

# Turkey Must Cut Migrant Flows to Europe: Top EU Official

AMSTERDAM - Europe needs Turkey to dramatically cut the number of migrants reaching Greece within weeks or the pressure for more border closures and fences will grow, the EU's top official in charge of ties with Ankara warned on Saturday. Frustrated that refugees continue to stream into Greece despite a Nov. 29 deal between Ankara and Brussels to slow down the flows, European Commissioner Johannes Hahn said Turkey must show results by the time EU leaders meet for a Feb. 18-19 summit. "This action plan was agreed more



than two months ago and we are still not seeing a significant decline in the

number of migrants," Hahn, the EU's enlargement commissioner, told

Reuters after an EU foreign ministers' meeting in Amsterdam attended by

Turkey's foreign minister, Mevlut Cavusoglu. "Turkey could do more,

I have no doubt," Hahn said, adding that Ankara's need to shift forces to curb violence in southeastern Turkey was "no excuse" for not patrolling its western coast and cooperating with Greece. The European Commission, the EU executive, is set to publish on Wednesday a report on Turkey's progress in implementing the migrant deal. While Turkish police targeting people smugglers have made arrests and Turkey has introduced a limited work-permit scheme for Syrian refugees, the Commission report is likely to be critical. (Reuters)

## Neighbor News

### China, UN to Stage World Tourism Conference

BEIJING - The Chinese government and the United Nations' World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) will co-host an international tourism conference in Beijing in May, an official announced on Saturday. Up to 850 attendees from 143 countries will be invited to the four-day meeting, running from May 18, Zhang Lizhong, departmental director of the China National Tourism Administration (CNTA), said at a press conference. The UNWTO will also stage meetings for ministers and officials involved in its T20 tourism initiative during the

same period. Global tourism has bucked the trend of sluggish global economic growth and expanded for six years in a row. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council's estimation, tourism accounted for 10 percent of world GDP and 9.5 percent of global employment last year. Through the conference, China aims to promote itself as a tourist destination, explore ways to boost sustainable development of the sector, push forward international cooperation, and relieve poverty in tourist destinations, Zhang said. (Xinhua)

### Saudi Defeat in Syria Definite: Iran's IRGC Chief

TEHRAN - A top Iranian military commander says a "definite" defeat awaits Saudi Arabia if it sends troops to Syria. "Sending troops by Saudi Arabia means a coup de grace for its regime which, of course, is not bad," chief commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Major General Mohammad Ali Ja'afari said on Saturday. In a surprise statement broadcast on the Saudi-owned Al Arabiya news network on Thursday, a spokesman for the Saudi defense ministry suggested that the kingdom could

send troops to Syria. Gen. Ja'afari dismissed it as a "bluff," saying he didn't think the Saudis "would dare to do that because their army is a classical army and history has shown they are incapable of confronting Islam's fighters." "Such an action will amount to a coup de grace for them which, of course, they apparently see no other choice to avoid but their defeat is definite," he told reporters in Tehran. "They are bluffing. But if that happens, we think it's not bad from our point of view," Ja'afari added. (PressTV)

## Syrian FM Warns Against Saudi Military Intervention

DAMASCUS - Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem warned Saudi Arabia against intervening in Syria militarily, saying those who will enter the Syrian ground without the consent of the Syrian government "will return to their countries in wooden coffins." Speaking at a press conference held in the capital Damascus, Syria's top diplomat said "we will resist any violations to our sovereignty." "Any ground intervention in Syria without the consent of the Syrian gov-

ernment is an aggression that should be countered, which will be the duty of all of the Syrian people. And the aggressors will return to their countries in wooden boxes," al-Moallem warned, while asked about the recent reports, suggesting Saudi Arabia is ready to send ground troops into Syria. The head of the Syrian diplomacy said "the logic and the normal sense rule out any possible intervention scenario, but reviewing the crazy decisions made by Saudi Arabia in



other areas suggest that nothing can be ruled out." "I think there is something being cooked under a U.S. supervision between Turkey and Saudi Arabia," he said. "Whether Saudis

or Turkish, all those who will practice aggression on Syria will be sent back in wooden coffins." The minister said the Saudi desire to enter Syria came after their... (More on P4)...(20)

## Merkel Urges better Protection of EU External Borders

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel called on Saturday for better protection at the European Union's external borders in order to maintain the passport-free Schengen zone. Merkel, who opened her country's borders to Syrians fleeing civil war last summer, is under increasing pressure to limit the influx of migrants after more than a million arrived in Germany last year. A poll published this week showed popu-

lar support for Merkel had tumbled to a four-and-a-half-year low with more than 80 percent of Germans doubting her government had the refugee crisis under control. "We need to protect our external borders because we want to keep Schengen," Merkel said in her weekly podcast. Failing to protect the EU's external borders would jeopardize free movement of people which is the basis for the bloc's wealth, Merkel added.



