

# Geneva Talks on Syria Postponed, UN Cannot Confirm: Russia

MOSCOW - A UN-backed intra-Syrian meeting in Geneva has been postponed to the end of February, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said Friday, but the UN said it cannot confirm the date change. "This date has been moved again from February 8 to the end of next month," Lavrov said at a meeting with Syrian opposition delegates days after a round of intra-Syrian talks in Astana, Kazakhstan, on a political settlement in the war-torn country. "We believe that the passivity of our UN colleagues, who have not held any rounds of the talks since April 2016, is unacceptable," Lavrov added, according to an official trans-



script of Friday's meeting posted on the website of the Russian Foreign Ministry. Rounds of Syrian peace talks have taken place in Geneva under the auspices of the UN but little progress has been made mainly due to continuous fighting in the Middle Eastern country. Yet UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura, who said last month that the Geneva dialogue will resume in February, cannot confirm or deny the postponement of the meeting. "There is no confirmation that the February talks are postponed," the special envoy's spokesperson, Yara Sharif, told reporters. "The ... (More on P4)...(26)

## Putin, Trump to Talk by Phone on Saturday: Kremlin

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin is scheduled to hold his first phone conversation with the new U.S. President Donald Trump on Saturday, the Kremlin said Friday. "Putin intends to congratulate Trump on assuming the presidency. And as is usual during such contacts, an exchange of views on the main parameters of the current state of bilateral relations takes place," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti news agency. Peskov denied knowl-

edge about the veracity of reports that the Trump administration plans to alleviate sanctions against Russia imposed due to the Crimea issue and Moscow's alleged involvement in the Ukraine crisis. "No, nothing is known about this," Peskov said. Putin was among the first leaders of major powers to send congratulations to Trump after the result of the U.S. presidential election was announced in November. During a call in mid-November, Putin and the then ... (More on P4)...(27)

## Trump Signs Two Executive Orders to Boost Border Security

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order to boost border security before his scheduled speech at the Department of Homeland Security. "The first order is the border security and immigration enforcement improvements, it addresses long-overdue border security issues," White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer said during a press briefing. "It will be the first order in that to build a large physical barrier on the southern border."

Trump reiterated earlier Wednesday during an interview that the wall project will start as soon as possible and financed by Washington, but Mexico will "100 percent" reimburse the United States at "a later date." The cost of the wall to block off the nearly 2000 mile (3200 km) long border has been estimated to be anything from eight billion U.S. dollars to 25 billion dollars. In some parts of the border, different versions of barriers already exist, but most of the border cross through



inhospitable wilderness. "The second order is enhancing the security of the interior of the United States," Spicer said. "Federal agencies will be unapologetically enforce the law, no ifs, ands and buts," he said. Spicer said the U.S. government will implement a host of measures to curb illegal immigrants entering the country. (Xinhua)

## NATO, Russia and Trade Top The Agenda for Trump Talks with Britain's May

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May, who share an unusual bond as the products of anti-establishment uprisings, will sit down on Friday for what could be a difficult search for unity on NATO, Russia and trade. The meeting will mark Trump's first with a foreign leader since taking power a week ago, and it could go a long way toward determining how crucial Trump considers the traditional "special relationship" between the two countries.

Trump rode an anti-Washington wave to win on Nov. 8, and May gained power in July after the "Brexit" vote that has put her country on a path to separate from the European Union. The meeting will conclude with a joint White House news conference. Trump has declared NATO obsolete and expressed a desire for warmer ties with Russia. May considers the trans-Atlantic alliance crucial and is skeptical of Russian ... (More on P4)...(28)

## France's Fillon Says Not to Drop out Presidential Bid after Wife's Job Affair

PARIS - French presidential frontrunner Francois Fillon on Thursday said he would stay in the presidential race despite allegations over his wife's hefty salaries for fake job. "I'm a candidate...I always said that I could not be a candidate for the presidency of the Republic if there was evidence that I had broken the law, it is not the case," Fillon said. "I knew that by presenting my candidacy to the presidential election I would confront all calum-

nies," he told TF1 television. On Wednesday, the satirical weekly Le Canard Enchaîné reported that Penelope Fillon had been paid 600,000 euros (640,319 U.S. dollars) for her job as a parliamentary assistant to her husband and for work at a cultural journal. However, there was no evidence showed she had really worked, the report added. Dogged by the political scandal months head the two-round election, Fillon rejected "abject" allegations, arguing



she "had always worked" for him as parliamentary assistant. The 62-year-old presidential frontrunner stressed his wife's "work was real ... legal and perfectly transparent," and which included press review preparation, meeting people for him and correcting his speeches. (Xinhua)

