

# Keeping Britain in EU in Germany's Interest: Merkel

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel told the parliament on Wednesday that to keep Britain as an active member of the European Union (EU) is in the national interest of Germany.

Addressing the German parliament ahead of the EU summit on Thursday and Friday, Merkel said Britain's demands for EU reforms are in many respects "justified and understandable."

"These are not just about Britain's individual interests. They are about the desire for more competitiveness and transparency as well as the requirement that countries that are not members of the euro zone should not be discriminated against and ignored," said Merkel.

The request of British Prime Minister



David Cameron to remove disincentives in the social security systems was also justified, said Merkel. "It goes without saying that each member country must be able to protect

its own social system," Merkel said, adding that free movement and non-discrimination should not be questioned.

"These principles are not negotiable," stressed Merkel.

Cameron has been meeting and talking with leaders of other EU member states in an attempt to secure agreement for the renegotiation of Britain's membership in the EU. The EU leaders are scheduled to discuss the matter at a summit in Brussels later this week.

Cameron has pledged to hold an "in or out" referendum on whether Britain should withdraw from the EU by 2017. He promised to campaign for his country to remain in the bloc if the EU agrees to reform as Britain has requested. (Xinhua)

## Turkey Accuses Russia of Attacks in Northern Syria Amid Kremlin's Denial

ANKARA - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday told Saudi Arabia's king that alleged attacks by Russia and the Syrian government in northern Syria were of an alarming nature, the state-run Anatolia news agency reported Wednesday.

Speak by phone to King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, Tayyip said that the attacks, which were denied by the Kremlin, further aggravated the humanitarian

crisis in Syria. The president also discussed with King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz the preparations for the forthcoming summit of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Turkey's largest city of Istanbul as well as regional developments, said the agency, citing a presidential source. The two leaders agreed to work together on ending attacks targeting opposition forces in Syria, urging the international community to act to secure access



for humanitarian aid, said the report. On Tuesday, Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu identified the Russian airstrikes in Syria as "dishonorable," claiming the bombing does ... (More on P4)... (15)

## U.S. F-22 Stealth Fighters Fly over S. Korea in Show of Force toward DPRK

SEOUL - Four U.S. F-22 stealth fighters flew over South Korea's airspace on Wednesday in an apparent show of force toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's (DPRK) recent nuclear test and rocket launch.

The nuclear-capable U.S. fighter jets flew low over Osan Air Base near Seoul at about noon time, according to local media reports.

The F-22 stealth fighters, which made a sortie from an air base in Japan, were escorted by four South

Korean F-15K fighters and four U.S. F-16 fighters. Two of them are set to return back to the air base in Japan, while the remaining are reportedly scheduled to stay at the Osan Air Base for the time being.

F-22 fighter, which has a stealth function of escaping radar detection, is capable of carrying nuclear missiles and bombs. Its operational range reaches as far as 2,177 km. The F-22s deployed at a U.S. air base in Japan can fly to the Korean peninsula in ... (More on P4)... (16)

## Syrian President Grants Amnesty for Draft Dodgers

DAMASCUS - Syrian President Bashar al-Assad issued on Wednesday a presidential pardon regarding military service violations, the official SANA news agency reported.

The amnesty covers the crimes of desertion inside Syria and abroad as well as other military service-related crimes committed before Feb. 17, said SANA. It added that it won't cover the fugitives until they turn themselves in to the authorities to settle their situation.

The reports said that the amnesty gives defectors who fled the country two

months to hand themselves in, and one month for those still inside Syria. The president usually issues such amnesties each year, but this year the pardon on the military service violations has a special importance amid reports of high number of draft dodgers. Assad issued a similar amnesty last July. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based watchdog group, said last year that there were 70 thousands draft dodgers who averted to report to service since the beginning of the Syrian crisis in mid-March 2011. ... (More on P4)... (17)

## Humanitarian Crisis Looming in Africa as 1 Mln Children Face Malnutrition

JOHANNESBURG - The Eastern and Southern Africa countries are heading towards a humanitarian crisis with over a million children requiring treatment for severe acute malnutrition, UNICEF said on Wednesday.

Most of these countries have not had enough rains in the past two years and the number of food insecure people in the region stands at 24 million, the organization said at a press briefing in Johannesburg.