In particular, the protection of external borders is not turning out very well where the EU has sea borders, she said, referring indirectly to Greece,

which has seen a huge influx of migrants and refugees coming in over water via Turkey, without mentioning the country by name. (Reuters)

### Heavy Security Around Stade De France 3 Months After Attacks

PARIS - Despite a marked increase in security checks, there was a calm and relaxed atmosphere outside Stade de France as fans arrived for the Six Nations rugby match between France and Italy on Saturday. It was the first event held at the national stadium since the deadly attacks that struck Paris of Nov. 13, when 130 people died and hundreds more were injured. That night, three suicide bombers blew themselves up outside the stadium as France

took on Germany in a football match. It was the first brutal act of bloodshed around the capital that put France under a state of emergency in the wake of Islamic extremist attacks. With tens of thousands of fans using public transport to reach the Stade de France, eagle-eyed Paris police also increased security checks on overland and underground trains, and also on cars - warning that any cars illegally parked around the stadium... (More on P4)...(21)

### Iran Prefers Euro for Oil Exports: Official

TEHRAN - Iran prefers to receive euro for its oil exports, an official in the National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC), said Saturday. "Our priority is to receive cash for oil payments in euro" following the removal of sanctions on oil exports and lifting the ban on Iran's banking transactions, Safar Ali Karamati told Iran's Petro Energy Information Network (Shana). "European customers have no problem to pay for

crude oil deals in euro," however, "It depends on the mutual agreement. But Iran would prefer euro," Karamati was quoted as saying. In the past, Iranian officials voiced interests for the use of national currencies, instead of U.S. dollars, in its transactions with its trade partners, berating the United States for exerting economic and financial pressures on the country over its nuclear program. (Xinhua)

### Russian Military Recalibrates its Mission: Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - Ever since Russia's Defense Ministry announced it is to convert its military presence in Tajikistan from a division into a brigade, watchers of the region have been scratching their heads trying to work out the significance of the development. Authorities in Tajikistan appear no more certain than anybody else what to make of it. Russian news agency TASS on January 30 cited the commander of the Central Military District, Colonel General Vladimir Zarudnitsky, as saying that the reformatting of the base would make Russian forces more mobile, while reducing the volume of enlisted personnel. "All the same, the role [of the

base] as a Russian outpost in Central Asia and guarantor for peace and stability in the region will remain unchanged," Zarudnitsky was quoted as saying. A drastic reorganization of Russian forces in Tajikistan has been in progress since late last year, when news emerged that troops were redeploying away from a base near the southern city of Kulyab. The explanation for the move offered at the time was that it was part of plans to enhance combat readiness. The motivations for the conversion to brigade status appear even more nebulous, and even Tajik Foreign Minister Sirojiddin Aslov confessed to being in the dark. (Agencies)

### 15 Iraqi Security Members Killed in IS Bomb Attacks in Anbar

RAMADI - A total of 15 Iraqi security members were killed and 21 others wounded in suicide car bomb attacks by Islamic State (IS) militants and a booby-trapped house explosion in Iraq's western province of Anbar on Saturday, a provincial security source said. An IS suicide bomber rammed his explosive-laden vehicle into a military convoy on the main road leading to the military airbase of Ain al-Asad airbase, near the town of al-Baghdadi, some 190 km northwest of Baghdad, destroying three military vehicles, killing nine soldiers aboard and injuring 16 others, the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. Ain al-Asad military base is used by Iraqi military forces, as well housing hundreds of U.S. Marines as military trainers and advisers. In a separate incident, U.S.-led coalition warplanes bombarded two suicide truck bombs in Huseiba al-Shriqyah area as the two vehicles... (More on P4)...(22)

## Syrians Flee to Turkish Border as Aleppo Assault Intensifies

ONCUPINAR - Russian and Syrian government forces on Saturday intensified an assault on rebel-held areas around the Syrian city of Aleppo that has prompted tens of thousands to seek refuge across the border in Turkey. The assault around Aleppo, which aid workers have said could soon fall to government forces, helped to torpedo Syrian peace talks in Geneva this week. Russia's intervention has tipped the balance of the war in favor of President Bashar al-Assad, reversing gains the rebels made last year.



