

Ex-U.S. President Carter to Attend Informal UN Meeting on Middle East

UNITED NATIONS - Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter has been invited to attend the United Nations Security Council's Arria formula meeting on the Middle East on Feb. 22, the body's president for February said Thursday.

The Arria formula meetings are very informal and confidential gatherings which enable council members to have a frank and private exchange of views. The meetings are called for the purpose of a briefing given by one or more persons, considered as experts in a matter of concern to the council.

The former U.S. president,



during whose term in office the Camp David Accords were brokered, had followed the Palestinian-Israeli problem for a long time, Kuwait's Ambassador to the United Nations Mansour Al-Otaibi, president of the council for February, said at a press briefing.

Carter had a role to play and that was why he was invited, he added.

Carter bridged wide gaps between the Egyptian leader Anwar Sadat and Israeli leader Menachem Begin, leading to the Camp David Accords in September 1978, which led to a peace treaty between the two countries. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

Trump not Certainly Standing with Iranian People: Iran FM

TEHRAN - Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has rejected the US president's latest claim that he is standing alongside Iranian people, saying Donald Trump's assertion once again demonstrated his "ignorance" of the realities on the ground in Iran and the wider region. In his first State of the Union address to Congress on Tuesday, Trump claimed his foreign policy is focused on strengthening "friendships around the world" while "restoring clarity about our adversaries." Trump also boasted of his meddlesome stance on a wave of scattered

riots that hit a number of Iranian towns and cities last month, saying, "I did not stay silent. America stands with the people of Iran in their courageous struggle for freedom."

He also reiterated his hostile stance on the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and six world powers and said, "I am asking the Congress to address the fundamental flaws in the terrible Iran nuclear deal."

Shortly after the address, Zarif tweeted that the US president's comments show he actually lacks knowledge about issues concerning Iran and the region. (Presstv)

Pentagon Confirms Failure of Missile Interceptor Test in Hawaii

WASHINGTON - U.S. Pentagon confirmed Thursday that an interceptor missile missed its target in a test off the Hawaiian coast, according to multiple reports. "It did not meet our objectives, but we learn something all the time with these tests, and we learned something from this one," said Pentagon Chief Spokesperson Dana White. The spokesperson was quoted as saying that the Pentagon does not consider the test on Wednesday a complete failure.

According to local media, the interceptor, an SM-3 Block IIA missile, was launched from an Aegis Ashore test site in Hawaii, but failed to hit another missile launched from an aircraft.

The Missile Defense Agency said the test was the first land-based launch. It also marked the first time both ground and space-based sensors were used in an Aegis launch. However, officials did not immediately confirm the test had failed on the day of the launch. (Xinhua)

India to Build Tunnel under 14000 Ft High Sela Pass Near Chinese Border

NEW DELHI - In a bid to ensure all-weather connectivity between the mainland and the hinterlands bordering China, the Indian government has announced the construction of a tunnel at the majestic Sela Pass that sits at 14000 feet above sea level. Primarily, the idea is to cut down the time taken by troops to travel to Tawang - a potential military flashpoint for its disputed status.

India's Minister of Finance Arun Jaitley confirmed the plan during the presentation of the annual budget in Parliament on Thursday. (Agencies)



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Turkmenistan on Schedule Regarding TAPI Pipeline's Construction

ASHGABAT - The Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline is being built in Turkmenistan in accordance with the approved schedule, Nebit-Gaz, online newspaper of the country's Oil and Gas Complex, reported Jan. 30.

Turkmengaz State Concern's representative in the board of directors of TAPI Pipeline Company Limited delivered a report at the final meeting of enterprises and departments of Turkmeni-

stan's oil and gas industry.

