promised a Brexit white paper in response to growing pressure from Members of Parliament (MPs) of all parties, for the government to update Parliament on its Brexit strategy before MPs are asked to vote on trig-



gering Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty -- the official trigger for Brexit.

Meanwhile, Britain's former EU ambassador Sir Ivan Rogers on Wednesday said Brexit talks would take place on a "humongous scale" involving "difficult trade-offs," BBC reported. Rogers predicted that much of the talks would be "conducted very publicly" with "name-calling" and an "extremely feisty atmosphere." He added that EU Commission chiefs were saying Britain should pay 40 to 60 billion euros (43 to 64 billion U.S. dollars) to leave and thought a trade deal could take until the mid-2020s to agree. (Xinhua)

Nearly 5,500 Maritime Migrants Reach Europe in 1st Month of 2017: IOM

GENEVA - A total of 5,483 migrants and refugees have crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe since the beginning of the year, down from 67,375 through the first 29 days of 2016, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported Tuesday.

Most entries this year were registered in Italy, where 4,292 migrants have arrived since Jan. 1, with the remaining 1,191 individuals landing on Greek shores.

According to the latest IOM figures, 253 people

have drowned at sea attempting to reach European shores so far this year.

Most deaths (227) were documented on the central Mediterranean passage linking North Africa with Italy, with the remaining fatalities recorded on western and eastern Mediterranean sea routes.

Some 363,348 migrants and refugees reached Europe in 2016, a year which saw a record 5,079 people lost their lives while crossing the Mediterranean Sea. (Xinhua)

UN Envoy Asks Security Council to Put off Syria Talks in Geneva

UNITED NATIONS - UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura said here Tuesday that he had asked the UN Security Council to postpone the intra-Syrian peace talks in Geneva until Feb. 20.

"I did ask the Security Council and based also on the discussions I had with the SG (UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres) to postpone the talks until the 20th" of February, de Mistura made the remarks after he briefed the 15-nation UN body at a closed meeting on the current

situation in Syria.

The Syria talks in Geneva had been scheduled for Feb. 8, de Mistura told the closed council meeting that he sought the postponement in order to give the Syrian opposition more time to prepare for the talks and ensure that the peace talks are as inclusive as possible, diplomats said here.

Last week, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said that the Syrian peace talks would be delayed, but he did not elaborate. However, the United Nations did not confirm it



at that time.

Rounds of Syrian peace talks have taken place in Geneva under the auspices of the United Nations, but little progress has been made mainly due to con-

tinuous fighting in the Middle Eastern country. Also last week, Russia, Iran and Turkey led talks in Astana, the Kazakh capital, in a bid to bring an early ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

UN Pledges to Facilitate Lasting Political Settlement of Syria Crisis

UNITED NATIONS - The members of the United Nations (UN) Security Council on Tuesday reiterated their support for the UN efforts to facilitate a lasting political settlement of the Syria crisis, according to a statement.

The members on Tuesday heard a briefing by the UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, and pledged to facilitate the lasting political settlement of the Syria crisis through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process that

meets the legitimate aspirations of the Syrian people, read the statement. They reaffirmed their "strong commitment to the sovereignty, independence, unity and territorial integrity of the Syrian Arab Republic," and reiterated that the only sustainable solution to the current crisis in Syria is through an inclusive and Syrian-led political process based on the Geneva Communiqué of June 30, 2012 and relevant ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

UN Hopes to See Temporary U.S. Refugee Ban "Lifted as Soon as Possible"

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations on Tuesday said that the world body hopes to see that the temporary U.S. ban on the entry of refugees into the country "will be lifted as soon as possible."

"We hope it will be lifted as soon as possible," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said at a daily news briefing here in response to a press question.

Thousands of protesters rallied in front of the White House in Washington D.C. on Sunday while demonstrations

continued across more than 30 American airports after U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order temporarily barring all refugees and seven Mideast and North African countries' citizens from entering the United States.

Under the order, refugees from all over the world will be suspended U.S. entry for 120 days while all immigration from so-called "countries with terrorism concerns" will be suspended for 90 days. Countries included in the



ban are Iraq, Syria, Iran, Sudan, Libya, Somalia and Yemen.