In Ethiopia, the number of people in need of food assistance would increase from over 10 million to 18 million by the end of the year, said Megan Gilgan, UNICEF Regional Emergency Advisor for Eastern and Southern Africa Regional Office (ESARO). Over six million people are in need of assistance in Ethiopia, while there are 2.8 million people facing food insecurity in Zimbabwe, said Gilgan. There are also 12,000 cases



of Cholera in Tanzania and 10,000 in Kenya, she said. "We have to address this crisis," Gilgan stressed. She said the drought has resulted in increases in food

prices and water shortages. In Ethiopia, over six million children are in need of food with some absenteeism reported in schools, according to UNICEF. (Xinhua)

## U.S. Needs to Respect the ASEAN Principle of Centrality

BEIJING - The United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on Tuesday issued a joint statement following a special leaders summit in California, outlining key principles that they say will guide their cooperation.

According to the statement, the U.S. and ASEAN say they recognize "the importance of pursuing shared prosperity; sustainable, inclusive economic growth and development; and respect and support for ASEAN centrality and ASEAN-led mechanisms in the evolving architecture of



the Asia-Pacific." In order for Southeast Asia to continue to thrive, it is in the interests of all regional countries to pursue shared prosperity. To achieve this, it is essential that countries from both inside and outside the region show respect for ASEAN

centrality. However, reports from the special leaders summit in California show otherwise, with President Barack Obama trying to impose his agenda of a U.S. pivot to Asia. Speaking at a press conference after the meeting, ... (More on P4)... (18)

## Britain's Exit would be 'A Shock' for Europe: French PM

PARIS - French Prime Minister Manuel Valls said Wednesday that Britain's exit from the European Union would be "a shock" for Europe but that members could not pick and choose rules that suit them. "We believe and we hope" that a deal is possible to keep Britain in the EU, Valls told France's parliament. "Because the departure of Britain would signify ... a shock for Europe, but more importantly a shock to the way the world sees Europe, which is already in crisis."

A summit of all 28 EU leaders will take place in Brussels on Thursday and Friday, at which British Prime Minister David Cameron hopes to win backing for a package of reforms to his country's relationship with the bloc. Cameron says the reforms are necessary to convince Britons to vote to stay in the EU in a referendum that could take place as soon as June. (AFP)

## G20 Trade Ministers to Meet in Shanghai in July

BEIJING - The G20 Trade Ministers Meeting will be held in Shanghai on July 9, 2016 to discuss ways to boost trade and investment cooperation, a commerce official said Wednesday. The two-day meeting will be held in advance of the G20 Hangzhou Summit, which is slated for Sept. 4 and 5. China took over the G20 presidency in December last year. "Global trade plays a weakened role as an engine for economic growth as its growth loses steam. Therefore, G20 members have a strong will to strengthen trade and investment cooperation," Ministry of Commerce (MOC) spokesperson Shen Danyang said at a press conference. The G20 Trade and Investment Working Group was established this year based on a proposal from China. The meetings ... (More on P4)... (19)

## Australian PM Leaves Door Open to Sending Refugees to New Zealand

SYDNEY - Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull on Wednesday left open the possibility of resettlement in New Zealand for asylum seekers facing repatriation to a detention camp in the tiny Pacific Island nation of Nauru. New Zealand Prime Minister John Key arrives in Australia on Thursday for talks that may revive an offer by Key to accept some asylum seekers now in Australia, providing Turnbull a way out of a growing political headache. Key reached a deal in 2013 with former Australian Prime Minister Julia Gillard to resettle 150 refugees then in Australia as part of New Zealand's annual humanitarian intake of 750 refugees. But Turnbull's predecessor, Tony Abbott, had declined to follow up on ... (More on P4)... (22)

## Austria to Cap Migrant Arrivals at 3,200 a Day

VIENNA - Austria will cap the number of migrants it lets in at 3,200 a day from Friday, Austrian Interior Minister Johanna Mikl-Leitner said, calling on other countries to tighten restrictions. Numbers coming into Austria along the main route from Slovenia have fluctuated widely over the past year, from as many as 14,000 a day to the latest figures that suggest around 1,000 are currently

braving the winter cold every 24 hours. "It's important that every country on the Balkan route acts more restrictively," Mikl-Leitner said in an emailed statement on Wednesday. "A backlog on the Slovenian side... cannot be ruled out," she added. Austria said last month it would only consider 37,500 asylum requests this year, compared with the ... (More on P4)... (20)