The construction of the Turkmen section of the TAPI gas pipeline was launched in December 2015 and will be completed in late 2018 according to the schedule. The TAPI pipeline will run from Galkynysh - the largest gas field in Turkmenistan - through the Afghan cities of Herat and Kandahar, and finally reach the Fajilka settlement located near the India-Pakistan border. (Trend)

Trump Expected to Approve Release of Classified Memo on FBI Russia Probe



WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump is expected to approve the publication of a controversial classified memo alleging the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)

and Justice Department abused its surveillance powers during the Russia probe, local media reported. Trump is expected to tell Congress about that as early as Friday, several

media outlets quoted anonymous White House sources as saying.

The president has read the memo and "is okay with it," a senior White House official told reporters travelling with Trump to West Virginia.

The memo, prepared by Devin Nunes, the Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, is said to be part of a bid to prove that the FBI and Justice Department are biased and out to get the president. Nunes, who served on the Trump transition team, is widely

seen as Trump's close ally. Democratic lawmakers have called the memo misleading and part of an effort to undermine special counsel Robert Mueller's probe into possible collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia during the 2016 elections.

The memo was meant to "sow conspiracy theories and attack the integrity of federal law enforcement as a means to protect President Trump," Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer said Thursday. (Xinhua)

UN Says at Least 90 Reportedly Drown in Boat Capsizing off Libyan Coast



GENEVA - At least 90 migrants are reported to have drowned when a boat capsized off the coast of Libya Friday morning, the United Nations migrant agency IOM cited its Libya representative as saying. Olivia Headon, IOM's representative in Libya, said that 10 bodies are reported to have been washed up on Libyan

shores, including two Libyans and eight Pakistani nationals.

Two survivors are reported to have swam to shore, while another was rescued by a fishing boat, Headon said.

IOM said it is working to get more details of the tragedy and to see how best to assist the survivors. (Xinhua)

Jeenbekov Meets with Tajik Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda

DUSHANBE - President of Kyrgyzstan Sooronbay Jeenbekov met today with Prime Minister of Tajikistan Kokhir Rasulzoda within the framework of his official visit to Tajikistan. During the meeting, Jeenbekov said that the current state of the entire range of Kyrgyz-Tajik relations was discussed with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and identified priority areas for further cooperation, Kabar with reference to the Kyrgyz President's press service reported.

"Between our countries there is a great unrealized potential in the trade and economic, transport, cultural and

humanitarian spheres.

Measures should be taken to intensify trade and economic cooperation and create favorable conditions for increasing the volume of trade between Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. It is necessary to develop mechanisms for cooperation in the export, import and re-export of goods, taking into account the membership of Kyrgyzstan in the Eurasian Economic Union and the GSP + status in the EU. It is necessary to help business circles and business entities of our countries in establishing contacts and concluding contracts," Jeenbekov said. (Trend)

German SPD's Schulz Says No Time Pressure for Coalition Talks

BERLIN - The leader of Germany's Social Democrats (SPD) said on Friday there was no time pressure in negotiations with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives on forming a coalition, suggesting talks will run beyond an initial deadline of Sunday night.

"In a few minutes we will begin the final round of negotiations on forming a new government," Martin Schulz said as he arrived for talks, adding that labor rights and healthcare policy continued to be sticking points in the negotiations.

He said solid progress had been made in talks and that he assumed the talks would be successful "for our country". (Reuters)

Russian Ex-Governor Gets 8-Year Prison Sentence

MOSCOW - A court in Moscow has convicted a former provincial governor of taking a 400,000-euro (\$500,000) bribe and sentenced him to eight years in prison.

Lawyers for former Kirov regional Gov. Nikita Belykh said they would appeal the verdict delivered late Thursday. Belykh has been in custody since he was arrested in June 2016 while accepting the money at a Moscow restaurant. He rejected the charges as provocation.