Earlier Tuesday, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, on his way back

from Ethiopia which is the largest refugee holding country in Africa, issued a statement which said that any country's border ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

UNSC Expresses Grave Concern over Situation in Eastern Ukraine

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations on Tuesday expressed "grave concern" over the situation in eastern Ukraine.

The members of the Security Council expressed "grave concern" about the dangerous deterioration of the situation in the eastern Ukraine and its severe impact on the local civilian population, says a UN Security Council press statement.

"The members of the Security Council condemned the use of weapons prohibited by the Minsk agreements



along the contact line in Donetsk region that lead to deaths and injuries, including among civilians," the statement says. "The members of the Security Council expressed their full support of sovereignty

and territorial integrity of Ukraine and underlined the need for strict compliance with Resolution 2202 (2015), which endorsed the 'Package of measures for the Implementation of the ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

Iraqi PM Says U.S. Travel Ban Punishes Anti-Terrorism Fighters

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi said on Tuesday that U.S. President Donald Trump's decision to ban Iraqis from traveling to the United States is punishing those who are "sacrificing and fighting terrorism."

Abadi's comment came four days after Trump put a four-month hold on allowing refugees into the United States and temporarily barred travelers from Iraq and six other Muslim-majority countries, saying the moves would help protect Americans from terrorist attacks. "You come to the victim to hold him accountable. You come to the people who are sacrificing and fighting terrorism, to punish them," Abadi said at a press conference after his weekly cabinet meeting. "The way the order was issued was not good and represents an offense to Iraqis that ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

UN Agency Says 26,000 Somali Refugees Affected by U.S. Travel Ban

NAIROBI - About 26,000 Somali refugees, who fled to Kenya from fighting in their country and had planned to resettle in the United States, are now stranded because of travel ban by Washington, the UN refugee agency said on Wednesday. Yvonne Ndege, an officer at the UNHCR Kenya office said the affected refugees, who have all been screened by both U.S. and UN officials, have waited for more than two years for their resettlement to be approved and organized.

Ndege said 13,000 of the refugees had been interviewed by U.S. officials and have not departed after President Donald Trump suspended the U.S. asylum program.

"We very much hope these issues will be resolved and the U.S. will continue its strong leadership role and long tradition of protecting those who are fleeing conflict and persecution," Ndege told Xinhua. She said 26,000 refugees in Kenya were in the process of resettlement to America and are affected by the travel ban, 14,500 of them are from Dadaab refugee camp in northeast Kenya.

Ndege said an additional 13,000 Somali refugees have applied to be resettled in the United States. The resettlement comes after Kenya announced the closure of the Dadaab camp in May 2016. Nairobi however, suspended the deadline by six months.

The resettlement fears follow President Donald Trump's signing on Jan. 27 of an Executive Order that, among things, suspends the U.S. refugee programme for 120 days and ...*(More on P4)...(26)*

S. Korea, Japan Dominate Speed Skating at Universiade

ALMATY - Skaters from South Korea and Japan dominated the men's 500m speed skating competition at the 2017 Almaty Universiade on Wednesday as they finished top six of the event.

Cha Minkyu of South Korea claimed the title in 70.40 seconds. Japan's Nakao Koto finished second in 70.76 and Cha's teammate Kim Youngjin came third in 71.13. Moreover, Shinjima Tatsuya and Goto Takuya, both of Japan finished fourth and sixth while another South Korean skater Kim Junho ranked fifth.

China's Zhang Hongqiang, who was considered a medal ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

Australia Must Embrace Free Trade despite Growing Global Protectionism: PM

CANBERRA - Australia should continue to embrace free trade in the face of growing global protectionism, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull said in a speech at the National Press Club on Wednesday.

Turnbull, who outlined his government's plans for the new year ahead of federal parliament's resumption next week, said recent trends towards protectionism and away from free trade were bad for businesses and the economy, and said Australia would continue to push forward with its plans to sign free trade deals and "aggressively" export vital services and produce. "We cannot

retreat into the bleak dead end of protectionism," Turnbull said on Wednesday. "We must compete aggressively to export our services in education, health, engineering, tourism and more, and we must pursue even greater access for our agriculture sector and our manufacturers." "We must pursue even greater global access to the global economy because it is good for jobs, good for investment and good for Australia. It puts our interest, our national interests first, because it creates more jobs and opportunities for Australians."

