

Trump Signs Bill to Repeal Transparency Rule for Energy Companies

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump on Tuesday signed a bill to repeal a regulation requiring energy companies to disclose payments to the U.S. or foreign governments for commercial development.

"This is a big signing. Very important signing," said Trump at the signing ceremony accompanied by two leading Republican figures, House Speaker Paul Ryan and House Financial Services Committee Chairman Jeb Hensarling.

The regulation was made by Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) under the 2010 Dodd-Frank financial reform law, mandating energy companies listed in



the U.S. stock market to report on royalties and other payments to governments related to oil, natural gas, coal and other mineral development.

Republicans and U.S. energy companies have long argued that the rule put U.S. companies in a disadvantage position compared with foreign competitors. Rex Tillerson, current Secretary of States, was one of the leading opponents when he was the CEO of Exxon Mobil Corp. Some Democratic lawmakers criticized that repealing the rule will make millions of dollars of U.S. citizens and investors "vanished into the pockets of corrupt foreign oligarchs." (Xinhua)

Inflation in Britain Highest Since 2014: ONS

LONDON - Inflation in Britain has reached a record high of 1.8 percent since 2014 in January, on the rising of fuel price, the Office for National Statistics (ONS) announced Tuesday.

The latest ONS data showed that annual level of inflation as measured by the Consumer Prices Index (CPI) hit 1.8 percent last month, compared to 1.6 percent in December, 2016, making the first month of this year the fourth consecutive month that the CPI rate has risen. "The latest rise in CPI was mainly due to rising petrol

and diesel prices, along with a significant slowdown in the fall in food prices," Mike Prestwood, head of inflation at ONS analyzed.

"The costs of raw materials and goods leaving factories both rose significantly, mainly thanks to higher oil prices and the weakened pound," said Prestwood. "Both house prices and rents continue to grow over the year but with some signs of a slowdown in recent months." Chris Williamson, chief business economist at IHS Markit, said the Bank of ... (More on P4)...(22)

Russia Deploys New Cruise Missiles in Violation of Treaty, U.S. Paper Claims

WASHINGTON - Russia has secretly deployed a new type of cruise missile in violation of an arms control treaty with the U.S., the New York Times reported Tuesday. The deployment of a fully operation unit of the SSC-8 ground-launched intermediate-range missiles presents a major challenge to U.S. President Donald Trump and the U.S.-Russia relations, the report said.

Quoting U.S. government officials, the report claimed that Russia now has deployed two battalions of the prohibited cruise mis-

sile, one is still located at Russia's missile test site at Kapustin Yar in southern Russia near Volgograd, while the other was shifted in December from that site to an operational base elsewhere in the country. The previous Obama administration charged in 2014 that Russia had tested this type of missile in violation of a 1987 treaty.

In 1987, former U.S. President Ronald Reagan and then Soviet leader Mikhail S. Gorbachev signed the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), which



bans intermediate-range ballistic missiles based on land. The Obama administration tried to persuade Moscow to correct the violation while the missile was

still in the test phase, but the Russians have moved ahead with the system, the report added. Russia has so far not responded to the Times report. (Xinhua)

UN Chief Names French Diplomat as New Peacekeeping Head

UNITED NATIONS - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday announced that he intends to appoint Jean-Pierre Lacroix, a French diplomat, as under-secretary-general for peacekeeping operations for one year.

Lacroix, 56, will assume the position on April 1, 2017 after his predecessor Herve Ladsous steps down. Lacroix is currently director for the United Nations and International Organizations at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France.

Ladsous has been serving

as UN peacekeeping chief for six years.

In a statement, Guterres also announced that UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman will stay at the post for another year until April 1, 2018.

Feltman, a U.S. diplomat, assumed his position in 2012.

The two posts of under-secretary-general are among the most important and high-ranking UN positions. They have long been held by France and the ... (More on P4)...(23)

Saudi King and Turkey President Discuss Regional Issues

RIYADH - Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud on Tuesday discussed with Turkey President Recep Tayyip Erdogan here regional issues, Saudi Press Agency reported.

Erdogan arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday for an official visit to the country, aiming to boost bilateral relations and cooperation.

The visit was part of his Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) tour that started with Bahrain and will end in Qatar.

Before the beginning of

his Gulf trip in Bahrain on Sunday, Erdogan said the Turkish troops and their Syrian rebel allies had entered the center of al-Bab, the last stronghold of the Islamic State (IS) in the northern Syrian province of Aleppo.