## Migrant Children Suffer Sexual Abuse by Smugglers: EU Commissioner

VALLETTA - Some migrant children were suffering sexual abuse at the hands of people smugglers, a senior European Union official said on Friday. Dimitris Avramopoulos, EU Commissioner for migration, home affairs and citizenship, made the remarks when addressing a conference in Malta titled "Lost in migration: Working together to protect children from disappearance." Avramopoulos highlight-



ed the need to declare war against people smugglers. "If we want to prove we are civilized people, we must declare a war against smugglers ... here in Mal-

ta, Libya, everywhere," he said. He said EU member states had to move beyond political rhetoric and take up their ... (More on P4)...(29)

## Security in Region Most Important for Poland, Latvia: Polish PM

WARSAW - Security in the region and the survival of the European Union (EU) is most important to both Poland and Latvia, Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo said here on Thursday after talks with her Latvian counterpart Maris Kucinskis, according to the Polish Press Agency. Speaking at a joint press conference, Szydlo said achieving these aims meant "finding such solutions which would be acceptable to all member states and which would further strengthen the EU." Szydlo noted that security decisions made during the Warsaw NATO summit in July 2016 on the strengthening of the alliance's eastern flank was "satisfying to both countries." "Security is a priority for both Poland and Latvia," Szydlo said. Referring to European affairs, Szydlo stressed that it was ... (More on P4)...(30)

## Violence Breaks out at Australia Day Protests

SYDNEY - An anti-Australia Day demonstration has turned violent in Sydney on Thursday, when scuffles broke out with police after a man allegedly set fire to an Australian flag. The 20-year-old was arrested and charged with assaulting police, resisting arrest and malicious damage. He was granted bail and will appear before local court in March. The rally took place at Broadway near Victoria Park and was part of the change the date movement which sees the national holiday as an "insult" to indigenous Australians. "Australia Day commemorates the beginning of the invasion of Australia by the British in 1788, and as such it's disrespectful to Aboriginal people who owned and cared for the continent for 60,000 years before that," protester and human rights activist, Andy Mason told Xinhua. "The social issues in Aboriginal communities are directly related to a history of colonization, if we want a day of national unity that has any meaning, we have to achieve meaningful justice for Aboriginal people first." But newly-appointed New South Wales Premier Gladys Berejiklian denounced the alleged violence, saying to local media "We have a democracy and everyone has a right to protest, but today is celebrating everything that brings us together, and I think most people would feel extremely disappointed at what they have seen today." (Xinhua)

## Turkey Awaits Results of Study by US for Safe Zone in Syria

ANKARA - Turkey is waiting to see the outcome of an expected order by the United States President Donald Trump to work on a plan for safe zones in Syria, the Turkish Foreign Ministry said on Thursday, noting that Ankara has long supported the idea. Turkish Foreign Ministry spokesperson Huseyin Muftuoglu said that they have seen the president's request for conducting a study, and is keen to know the results and recommendation, adding that they "should see the content of the study and then make an assessment," local Hurriyet reported. He recalled that from the very beginning, ... (More on P4)...(31)

## Tackling Migration from Libya "Crucial": EU Commissioner

VALLETTA - EU Commissioner for migration, home affairs and citizenship, Dimitris Avramopoulos, highlighted on Thursday the importance of tackling migration from Libya in the European Union (EU). Addressing a press conference following an informal meeting of justice and home affairs ministers in Malta, Avramopoulos said it was crucial to tackle migration from around the Libyan route. He said member states needed to focus on fighting human smuggling, helping to manage migratory flows in a more effective way, continuing to save lives at sea and also improving conditions of mi-

grants and refugees in Libya and neighboring countries. "All countries need to be respecting international and fundamental human rights. This is a basic principle we will not weaken," Avramopoulos said. The European Commission this week rejected a suggestion by Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat to offer Libya a deal similar to the EU's agreement with Turkey on migration. Malta's Home Affairs Minister Carmelo Abela spoke of the need for a holistic approach to better manage migration with member states, not only when it came to internal factors, but also external ones. (Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### China's Lunar New Year Holiday to Become Global "Golden Week"

