

EU's Juncker Calls for Bigger EU Budget after Brexit

BRUSSELS - European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on Monday called for the European Union (EU)'s 27 member states to pay more money into the bloc's joint budget after Brexit. Juncker made the remarks at a conference convened by the European Political Strategy Center, the European Commission's in-house think tank. The president is pushing the EU national governments to lift the imposed cap of 1 percent of EU gross national income being contributed to the bloc's common budget, saying the money is just "one cup of coffee a day" for the European taxpayer. He said his working hypothesis



is that Britain will be leaving the EU in 2019 and the bloc needs to find ways of reacting to the loss of a significant number of billions of euros when a net contributor goes. "We need more than one percent of GDP if we are to pursue EU policies and fund them adequately," he said at the event. "I think Europe is more than one cup of coffee a day," he added. In addition, Juncker said the common agriculture policy and cohesion funds should be modernized and be "flexible", adding he was not in favor of drastic cuts in the two sectors which make up more than 50 percent of the EU budget. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

China, France to Work Together for Community of Shared Future: Xi

BEIJING - China and France will work together for a community of a shared future, Chinese President Xi Jinping said at a joint press conference with his French counterpart on Tuesday in Beijing. Xi said China and France will deepen strategic cooperation in aviation, nuclear and other sectors, noting that the two countries will also work together in tackling climate change and terrorism. He also welcomed France's participation in Belt and Road Initiative.

French President Emmanuel Macron said joint efforts between the two countries are necessary amid global uncertainty. The two leaders attended a signing ceremony, which saw 20 documents signed in areas like nuclear power, health, economic, and aerospace for further cooperation. The French president is paying a state visit to China from Monday to Wednesday. He arrived in Beijing Monday afternoon after a half-day visit to China's northwestern city Xi'an. (Agencies)

PM Stresses More Collaboration with China in Trade, Education

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi Tuesday stressed strengthening people-to-people contacts with China and collaboration in various areas including trade, commerce, education and culture. Talking to Ambassador of China Yao Jing here, he congratulated him on his appointment to Pakistan and reiterated strengthening the all-weather strategic cooperative partnership between the two nations. The prime minister said deepening the strong bonds of friendship and multi-sector cooperation

between Pakistan and China would continue with great fervor. He expressed the confidence that Ambassador Yao would actively contribute towards smooth and expeditious implementation of the projects under China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Ambassador Yao Jing thanked the prime minister and the government for a very warm welcome and assured to play his part in realizing the vision of Chinese and Pakistani leadership for the benefit of people of the region. (Monitoring Desk)

British Brexit Minister Complains about EU's Planning for No-Deal

LONDON - Brexit minister David Davis has complained in a letter to the prime minister that Brussels is damaging British interests by talking up the threat to companies if the UK leaves the European Union without a deal. The letter showed that Davis had sought legal advice over whether Brussels was breaching Britain's rights as a member state by advising companies of the risk to trading in the event of a "no deal". It was first published by the Financial Times and

confirmed as genuine by the Brexit department. "The EU has adopted a number of measures that put agreements or contracts at risk of being terminated in the event of a 'no deal' scenario and/or would require UK companies to relocate to another Member State," the letter said. An aide from the Department for Exiting the EU confirmed that the letter, dated December 2017, from Davis to Prime Minister Theresa May was genuine. (Reuters)

Koreas Agree to Hold Talks on Reducing Tensions

SEOUL, South Korea - The two Koreas have agreed in a joint statement to hold talks on reducing military tensions and "actively cooperate" in next month's Winter Olympics in South Korea. Senior officials of the rival Koreas gathered at the border village of Panmunjom on Tuesday for their first formal talks in about two years. South Korean media say they issued a statement after the meeting in which they agreed to hold military talks aimed at reducing animosity along their

tense border. The statement says North Korea also agreed to send a delegation to the Olympics in Pyeongchang, South Korea, and work for the success of the games. South Korean media say North Korea has restored a military hotline with the South, in the second reopening of a suspended inter-Korean communication channel in about a week. All major inter-Korean communication channels had been shut down amid animosities over the North's nuclear program



in recent years. But North Korea reopened one of the channels last week as signs emerged of improving ties. The two Koreas were holding rare talks at the

border village of Panmunjom on Tuesday to discuss how to cooperate in next month's Olympics in South Korea and improve their long-strained ties. (AP)

