

Euro Area Unemployment Rate Hits 11.5 Pct in Nov.

BRUSSELS - The seasonally-adjusted unemployment rate of the euro area hit 11.5 percent in November 2014, the same level compared with that of October 2014, according to the latest figures released on Wednesday by Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union (EU). The figure was down from 11.9 percent in November 2013, according to the office. According to the statis-

tics, the unemployment rate of the EU area was 10 percent in November 2014, down from 10.1 percent in October 2014 and from 10.7 percent in November 2013. Eurostat estimates that 24.42 million men and women in the EU, of whom 18.39 million were in the euro area, were unemployed in November 2014. Among the member states, the lowest unemployment rates in November 2014 were

recorded in Austria, with a jobless rate of 4.9 percent, and Germany, with 5 percent. And the highest unemployment rates were recorded in Greece and Spain, both of which saw a jobless rate that exceeded 20 percent. Compared with a year ago, the unemployment rate in November 2014 fell in 22 member states, increased in four and remained stable in Belgium and Slovenia. Youth unemployment

still stood high. In November 2014, 5.1 million young persons, referring to those aged under 25, were unemployed in the EU, of whom 3.4 million were in the euro area. In November 2014, the youth unemployment rate was 21.9 percent in the EU bloc, down from 23.2 percent in November 2013. In the euro area, youth unemployment rate was 23.7 percent, down from 23.9 percent in November



2013. Among EU member states, Spain has the highest youth unemployment rates of 53.5 percent in November 2014, followed by Greece, Croatia and Italy. The Eurostat said in November 2014, the unemployment rate in the United States was 5.8 percent, stable compared to October 2014, and down from 7 percent in November 2013. (Xinhua)

Arab League to Discuss Failed Palestinian UN Bid

CAIRO - The Arab League is to meet January 15 to discuss the failed Palestinian bid at the United Nations Security Council aimed at ending Israel's occupation, an official said Wednesday. On December 30, the UN Security Council rejected a draft resolution that would have set a 12-month deadline for Israel to finalise a peace deal with the Palestinians and then fully withdraw its troops from the Palestinian territories by late 2017. The Arab League called Wednesday for a meeting



of its foreign ministers to discuss the issue. "The meeting will review a number of issues, the main one being the developments regarding the Palestinian case, especially after failing to

pass the UN bid," Deputy Secretary General Ahmed Helly told reporters. The meeting will also discuss "future steps to support the Palestinian position," Helly said. Ahead of next week's meeting, Pal-

estinian president Mahmoud Abbas will attend a separate Arab peace initiative gathering, he added. After the draft resolution failed, the Palestinians presented a bid to join the International Criminal Court, which would pave the way for them to pursue Israeli leaders for alleged "war crimes." In response, Israel froze the transfer of 106 million euros (about \$126 million) in taxes collected on behalf of the Palestinians, and threatened legal countermeasures against the Palestinian leadership. (AFP)

US Gives 250 Mine-Resistant Armored Vehicles to Iraq



BAGHDAD - The United States has donated 250 mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles (MRAPs) to the Iraqi Army as it battles the ISIL terrorist organization, the US embassy announced. "The number one threat to the Iraqi security forces are roadside bombs and vehicle-borne bombs," US Ambassador Stuart Jones said in a statement Tuesday. "These vehicles will save Iraqi lives and enable Iraqi security forces to win the fight" against ISIL. The statement did not specify the cost of the armored vehicles, whose delivery was completed on Sunday. Of the 250 vehicles, 25 went to the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and the rest were given to the Iraqi security forces, according to the Pentagon. The vehicles were sent from Kuwait, where they had been sitting since the US pulled most of its troops and military equipment out of Iraq in 2011. Last year, the US gave \$300 million in military equipment, weapons and training to Iraq, and will also deliver six more Abrams tanks, 50 up-armored Humvees, and 10,000 M16A2 assault rifles this year. In addition to military

donations, the US State Department authorized Baghdad to purchase 175 M1 Abrams tanks and other vehicles worth \$2.4 billion from the United States. Many of the US-supplied firearms and vehicles fell into the hands of ISIL terrorists when they swept through northern and western Iraq in June. US President Barack Obama has pledged 3,100 American troops to Iraq to "train and advise" the Iraqi Army. Obama and other senior US officials maintain that US troops would not engage in direct combat with ISIL terrorists. However, Pentagon spokesman Col. Steven Warren said Monday that the 320 US troops at Al Asad air base in western Iraq are now coming under "regular" mortar and rocket attacks from ISIL militants. While Warren insisted that no US personnel have been impacted, this was the first time the Pentagon acknowledged that American troops were in danger since deploying to Iraq late last year. The US-led coalition has conducted more than 900 airstrikes against ISIL targets in Iraq since August 8 at an average cost of over \$8 million a day, according to the Pentagon. (Press TV)