Erdogan also called for a safe zone in northern Syria to settle displaced people amid the ongoing war. The Saudi king visited Turkey in 2016, in which



Erdogan awarded him a rare honor, the Order of State. Turkey then began hosting Saudi warplanes at its Incirlik air base as

part of the U.S.-led coalition against the IS, who are among an array of factions fighting in Syria. (Xinhua)

European Parliament Approves EU-Canada Trade Agreement

STRASBOURG - The European Parliament, meeting Wednesday for its plenary in Strasbourg, has voted its approval on the EU-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA), which aims to increase trade and investment flows between the two parties.

Approved by 408 votes in favor to 254 against, with 33 abstentions, the extensive trade deal would unlock commerce between the European Union (EU) and Canada by removing tariffs on most goods and services, while also open-



ing up Canada's public procurement market.

"By adopting CETA, we chose openness and growth and high standards over protectionism and stagnation," declared the European Parliament's

CETA rapporteur Artis Pabriks, who's also a member of the EP for Latvia, after Wednesday's vote.

"Canada is a country with whom we share common values and an ally we can rely ... (More on P4)...(24)

9,000 Soldiers Sent to Rio De Janeiro Ahead of Potential Police Strike

RIO DE JANEIRO - Around 9,000 soldiers from the Brazilian army were deployed to Rio de Janeiro Tuesday ahead of a potential police strike, the Ministry of Defence announced.

Minister of Defence Raul Jungmann told a press conference that the soldiers will patrol Rio de Janeiro and the nearby cities of Niteroi and Sao Goncalo until Feb. 22, although their deployment could be extended until after Carnival.

On Tuesday afternoon, their presence could be seen in the tour areas of Copacabana and Ipanema, as well as along the main highways in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil's second-largest city. This deployment comes after Rio state Governor Luiz Fernando Pezao appealed to President Michel Temer to reinforce security, as a number of military police battalions stayed ... (More on P4)...(25)

Trump Assails U.S. Intelligence Agencies Amid Questions over Russia

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump assailed U.S. intelligence agencies on Wednesday for what he said were illegal information leaks, and dismissed reports of contacts between members of his presidential campaign and Russian intelligence officials.

Trump went on the counter-offensive as his administration reeled from the abrupt dismissal of Michael Flynn as national security adviser on Monday.

The New York Times reported late on Tuesday that phone call records and intercepted calls showed members of Trump's presidential campaign and other Trump associates had repeated contacts with senior Russian intelligence officials in the year before the Nov. 8 election.

Trump dismissed the report, firing back in a series of early morning tweets on Wednesday.

"This Russian connection non-sense is merely an attempt to cover-up the many mistakes made in Hillary Clinton's losing campaign," the Republican president tweeted, citing his former Democratic rival in the 2016 presidential contest.

In another tweet, Trump said: "Information is being illegally given to the failing @nytimes & @washingtonpost by the intelligence community (NSA and FBI?). Just like Russia," adding that the situation was "very serious."

"The real scandal here is that classified information is illegally given out by 'intelligence' like candy. Very un-American!" Trump wrote. (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

China Moves to Boost Foreign Investment in Manufacturing

BEIJING - China's top economic planner Wednesday pledged to take measures to attract more foreign investment to the country's manufacturing sector.

China will specify policies that will grant foreign investors the same treatment with domestic companies regarding the delivery of the "Made in China 2025" plan, according to the National Development and Reform Commission.

The agency said that wider open-ups would be pushed to allow foreign entry, and local governments would be asked to lend more support to manufacturing projects

when attracting foreign investment.

Meanwhile, foreign business projects will get preferential policies in land supply and prices.

Foreign direct investment (FDI) in the Chinese mainland maintained steady growth last year, up 4.1 percent year on year to reach 813 billion yuan (around 118.5 billion U.S. dollars).

FDI to high-tech manufacturing went up 2.5 percent to 59.8 billion yuan during the year.