U.S. VP to Kick off Postponed Middle East Trip Amid Tensions



WASHINGTON - The U.S. Vice President Mike Pence will head to Egypt, Jordan and Israel later this month, a tour first scheduled last month

after President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, the White House said on Monday. During the trip, which

is slated from Jan. 19-23, Pence will meet with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Jordan's King Abdullah and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, according to a statement released by the White House. Combating terrorism and improving the U.S. national security were among the key topics of the visit, said the statement. During his stay in Jerusalem, Pence will give a speech at the Israeli parliament. Pence's visit came amid

escalating tensions in the region since Trump's controversial Jerusalem decision, which has led to deadly uproar and protest. Pence is no longer scheduled to visit the West Bank or meet with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, who canceled that meeting in protest over Trump's decision. Pence postponed a planned visit in the Middle East in December for a vote on Trump's tax overhaul plan in U.S. Congress. (Xinhua)

Russian Pacific Fleet Marines Start First 2018 Drills in Far East

VLADIVOSTOK, Russia - Marines of the Russian Navy's Pacific Fleet started exercises in the Eastern Military District in Russia's Far East, kicking off the country's first drills in 2018, the Sputnik news agency reported Tuesday. Citing a Pacific Fleet press statement released Monday, Sputnik said about 1,000 servicemen of the Pacific Fleet's marine corps and units began performing tasks at the ranges of Bamburovo, Gomostai and Radygine, the first to begin combat training tasks in 2018.

The marines will perform tasks of combat vehicles driving, tactical methods of combat and engineering training issues, as well as practical shooting from all types of small arms, it said. Up to 200 units of combat and special equipment were sent to the exercises, it added. Based in the Far Eastern city of Vladivostok, the Pacific Fleet is part of the Russian Navy and a force of the Eastern Military District, one of the four operational strategic commands of the Russian military. (Xinhua)

EU to Host Meeting With Iran on Nuclear Treaty Thursday

BRUSSELS - The European Union is to host a meeting with the foreign ministers of Iran, France, Germany and Britain to discuss the state of a landmark nuclear agreement with Iran. EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini convened Thursday's meeting with Iranian Foreign Minister Jawad Zarif "to ensure a full and continued implementation" of the 2015 agreement. Under the accord, Iran

curbed its nuclear program in exchange for an easing of international economic sanctions. The United States has said it would consider scrapping the deal. Mogherini, the European Union's top diplomat, says the United States stepping away from a landmark nuclear deal would be counterproductive and insists other disputes with Tehran should be tackled in other ways. (AP)

Uzbek-Turkmen Trade, Economic Ties Dynamically Develop: Turkmen President

ASHGABAT - Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov has sent a congratulatory letter to President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev on the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. "On behalf of the people and government of Turkmenistan and on my own behalf, I have the honor to convey to you and to all the fraternal people of your country cordial greetings and best wishes on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan," said the letter. In his letter, Berdimuhamedov also said the Turkmen-

Uzbek trade and economic ties are developing dynamically. Berdimuhamedov noted that currently Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan successfully cooperate not only in a bilateral format, but also within the framework of international structures. This is evidenced by mutual support of international initiatives and proposals put forward by the countries within authoritative organizations of a global and regional scale. "Currently, Uzbek-Turkmen trade and economic ties are developing dynamically. Cooperation in the cultural and scientific fields is also successfully expanding and strengthening. (Trend)

Turkey Says Syrian Strikes in Idlib Undermine Political Process

ANKARA - Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Tuesday the Syrian army was striking moderate opposition forces in Idlib province and this was undermining efforts to reach a political solution to the war in Syria. Turkey has been fiercely opposed to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad during his country's six-year-old civil war but has recently been working with his allies Russia and Iran for a political resolution to the conflict. The three countries agreed last year to establish a "de-escalation zone" in the opposition-held Idlib province and surrounding region, which borders Turkey, but Syrian forces have since launched an offensive in the area. "Regime forces are hitting the moderate opposition with the excuse that they are fighting Nusra (Islamist militants). This attitude scuttles the political solution process," state-run Anadolu news agency quoted Cavusoglu as telling reporters. "The groups who will come together in Sochi should not do this," he said, referring to the Russian city where a Syrian congress of national dialogue is set to be held at the end of this month. The main rebel force in the northwestern province of Idlib is Tahrir al-Sham, spearheaded by the former al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria that was known as Nusra Front. A Turkish security source said Ankara was watching developments in northern Syria closely but added that the areas that the Syrian army had recaptured lay "mostly outside the de-escalation zones". Turkey says it has deployed troops to observation points in northern Idlib province, about 60 km (40 miles) north of the Syrian army offensive. (Reuters)

