

Egypt's First Parliament in 3 Years Convenes

CAIRO - Egypt's first legislature in more than three years, a 596-seat chamber packed with supporters of President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi, held its inaugural session on Sunday, signaling the completion of a political road map announced after the 2013 military overthrow of an elected Islamist president. The assembly, elected in November and December, is the first legislature since el-Sissi, as military chief, led the 2013 ouster of President Mohammed Morsi following mass protests against the Islamist leader and his



Muslim Brotherhood. The new parliament replaces one dominated by Islam-

ists that was dissolved by a court ruling in June 2012. The new chamber's first task will be to ratify some 300 presidential decrees issued by el-Sissi since

taking office in June 2014 and Interim President Adly Mansour before

him. Under the constitution, these decrees must be ratified within 15 days starting from the date of the inaugural session. Failure to do so will result in the automatic repeal of the laws. The decrees include a law severely restricting street demonstrations and a terror law that curbs press freedoms and gives police sweeping powers. Sunday's session was supposed to be a mostly procedural one, with lawmakers taking the oath and electing a speaker and two deputies. But heated arguments be...

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Neighbor News

Iran to Stage Massive Navy Drills in Indian Ocean



TEHRAN - Iran will hold massive navy drills in the northern areas of Indian Ocean in the coming days, a senior Iranian navy commander said Sunday. The exercises code-named "Velayat 94" will be staged by January 20, Navy Lieutenant Commander Rear Admiral Gholamreza Khadem-Bigham was quoted by Tasnim news agency as saying.

The drill is aimed at evaluating the capabilities and testing the military equipment of the Iranian navy forces, Khadem-Bigham said.

"Iran's presence in-

ternational waters and high seas and holding various navy drills indicate the Islamic republic's high level of preparedness and power," and this is an important deterrent strategy, he added.

In the past, the Islamic republic carried out a number of navy drills in the Strait of Hormuz, the Sea of Oman, the north of the Indian Ocean, the Gulf of Aden and the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait. Iran used to test different kinds of missiles, reconnaissance and combat drones, as well as torpedoes.

(Xinhua)

France Pay National Tribute to Terror Victims

PARIS - Under cloudy sky and in windy weather, hundreds of French people gathered at the Republic Square in eastern Paris to take part in a national tribute to the 147 victims killed in separate attacks in January and November 2015.

On Sunday, President Francois Hollande presided over the official ceremony during which he unveiled a memorial plaque whose text said "in memory of the victims of the terrorist attacks in January and



November 2015, in Paris, Montrouge and St. Denis. Here, the people of France pay tribute." A 10-meter-high commemorative oak tree was

planted at Place de La Republique. At the official memorial ceremony attended by members of the Socialist government and victims' families,

French rock star, Johnny Hallyday performed his song "A Sunday in January" referring to the millions of people who took

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Finnish, Swedish PMs Jointly Issue Article Underlining Defense Cooperation

HELSINKI - Finnish and Swedish prime ministers said the two Nordic countries are prepared to further increase defense cooperation, and meanwhile underlined the importance of the countries remaining outside military alliances.

In a jointly undersigned article published on Sunday, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven and Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipila noted that being outside military alliances "contributes to stability and

security in Northern Europe on the whole." The article was published in Finnish language by several Finnish newspapers, and in Swedish by Dagens Nyheter in Sweden.

The prime ministers said Finland and Sweden will be able to act together "in the event of a crisis or armed conflict," provided necessary political decisions are taken in both countries.

In the article, the duo recalled that Finnish

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Japan PM Aims for Constitutional Revision with Help from Opposition

TOKYO - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Sunday he aimed to get a two-thirds majority from his ruling bloc and like-minded opposition parties at an upper house election this summer to enable him to revise the constitution.

Abe has made clear he wants to revise the U.S.-drafted, pacifist constitution, but formal amendment requires approval by two-thirds of both houses of parliament and a majority in a referendum. Abe's Liberal Democratic Party

(LDP) and its junior coalition partner, the Komeito party, already command a two-thirds majority in the lower house, but only hold a simple majority in the upper chamber. "It will be very difficult for the ruling bloc alone to win a two-thirds majority," Abe told a TV news program. "Besides the LDP and Komeito, I aim to form a two-thirds majority with those positive and responsible people who are thinking of a constitutional revision." Abe

...(More on P4)...(22)

Greece's Main Opposition Party to Elect New Leader

ATHENS - Greece's main opposition New Democracy (ND) party is to elect a new leader on Sunday, with some 400,000 voters expected to cast ballots nationwide.

Two party heavyweights, Vangelis Meimarakis and Kyriakos Mitsotakis, emerged as the top contenders from the first ballot, which was held in December.

Meimarakis, a 62-year-old former speaker of parliament, acted as the ND's interim chief from July to November after



former prime minister and party leader Antonis Samaras stepped down. He won 39.8 percent of the vote in the first

round. Mitsotakis, 47 and son of former ND leader and prime minister Constantine Mitsotakis, received 28.5 percent of the

vote last month.

The polls are scheduled to close at 7 p.m. local time (1700 GMT), and estimates on the results are expected around midnight.

Analysts noted that two factors would determine the outcome, of which the first is the voter turnout. In the previous round, more than 400,000 party members cast votes.