He said while it was important for Australians to support ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

Nieghbor News

China Plays Crucial Role in Promoting Construction of Better World: UNOG Chief

GENEVA - The head of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) has hailed China's role as a catalyst and as one "showing the way forward" in promoting the construction of a better world.

In an exclusive interview with Xinhua, Michael Moller, director-general of UNOG, hailed Chinese President Xi Jinping's recent speeches at the World Economic Forum in Davos and the Palace of Nations in Geneva.

"Particularly in today's world that is fragmented, confrontational and difficult, his message was extremely welcome," said Moller.

"I look forward to our working very closely to-

gether to make sure we move forward on what is basically a very common approach," said Moller.

In the face of climate change, migration, resource scarcity, water, health and financial issues, the world must cooperate to find solutions and reduce the impact of these global scourges on affected populations, he added.

Against this challenging backdrop, the UN official welcomed Chinese support for multilateralism, adding that the country can play a key role in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris agreement on climate change, both adopted in 2015.

...*(More on P4)...(29)*

Iran Confirms Recent Ballistic Missile Test

TEHRAN - Iran's Defense Minister Hossein Dehqan on Wednesday confirmed the recent ballistic missile test by his country, Tasnim news agency reported.

"The recent (missile) test was in line with our programs, and we will not allow any outsider to interfere in our defense affairs," Dehqan was quoted as saying.

Iran's missile test is by no means contradict the Iranian nuclear deal, known as JCPOA, nor United Nations Security Council Resolution 2231, the minister said.

Resolution 2231, adopted on July 20, 2015, to endorse a nuclear deal between Iran and six world powers, calls upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic

missiles designed to be capable of delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology.

The defense minister said that the country's missile tests are part of Iran's defense plans aimed at fulfilling its national interests, and no one or country could affect the country's plans and decisions. He reiterated that

Iran's missile program is for deterrence purposes. Details of the recent missile test by the Islamic republic has not been publicized, but it was the first test by Iran after new U.S. President Donald Trump took office on Jan. 20.

On Tuesday, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif warned Washington against ...*(More on P4)...(30)*

Debt Fears Overblown, Says Dar

KARACHI - In a long and detailed rejoinder to his critics, Pakistani Finance Minister Ishaq Dar says that the country's debt profile is in fact improving, and "predictions of doomsday scenario for Pakistan" regarding public debt are overblown.

To highlight the point, he provides a comparison in growth of debt between his government and that of his predecessor. "[I] he previous government contracted net debt of around Rs7,833 billion during its term (2008-13)," he says, which averages out to "an annual

compounded growth rate of 19.0 per cent." By contrast, the same figure for the three years of his own government is 9.75pc, he says, providing detailed breakdowns of the figures for each of the periods.

"The Net Debt-to-GDP ratio as at June 2008 was 53.1pc, which had increased to 60.2pc in June 2013 when the present government assumed office. During the period from July 2013 to June 2016, the Net Debt-to-GDP ratio has remained unchanged at 60.2pc, ...*(More on P4)...(31)*

Early Voting at Presidential Election to Start in Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - The Central Commission for Election and Referenda of Turkmenistan has adopted a resolution according to which early voting at the country's presidential election will start Feb. 2, 2017.

The early voting will be carried out daily from 08:00 (GMT +5 hours) to 18:00. In accordance with the article 73 of the Electoral Code of Turkmenistan, those, who are un-

able to be at their place of residence on the election day, have the right for early voting at a polling station.

Presidential election in Turkmenistan is scheduled for Feb. 12, 2017.

Nine presidential candidates were officially registered in Turkmenistan. The Democratic Party nominated the incumbent head of state Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the ...*(More on P4)...(32)*

Uzbekistan Approves State Program on Aral Sea Basin

TASHKENT - The "State program on development of the Aral Sea basin for 2017-2021" has been approved by Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's decree.

The program aims at improving the living conditions of the population in the region. Around 67

projects worth 8.422 trillion soums are planned to be implemented within the program. The measures are planned to be taken to create new jobs, increase the investment attractiveness of the region, develop the water supply system, improve ...*(More on P4)...(33)*