Syrian Refugees in Lebanon Become Poorer, More Vulnerable in 2017: UN

GENEVA - Syrian refugees in Lebanon are more vulnerable than ever, with more than half now living in extreme poverty and over three quarters living below the poverty line, a survey released by three UN agencies found Tuesday. The UN refugee agency UNHCR, the UN children's agency UNICEF and the World Food Programme found that seven years into the crisis, Syrian refugees in Lebanon are finding it

more difficult to make ends meet. "The survey said they are more reliant than ever on international aid amid an uncertain outlook for humanitarian funding in 2018," said UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler at a UN briefing. The annual Vulnerability Assessment of Syrian Refugees reveals that 58 percent of households are now living in extreme poverty - on less than 2.87 U.S. dollars a person per day. Three quarters of Syrian

refugees in Lebanon now live on less than 4 U.S. dollars a day, leaving refugees with dwindling resources to meet their most basic needs. Refugee households are now spending on average just 98 U.S. dollars a person per month, 44 U.S. dollars of which is spent on food. Borrowing money for food, to cover health expenses and pay rent is extremely common, with almost nine out of every ten refugees saying they are in debt. (Xinhua)

Polish President Sacks Defense, Foreign Ministers

WARSAW - Polish President Andrzej Duda Tuesday sacked defense and foreign ministers at the request of Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki. Jacek Czaputowicz has replaced Witold Waszczykowski on the post of minister of foreign affairs in the government reshuffle, local media reported. Mariusz Blaszczak, former minister of interior and administration, has been appointed as the minister of national defense, replacing Antoni Macierewicz. Joachim Brudziński replaced Blaszczak on the post of minister of interior and administration. The post of minister of eco-

conomic development and finance, previously held by Mateusz Morawiecki, who currently holds a post of prime minister, has been divided. Teresa Czerwinska has been appointed as the new minister of finance, while Jerzy Kwiecinski has been appointed the minister of investments and development and Jadwiga Emilewicz - the new minister of entrepreneurship and technologies. Other appointments included Andrzej Adamczyk as minister of infrastructure, Lukasz Szumowski as minister of health as well as Henryk Kowalczyk as minister of environment. (Xinhua)

French Minister Dismisses Concerns over Macron's Fake News Law Plan

LONDON - Judges, not the government, will be in charge of enforcing French President Emmanuel Macron's proposed new legislation to fight fake news on the Internet, a minister said on Tuesday, dismissing concerns over state control of information. Macron, a target of fake news and of a major data hack during his run for the presidency last year, announced plans last week to give judges powers to delete some content on the Internet, close a user's account or block access to a website during election campaigns. The plans also include giving French media regulator CSA new powers to remove broadcasters' rights to air content in France if it is deemed to be fake news. The proposals quickly ran into opposition from lawmakers who warned of a risk to civil liberties, and from Twitter users who derided it by posting absurd statements under the hashtag #InventYourFakeNews. "The judge will be there and he will judge," Culture Minister Françoise Nyssen told Reuters, in response to a question on how Macron's plan to counteract fake news online would work in practice. Pressed to address concerns about whether the law would allow the authorities to muzzle opposition, Nyssen brushed aside such fears by saying that the proposed new powers would not be in the hands of the executive. "On the one hand you have the CSA and on the other judges. So it's not the executive that will be getting involved," Nyssen told Reuters in an interview during a visit to London. (Reuters)

Uzbekistan's President to Visit Tajikistan Soon

TASHKENT - While there's no date yet, the visit is expected in early 2018 and will mark a significant diplomatic step in the region. Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev is expected to visit Tajikistan soon. Tajikistan remains the only Central Asian country the Mirziyoyev has not visited in his first year at the helm of Central Asia's central and most populous country. In remarks on January 6,

Mirziyoyev said preparations for an official visit were underway and that important bilateral agreements would be signed. This week, Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov is scheduled to make a working visit to Dushanbe to pave the way for the president's visit. According to Trend, Aripov will meet with Tajik President Emomali Rahmon and Prime Minister Kokhir Rasulzoda. (Agencies)