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain on Wednesday signed a bill into law a day after the parliament approved tough anti-terror measures that also include establishment of military-led courts for the hearing of terrorism-related cases. The National Assembly and the Senate passed the new laws with majority vote on Tuesday. A Presidential spokesman said that the Presidency had received the bills late Tuesday from the Parliament's secretariat. "The President signed the bill into law Wednesday morning," he told the media. The Law Ministry has now officially notified the new law, official said. The military courts will work for two years and the federal government will refer the cases for hearing. The government carried out the new legislation following Taliban's brutal killing of 140 schoolchildren and 10 of their teachers in an attack on an army-run school in Peshawar city on Dec. 16. The military courts will put on trial members of "any terrorists groups or organizations using the name of religion or sect and raised arms or wages war against Pakistan or attacks armed forces of Pakistan and law enforcement agencies, or attacks any civilian or military organization in Pakistan." "Those will also face military trial who kidnap any person for ransom, store or carry explosives, fire, arms, instruments, articles, suicide jackets or vehicles designed, to be used for terrorist acts. A person who receives or provides funding from any foreign or local sources for such illegal activities and acts or does any act to over-awe the state or any section of the public or sect or a religious minority or to create terror or insecurity in Pakistan will be punished under this act, according to the draft. (Xinhua)

Trans-Regional Actors Sowing Discord among Muslims: Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani warned that certain trans-regional countries are implementing plots to create rift among Muslims, and urged strengthening unity between Shiites and Sunnis. "Under the circumstances prevailing in the world today and with all the dangers threatening the Muslim world, the Shiite and Sunni Muslims are necessitated to side with each other and we should stand hand in hand to create unity in the Muslim world," Rouhani said, addressing a cabinet meeting on Wednesday. He cautioned that those outside the Muslim world are widening natural and theoretical differences among Muslims to

stir religious and sectarian strife in a bid to prevent the region and the Muslim world's development. In relevant remarks in November 2013, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyed Ali Khamenei urged the Muslim Ummah (community) to increase vigilance as enemies of Islam are hatching plots to stir sectarian strife among them. "A major problem of the Muslim World today is the imposed, intentional and wicked problem of kindling differences among the Muslim Ummah and (Islam's) religious sects," Ayatollah Khamenei said addressing Hajj officials in Tehran. (FNA)

Iraqi Forces Kill 50 ISIL Terrorists

TEHRAN - The Iraqi army backed by local people killed over 50 Takfiri terrorists in Salahuddin province in the Northern parts of the country. "A sum of 55 ISIL terrorists have been killed in clashes with security and popular forces in Dajil region in the Southern parts of Tikrit," informed sources in Salahuddin province said. The sources said that a sum of 4,500 people also joined the Iraqi popular forces. The bloody clashes took

place in Al-Kasarat region of Dajilin Southern Tikrit. On Monday, the Iraqi security forces killed 26 ISIL terrorists in Baiji in Salahuddin. "The security forces, backed by the volunteers, killed 26 ISIL terrorists and destroyed 3 of their vehicles," a security source said. Last month, the Iraqi security forces purged two areas in Southern Balad in Salahuddin province of the ISIL terrorists. The Iraqi security forces,



backed by volunteers, liberated Albu Hrien and al-Tarisha areas in Southern Balad from the ISIL control. Some parts of Iraq are engaged in a militant war launched by the ISIL ter-

rorists and their western and regional supporters. The country's army and popular forces have, in a series of operations, started massive attacks against terrorists to liberate occupied areas. (FNA)

Car Bomb Kills 30 Outside Yemen Police College

SANAA - A car bomb exploded outside a police college in Yemen's capital Sanaa on Wednesday, killing about 30 people and wounding more than 50, police sources said, underscoring the country's deteriorating security and a persistent al Qaeda threat. Sectarian conflict after a 2011 popular uprising that led to a change of government and splits in the army has worsened since September when the Shi'ite Muslim Houthis militia seized Sanaa. Al Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), one of the Sunni militant group's most active wings, had staged



increasing numbers of attacks across Yemen before the Houthis advance and has carried out more bombings and shootings since. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for Wednesday's bombing. Al Qaeda has in the past claimed they were behind similar attacks. The victims from

the latest blast included students at the college and people waiting in line to enroll with the police, the police sources said, as well as passers by. The explosion was heard across the city and a large plume of smoke was visible near the college in a heavily congested part of the city near

the central bank and the defense ministry. "The situation is catastrophic. We arrived to find bodies piled on top of each other," a paramedic at the scene told Reuters as ambulances took casualties away. "We found the top part of one person yelling, while his bottom half was completely severed." A policeman told Reuters that another car had been passing as the bomb went off and was set on fire along with everyone inside. The Interior Ministry said it was halting registration at the police college, which takes place every year, for a week. (Reuters)