The second factor is whom the supporters of the other two candidates would opt for. About

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Gunmen Kill Senior Intelligence Officer in Yemen

ADEN - A military intelligence colonel was killed in a drive-by shooting in Yemen's southern port province of Aden on Sunday, a security official said. The assailants riding a motorcycle opened fire from silenced weapons at the officer near his house in Aden's neighborhood of Mansourah, the source told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. The slain officer had been working for Aden's International Airport, the source said. Witnesses confirmed to Xinhua that the masked assassins fled the scene after the attack. On Tuesday, governor of Yemen's Aden Major General Aidarous Zubaidi and senior military commanders escaped unharmed a suicide bomb attack on their convoy, which left two guards dead and several others injured. Last week, the Yemeni security authorities imposed renewable curfew in Aden after armed confrontations with militants over the control...

Qaeda Abducts Media Activists from Syria Rebel Town

BEIRUT - Syria's Al-Qaeda affiliate abducted two of the country's most prominent media activists from a radio station in the northwestern Idlib province on Sunday, opposition officials told AFP. "Al-Nusra Front kidnapped at 0655 (0455 GMT) activists Hadi al-Abdallah and Raed Fares in the offices of Fresh FM where they work and live in Kafranbel," said Soner Taleb, head of media at the Syrian National Coalition. Fares, Fresh FM's director, has previously been detained by Al-Nusra...

Ambassador Denies U.S. Conducting Helicopter Raids in N. Iraq

raids against Islamic State militants in northern Iraq. "There have recently been reports of U.S. helicopter raids in Hawija and Kirkuk. As Defense Minister Obaidi and numerous other Iraqi officials have stated, reports of these raids are untrue," Stuart Jones said in a statement on Saturday. Recent reports of more than half a dozen air raids led by U.S. special forces have been denied by powerful Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias and other critics of Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi as violations of Iraqi sovereignty. "I



want to stress what I have said many times before: Iraqi sovereignty is sacred and must be respected. All coalition activities conducted in Iraq are and will be in consultation with the Iraqi gov-

ernment," Jones said, referring to the U.S.-led coalition bombing Islamic State targets and training Iraqi forces. Iraqi parliament speaker Salim al-Jabouri told Reuters...

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U.S.-Led Coalition Conducts 11 Strikes in Syria, 15 in Iraq: U.S. Military

WASHINGTON - The U.S.-led coalition conducted 11 air strikes against Islamic State forces in Syria and 15 in Iraq on Saturday, the task force leading the operation said. The strikes in Syria hit near Raqqa, Kamal, Manbij, Ayn Isa, Dayr Az Zawr, where one strike destroyed 16 skid-mounted gas and oil separation plants, the Combined Joint Task Force said in a statement Sunday. Six of the strikes in Iraq were near the contested city of Ramadi, where Iraqi government troops were fighting to keep militants out of the city they had occupied since May, it said. They destroyed weapons, fighting positions, an improvised explosive device and wounded three Islamic State fighters and denied militants access to terrain. Other strikes hit near Mosul, Kisik, Haditha, Albu Hayat, Habbaniyah. (Reuters)

Cologne Attacks Planned in Advance: German Justice Minister

BERLIN - German Justice Minister Heiko Maas said on Sunday that he believed the string of sexual assaults in Cologne were "coordinated and prepared" ahead of time. "No one can tell me that it wasn't coordinated and prepared," Maas said in an interview with German newspaper Bild am Sonntag. He voiced his suspicions that the crimes which have the whole country reeling were not the result of

an opportunistic mob mentality, but a thought-out, planned attack. On New Year's Eve, a group of about 1,000 men were surrounded, harassed and robbed, especially women in the western German city of Cologne. The number of criminal charges after assaults in Cologne has increased dramatically from around 170 to 379, German police said on Saturday. "The..."

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Dutch PM Says will Push for 'Yes' in Ukraine Vote

AMSTERDAM - Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte said he would argue for a "yes" vote in an upcoming referendum on a treaty on closer ties between the European Union and Ukraine which threatens to overshadow his presidency of the 28-member bloc. Rutte's remarks came a day after European

Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker warned that a rejection of the treaty by Dutch voters could lead to a "continental crisis". While the vote, on establishing an association agreement between the EU and its troubled eastern neighbor, is not binding, most Dutch

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Pakistan to Respond to Saudi's Territorial Integrity Threat

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani army chief Gen. Raheel Sharif has reiterated that any threat to Saudi Arabia's territorial integrity will evoke a response from Islamabad. Sharif made the remarks Sunday in a statement after Saudi Deputy Crown Prince and Defense Minister Mohammed bin Salman called on him in the garrison city of Rawalpindi, adjacent to the capital.

Salman earlier arrived in Islamabad, making him the second top Saudi of-

ficial to visit Pakistan in a week amid growing tension with Iran over Shiite cleric Nimr al-Nimr's recent execution. The prince is also expected to meet with other Pakistani leaders. The visits came after Saudi Arabia and several of its allies announced the severing or downgrading of diplomatic relations with Shiite powerhouse Iran.

Pakistan, a predominantly Sunni state, also has a large Shiite population. (AP)

Golestan Province Imports 1,000 Tons Wheat from Turkmenistan

GORGAN - Some 1,000 tons of wheat was imported to Iran's Golestan Province through Inche Borun railway from Turkmenistan. Golestan Province imports 1,000 tons wheat from Turkmenistan Head of provincial department for Standardization Mehdi Hosseini told IRNA that experts in his office had exam-

ined the wheat and verified its quality. He added that results of the tests show that the 1,000-ton consignment matched standards of his office, so the quality license was issued. Early December, 2015, Golestan province imported 1,000-ton barley from Turkmenistan via Inche Borun railway and customs office. (IRNA)