Belykh's case was among a series of arrests of regional and federal officials intended to showcase Kremlin efforts to combat corruption. Prior to his appointment to the governor's job, Belykh led a liberal party, an untypical track record untypical for Russia's provincial leaders. (AP)

Ukraine to Participate in China International Import Expo

KIEV - Ukrainian enterprises will join the first China International Import Expo (CIIE), the president of the Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Gennady Chizhikov announced on Thursday. "China International Import Expo will be one of the most important events in our cooperation with the Chinese business community in 2018. I am sure that this will be an event of the global significance," Chizhikov said during the presentation of the CIIE in Kiev. The presentation was attended by about 500 high-ranked guests, including the official delegation from the



Chinese Ministry of Commerce, representatives of Shanghai municipal government, Ukrainian entrepreneurs and government officials. Olga Trofimtseva, Ukraine's deputy agriculture minister, said that the expo will provide a great chance for the Ukrainian agricultural

producers to enter the Chinese market. "I believe that we have the potential for increasing the bilateral trade in agrarian and food products and an extremely large potential for expanding the range of products traded between our countries," Trofimtseva said. (Xinhua)

UAE Breaks Guinness Record for World's Longest Zipline

DUBAI - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) emirate of Ras al-Khaimah said its latest zipline was confirmed by Guinness as the "World's Longest Zipline" on Thursday.

The zipline, locally known as "Jebel Jais Flight," enables visitors to travel at speed of up to 120 kph to 150 kph at a height of 1,680 meters above the sea level.

The official certification was handed over to Sheikh Ahmad bin Saud Bin Saqr Al-Qasimi, ruler of Ras al-Khaimah, by

Hoda Khachab, the official adjudicator from Guinness World Records, the local tourism authority said in an e-mailed statement.

The city ruler became the first person to take a trial ride on the new zipline, following the official certification.

"This is a great achievement for Ras al-Khaimah's international tourism ambitions," said Haiitham Mattar, chief executive officer of Ras al-Khaimah Tourism Development Authority. (Xinhua)

Turkey Urges UN to Exclude PYD from Syria Constitution Committee

ANKARA - Turkey has urged the UN not to include any representative from the Syrian Kurdish group, Democratic Union Party (PYD), at the constitutional committee agreed at the Sochi Congress, a Turkish diplomat told Xinhua.

The delegation representing Turkey at Sochi Congress has raised the issue with UN's Special Representative for Syria Staffan de Mistura on the sidelines of the gathering, the diplomat said on condition of anonymity.

The UN envoy said he was "aware of" Turkey's sensitivity on the issue of PYD, which Ankara sees as the offshoot of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), according to the diplomat.

Turkey often raises its sensitivity about the Syrian Kurdish group "almost at every meeting with Mistura," said the diplomat explaining that the UN special representative is familiar with Ankara's concerns.

A committee was formed at the Syrian peace talks held in Russia's Sochi on Tuesday, aiming to discuss revision of the current Syrian constitution.

Turkey, Russia and Iran, the three guarantor countries of Astana process, each submitted the UN envoy a list of 50 names, making a total of 150, as potential members of the constitutional committee, the diplomat said adding that Mistura will decide on some 30-40 names among these lists. (Xinhua)

Pakistan High Commissioner to Canada Meets Sec Gen Aiex

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan High Commissioner to Canada Tariq Aziz Khan Friday met Alex Neve Secretary General, Amnesty International, Canada to discuss the Indian ruthlessness being carried out against innocent Kashmiris.

According to a message received here, High Commissioner briefed the Secretary General on the situation in Indian occupied Kashmir where hundreds of civilians, especially the youth, were blinded through use of pallet guns by the occupational forces.

Pallet shot guns have been responsible for blinding, killing and traumatizing thousands of people in occupied Kashmir and violates international standards under UN code of conduct, he added. High Commissioner un-

derlined that Canada is considered as the flag bearer and champion of human rights, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in his forthcoming visit to India, should take up the issue of human right violations in the Indian occupied Kashmir.

Secretary General informed the High Commissioner that it is unfortunate that India is not allowing access to Amnesty International and other international human right organizations to visit parts of Kashmir which are under siege by the Indian forces.

He informed the High Commissioner that Amnesty International will urge Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to take up the human rights violations issue with the Indian government during his visit. (Monitoring desk)