Any hopes of a ceasefire were dampened by Assad's foreign minister, who said it would be all but impossible to stop the fighting while rebels were able to pass freely across the borders with Turkey

and Jordan. Taking control of Aleppo, Syria's largest city before the civil war erupted five years ago, would be a huge strategic prize for Assad's government in a... (More on P4)...(23)

### S.Korea Sees DPRK Complete Rocket Launch Preparations

SEOUL - South Korea's military has seen the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) complete all of preparations necessary for a planned launch of a long-range rocket after Pyongyang's revised notification of the launch window. A Defense Ministry official was quoted by Yonhap news agency as saying on Saturday that in consideration of various situations, the DPRK seemed to have completed preparations for the launch that include erecting and assembling missile boosters at a launch pad and filling fuel and oxidizer. The DPRK is highly likely to fire a long-range missile as early as Sunday, the official estimated, saying the military is preparing for the Sunday launch. Expectations emerged for the Sunday launch as the DPRK moved up its rocket launch window to Feb. 7-14 from the previous Feb. 8-25. Pyongyang informed the International Maritime Organization on Saturday of the... (More on P4)...(24)

### Britain's Northern Powerhouse New Magnet for Finance Sector: Minister

LONDON - It's the most famous square mile in the world, the City of London, recognised as a global financial center. But more people are employed in the sector outside Britain's capital where the legendary Dick Whittington said the streets were paved with gold. Speaking in Leeds Saturday, the gov-

ernment's Northern Powerhouse Minister James Wharton challenged global financial services companies to tap in to the wealth of talent Britain's north has to offer. Wharton, highlighting the contribution of Northern Powerhouse to Britain's leading global position in financial services, said... (More on P4)...(25)

### Majority of Palestinians in Favor of Holding General Elections: Poll

RAMALLAH - An overwhelming majority of the Palestinians support holding the general elections, a poll showed on Saturday ahead of the resumption of reconciliation talks between rival factions. The poll, which was conducted by the Arab World For Research and Development (AWRAD), said that 80 percent of the subjects are for holding the general elections immediately. It showed that the number of the

Palestinians who support holding the elections was higher in the Gaza Strip than that in the West Bank. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas' Fatah Party will get 39 percent of the votes while its rival Hamas will get 17 percent if the elections are held, according to the poll. It also showed that if other small parties, like the left-wing Popular Front (PFLP) and Islamic... (More on P4)...(26)

### North Korea Brings Forward Rocket Launch to as Soon as Sunday

TOKYO/SEOUL - North Korea could launch a rocket that it says will carry an earth observation satellite as soon as Sunday, after bringing forward and shortening the time frame for the launch, the Japanese and South Korean governments said on Saturday. North Korea had earlier told the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) it would launch the rocket some time between Feb. 8 and Feb. 25, triggering international... (More on P4)...(27)

### 10 Killed, 40 Injured as Suicide Blast Hits NW Pakistan

ISLAMABAD - At least 10 people were killed and 40 others injured as a suicide blast hit a security forces' convoy in Pakistan's southwest city of Quetta on Saturday afternoon, said local officials. Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar, spokesman of the government of Balochistan Province with Quetta as its capital, confirmed that six paramilitary forces Frontier Corps (FC) personnel were among the 10 killed and the 40 injured including women and children. According to local media reports and officials, the attack took place at about 4:20 p.m. local time when a man riding a motorbike hit a

FC convoy passing by a local court on Jinnah Road of Quetta city. Three vehicles of the convoy and one passing-by rickshaw were destroyed in the blast and several nearby buildings were also damaged. Bomb disposal squad officers said an estimated 10 to 15 kg of explosives were used in the bomb. All the blast victims have been shifted to the local military and civil hospitals where several injured people are said to be in critical condition. Both Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif have condemned the attack shortly after the blast. (Xinhua)