## Suicide Bomber Kills 9 at Yemen Military Camp

ADEN - A suicide bomber attacked a military camp in southern Yemen on Wednesday, killing at least nine soldiers, military and medical sources said. "A man detonated his explosive vest among soldiers" at the camp in the southern city of Aden overseen by the Saudi-led coalition fighting Iran-backed rebels, a military source said. The soldiers were attending training run by Sudanese forces belonging to the Arab coalition,

another military source said. "So far, the bodies of nine soldiers and several wounded were brought to the hospital" in Aden, a medical source said. The attack took place at the Ras Abbas military camp located in Aden's western Buraiga district, the first military source said. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack, which comes just a day after Aden's governor and its police chief ... (More on P4)... (21)

## Neighbor News

### Sharif Threatens to Clip NAB's Wings

LAHORE - After Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the rulers from Punjab are feeling the heat of accountability and, apparently in a preventive move, they have started warning the National Accountability Bureau to act carefully or get ready for clipping of its wings. The warning to NAB came from none other than Pakistan's Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif himself on Tuesday. He indicated the government was considering amending the law if NAB Chairman Qamar-Zaman Chaudhry does not address his reservations. The prime minister's

body language and tone clearly suggested that all is not well between his government and NAB.

Talking of his reservations about NAB, Nawaz Sharif said: "The NAB is harassing government officers. They (bureaucrats) are afraid of taking decisions (signing of files of different projects) because of the NAB harassment. The NAB terrifies the government officers, hindering them from performing their duty." The prime minister was addressing newly-elected local government representatives of PML-N in Bahawalpur. (Agencies)

### Russia to Deliver S-300 Missile System to Iran Thursday

TEHRAN - Russia will reportedly hand over the first batch of the S-300 surface-to-air defense missile system to Iran on Thursday. Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehghan, who is currently in Russia, will participate in a ceremony to deliver the first part of the defense system to Iran via the Caspian Sea on February 18, a source told Russia's Sputnik news agency.

"Hossein Dehghan will participate in the ceremony of delivering the S-300 in Astrakhan on Thursday," the source said. Dehghan's trip to Moscow comes at the official invitation of his

Russian counterpart Sergei Shoigu. The officials discussed the latest mutual, regional and international developments, as well as enhanced defense, military and technical cooperation between Tehran and Moscow on Tuesday. Russia committed to delivering the systems to Iran under a USD-800-million deal in 2007. Moscow, however, refused to deliver the systems to Tehran in 2010 under the pretext that the agreement was covered by the fourth round of the United Nations Security Council sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program. (PressTV)

### Tajikistan Reaches Beyond its Borders to Silence Opposition

DUSHANBE - The government of Tajikistan is "arresting, imprisoning, and torturing members of the country's peaceful political opposition," a pair of human rights organizations said Wednesday. Human Rights Watch and the Norwegian Helsinki Committee also said that the crackdown is not limited to Tajikistan's territory but has continued to

spill over its borders into countries to which Tajiks have fled, most prominently Russia, Belarus, Moldova, and Turkey. The Tajik government, in addition to chasing opposition members with extradition requests, has also made a habit of harassing family members as a means to pressure their relatives into returning to the country. (Agencies)

### U.S.-ASEAN Relationship Should Benefit Regional Peace: China

BEIJING - China said on Wednesday that the development of relationship between the United States and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should be conducive to regional stability and development. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei made the remarks when asked to comment on a gathering between U.S. President Barack Obama and leaders of Southeast Asian countries on Monday and Tuesday. In a joint statement issued after the meeting, the two sides shared a commitment to "maintain peace, security and stability in the region, ensuring maritime security and safety, including the rights of freedom

of navigation and overflight." "We have taken note of the attempt by some country to use the summit to stir up the South China Sea issue, but most of ASEAN members did not agree, because such a move will not only damage trust among countries in the region, but will interfere with their efforts in safeguarding the peace and stability in the South China Sea," said Hong at a routine press briefing. Obama told a news conference that the two sides "discussed the need for tangible steps in the South China Sea to lower tensions, including a halt to further reclamation, new construction and militarization of disputed areas." ... (More on P4)... (23)