BEIJING - China's week-long Lunar New Year holiday, which began Friday, is set to become a "Golden Week" for overseas tourist destinations as this year more than 6 million Chinese chose to spend the holiday abroad. The Lunar New Year holiday is usually a time for family reunions and celebrations, but now as more and more Chinese travel overseas, the China National Tourism Administration described it as a "global Golden Week." Since the year 2000, China lengthened its three major public holidays - Spring Festival, May Day and National Day - from three days to seven days. They soon became known as "golden weeks," when people can travel and gather with families, boosting travel and hospitality sectors' revenue. Based on a survey conducted by the administration, the United States was the most popular long-haul outbound destination during the holiday, followed by Britain, Spain, Germany and Switzerland. Australia, New Zealand and Thailand are attracting the most Chinese tourists as medium- or short-haul destinations, while China's Hong Kong and Macao remain the major nearby destinations, according to a report by Ctrip, a travel website, Chinese tourists are expected to spend 100 billion yuan (about 14.5 billion U.S. dollars) in total over the week. Ctrip saw great potential in China's outbound tourism as a result of higher incomes, simpler visa... (More on P4)...(32)

banisation, as well as rural and urban population across the country. The population data will be used for delimitation of the constituencies of the national and provincial assemblies, a requirement under the constitution. In Pakistan, the first four censuses i.e., 1951, 1961, 1972 and 1981, were held on time by the Population Census Organisation, in collaboration with staff from the provincial governments. The fifth census was due in ... (More on P4)...(33)

### General Bajwa Approves Deployment of 200,000 Troops for Census

ISLAMABAD - The Pakistani Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa on Friday authorised the deployment of upto 200,000 troops to support the often delayed national population census, said a statement released by the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR). The troops will be deployed while continuing other security responsibilities, added the ISPR statement. The population census will yield statistics about internal migration, ur-

banisation, as well as rural and urban population across the country. The population data will be used for delimitation of the constituencies of the national and provincial assemblies, a requirement under the constitution. In Pakistan, the first four censuses i.e., 1951, 1961, 1972 and 1981, were held on time by the Population Census Organisation, in collaboration with staff from the provincial governments. The fifth census was due in ... (More on P4)...(33)

### IRGC to Hold Massive Air Defense Drill Soon

TEHRAN - Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Force has plans to hold a large-scale air defense exercise in near future, Tasnim news agency reported on Friday. Commander of the IRGC's Aerospace Force, Brig. Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh said that in the massive war game IRGC will practice air defense tactics. A whole range of air defense equipment will be utilized in the drill, including radars, command

and control systems, and ground-to-air missiles, Hajizadeh was quoted as saying. All the military gear to be used in the drill has been designed and manufactured by the local experts, he said. Last month, IRGC conducted a large-scale exercise in cooperation with the Army's Air Defense in which more than 17,000 military forces participated in an area of 496,000 square kilometers in Iran's southern areas. (Xinhua)

### Turkmenistan, Tajikistan Studying Prospects of Co-Op

ASHGABAT - Ashgabat hosts a meeting of the Turkmenistan-Tajikistan joint intergovernmental commission on trade and economic, scientific and technical cooperation, the Allyn Asyr TV channel reports. The meeting is attended by representatives of authorities and business structures of the two countries. Trade, fuel and energy sector, power industry, agriculture and water industry, health-care and tourism are among priority directions of discussions. The necessity to expand the list and volumes of delivered goods and provided services, establishing direct business contacts was noted during the meeting. "Special attention was attached to the transportation and communications sphere by considering the implementation of joint project on construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Tajikistan (TAT) railway," said the ... (More on P4)...(34)

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### Tajikistan, Uzbekistan to Resume Air Traffic Soon

TASHKENT - The air communication between Tashkent and Dushanbe will resume in the near future, said Director General of the national airline of Uzbekistan, reports Gazeta.uz. "The intergovernmental agreement will soon be finalized and ready for signing. The flights to Dushanbe will start operation soon," said Valeriy Tyan. According to him,

the aviation authorities of Uzbekistan and Tajikistan are carrying out an intensive work on this issue today. The decision on resumption of air traffic between Tashkent and Dushanbe was adopted in November 2016 during the meeting of intergovernmental commission on trade and economic cooperation. Then on December 2016, they signed a ... (More on P4)...(35)