The slew of measures came as the government is working to shift the country away from low-end manufacturing to ... (More on P4)...(28)

RCCI Signs Three MoUs with Chinese Companies

RAWALPINDI: The Rawalpindi Chamber of Commerce and Industry (RCCI) on Tuesday signed three Memorandums of Understanding (MoU) with Chinese companies for consultations in the construction sector, development of economic zones and biotechnology. The companies which signed the MoUs included ZYLH-BEIJING International Consultation Co Ltd (consultation for construction sector), Teng' Ao Economic Development Zone Management Committee (consultation for development of economic

zones) and Guangdong Wodelong Biological Technology (consultation for biotech). The companies were part of a twenty member Chinese delegation - led by Mr Deng Jihai, chairman of International Green Economy Association China - visiting the RCCI. The purpose of the visit was to explore opportunities for business collaboration in different sectors including disposal power generation, agriculture, steel industry, energy, technology, industrial zones, ship construction and biotech. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran President Eyes Better Ties with Gulf Arabs During Trip

BEIRUT - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said his country sought good relations with its Gulf Arab neighbors as he began a one-day trip to Oman and Kuwait on Wednesday, his first since taking power in 2013.

Relations between predominantly Shi'ite Iran and the mainly Sunni Arab countries of the Gulf, particularly Saudi Arabia, remain strained over their support for opposing sides in the conflicts in Syria and Yemen. "The basis of the policy of Iran is always good neighborly relations with neighbors and the secu-

rity of the Persian Gulf," Rouhani said, according to the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA).

Rouhani also said there should be greater unity between Shi'ites and Sunnis, saying they had "coexisted side by side peacefully for hundreds of years", IRNA reported. Omani state news agency ONA reported that the country's ruler, Sultan Qaboos, welcomed Rouhani with a 21 gun salute when he arrived at the al-Alam Palace in the capital Muscat. Omani media showed Qaboos receiving Rouhani outside the palace, the sultan's second... (More on P4)...(29)

ADB President Plans to Visit Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - Takehiko Nakao, the president of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), plans to visit Uzbekistan in late February - early March 2017, the ADB's Tashkent office told Trend.

"Sadiq Safayev, first deputy chairman of the Senate of the Uzbek Parliament, and Hong Wei, deputy director general of the Central and West Asia Department at the ADB, discussed the issues of the

preparation for the visit," the ADB office said.

Sadiq Safayev and Hong Wei discussed priority areas of cooperation between Uzbekistan and the ADB, according to the press service of the Uzbek Senate.

At the same time, ADB representative stressed the importance of further strengthening the relations between the bank and Uzbekistan. ... (More on P4)...(30)

China, Russia Discuss Energy Cooperation

BEIJING - Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli met with Russian natural gas company Gazprom CEO Alexei Miller Wednesday, calling for steady development of bilateral energy cooperation.

Zhang said China and Russia should conduct further research on the west-route gas pipeline and the Far East gas supply projects adhering to the principle of shared benefits and risks, and expand cooperation in natural-gas-burning power generation, underground gas storage, engine fuel and other areas.

He called on both sides to ensure the success of major projects like the China-Russia crude oil trade and increased crude supply, east-route gas ... (More on P4)...(26)

Syrian Opposition Wants Geneva Talks on Political Transition

BEIRUT/ROME - The main Syrian opposition body said on Wednesday it wanted face-to-face negotiations with the Damascus government about a political transition at peace talks that are due to begin in Geneva next week.

Salim al-Muslit, spokesman of the High Negotiations Committee (HNC), also told Reuters the opposition was sticking to its position that President Bashar al-Assad can have no role in the transition, saying "the heavy price paid by the Syrian people" would have been wasted if he remained in power. Russia, Assad's most powerful ally, has sought to revive diplomacy since its air force helped to defeat

rebels in Aleppo in December, the Syrian leader's biggest victory to date. Nearly six years into the war, Assad seems militarily unassailable thanks to the decisive backing of Russia and Iran.

Muslit said the HNC, which includes rebel groups and political opponents of Assad, wanted to start the negotiations by discussing a governing body to oversee the transition.

Assad has previously ruled out that idea. "We want direct negotiations, we want to save time, we want a quick end to the suffering of the Syrian people," said Muslit. But he said the opposition had yet to receive an agenda ... (More on P4)...(27)

Putin, Berdymukhamedov Reaffirm their Intention to Strengthen Cooperation

ASHGABAT - Russian President Vladimir Putin had a phone conversation with President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov at the Russian side's initiative, Kremlin reported. The President of Russia congratulated Gurbanguly Berdymukhamedov on his landslide victory in the presidential election and wished him success in his work as the leader of Turkmenistan.

The two presidents reaffirmed their intention to strengthen mutually beneficial multifaceted cooperation between Russia and Turkmenistan. Vladimir Putin noted the achievements of Turkmenistani diplomats, at whose initiative the UN General Assembly adopted a special resolution on International Neutrality Day on February 2, 2017. He pointed out that Russia, ... (More on P4)...(31)