At Least 12 Dead in Paris Newspaper Headquarters Attack

PARIS - The office of Paris Prosecutor of the Republic confirmed at least 12 people were killed on Wednesday in a shooting at the Paris office of Charlie Hebdo, a satirical newspaper, adding four others were seriously wounded in the "terror attack." France has raised anti-terrorism alert in the greater Paris area to the highest level after the shooting amid fears of eventual attacks in the region, because the perpetrators have fled away, raising risks of eventual shooting in the French capital.

"Without doubt, it's a terrorist attack against an office that has been threatened several times, which is why it was protected," French president Francois Hollande said visiting the shooting scene. "They will be hunted down and brought to justice," the president stressed. France, the target of Islamist fighters in reprisal for its military strikes against Islamist strongholds in Iraq and the Sahel region, has aborted several terror attacks in recent weeks, Hollande said.

Arab League and Top Muslim Body Condemn Paris Attack

CAIRO - The Arab League and Al-Azhar, Sunni Islam's most prestigious centre of learning, both condemned a deadly attack Wednesday on a Paris satirical newspaper. "Arab League chief Nabil al-Arabi strongly condemns the terrorist attack on Charlie Hebdo newspaper in Paris," the League said after gunmen stormed the weekly's offices killing at least 12 people and chanting "Allahu Akbar" (God is greatest). Al-Azhar condemned the "criminal attack," saying that "Islam denounces any violence," in remarks carried by Egypt's state



news agency MENA. In a separate statement to AFP, Al-Azhar senior official Abbas Shoman said the institution "does not approve of using violence even if it was in response to an offence committed against sacred Muslim sentiments." Charlie Hebdo has sparked anger in the past among Muslims for publishing cartoons of the prophet Mohamed. (AFP)

S.Korean Politicians Urge Gov't to Take Action toward Anti-DPRK Leaflet Spread

SEOUL - South Korea's rival political parties urged the government on Wednesday to take proper action toward civic groups floating leaflets against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Kim Young-woo, spokesman of the ruling Saenuri Party, told a press briefing that the freedom of speech, which is people's basic right, should be guaranteed, but he said that if its exercise puts other people's lives at risk, it would become a matter beyond the freedom of expression. Kim said a country has an obligation to protect the lives and property of people, urging the government to take a prudent and appropriate action toward the spread of anti-Pyongyang leaflets. His comments came a day after a South Korean court ruled that the government can restrict the anti-DPRK leaflet spread in response to clear dan-

China's Anti-Graft Campaign Tally in 2014

BEIJING - After caging dozens of high-level "tigers" and swatting thousands of lowly "flies", China's anti-raft campaign will continue strong measures to root out corruption, said a senior graft-buster on Wednesday. Huang Shuxian, deputy secretary of the Communist Party of China's (CPC) Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), said cases involving 68 high-level officials are under investigation or have been closed. According to Huang, the cases involving Zhou Yongkang, Jiang Jiemin, Li Dongsheng, Li Chongxi and Shen Weichen have been transferred to judicial organs, while the cases of Ling Jihua and Su Rong are still

under investigation. Huang singled out north China's Shanxi Province, a major coal-producing region in China, saying that some Party organizations in the province should be held accountable for widespread corruption. He also said China will continue to investigate election fraud in Hengyang in central China's Hunan Province, the subject of one of the largest cases in terms of people and money. The campaign also made efforts in reducing corruption opportunities for discipline inspectors, prosecutors, and others tasked with fighting graft. Huang said 1,575 corrupt graft-busters were rooted out during the campaign. (Xinhua)

Deported Tajik Labor Migrants Invited to Build Roghun HPP

DUSHANBE - The Ministry of Labor, Migration and Employment of Population of Tajikistan (MLMEP) has invited Tajik labor migrants who were deported from Russia for violating rules of stay in the Russian Federation to work at the site for construction of the Roghun hydroelectric power plant (HPP). Bricklayers, gas welders, concrete workers, and drivers are reportedly invited to work at the site for construction of the Ro-

ghun HPP. People, who do not have the above-mentioned professions, are invited to take short-term training courses at the MLMEP Adult Training Center. "To-date, 22 Tajik labor migrants who were deported from Russian last year have already been provided with permanent jobs at the site for construction of the Roghun HPP," Abdullo Qodiri, a spokesman for a MLMEP, told Asia-Plus in an interview. (Asia-Plus)