

# 40% of Germans Say Merkel Should Resign over Refugee Policy: Poll

BERLIN - Forty percent of Germans want Chancellor Angela Merkel to resign over her refugee policy, a poll showed on Friday, in a sign of rising dissatisfaction with her welcoming stance towards people fleeing conflict and economic hardship in the Middle East and Africa. Merkel, who enjoyed record high popularity ratings early last year, has grown increasingly isolated in recent months as members of her conservative bloc have pressed her to take a tougher line on asylum seekers and European allies have dragged their feet on the



issue. Responding to popular pressure, Merkel's conservative and their left-leaning Social Democrat (SPD) coalition partners agreed on Thursday to tighten asylum rules, reaching a compromise on how to stem the influx of migrants. The Insa poll for Focus magazine surveyed 2,047 Germans between Jan. 22 to Jan. 25. It showed 45.2 percent believed Merkel's refugee policy was not a reason for her to resign. It was the first time the pollster had asked voters whether Merkel should quit. (Reuters)

## Migration Becoming Key Public Security Issue: Hungarian PM

SOFIA - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban here on Friday said migration had become the number one public security issue in the European Union (EU), and people must be protected. So far, the migration crisis has been handled as an economic and cultural issue, Orban said at a joint press conference after talks with his Bulgarian counterpart Boyko Borisov. However, in recent weeks it has become a question of security and safety because the threat of terrorism is increas-

ing and public security is deteriorating, Orban said. According to him, European citizens are living under threat, especially "the more vulnerable ones; women and those who cannot defend themselves," a situation the premier deemed unacceptable. There is an increasing number of European countries that are unable to provide safety and protection to their citizens, and this situation has to be taken seriously, Orban said. This is not the time to... (More on P4)... (29)

## Kremlin Asks U.S. to Explain Accusations on Putin

MOSCOW - Russia expects the top leadership of the United States to provide an explanation of "unacceptable" statements by U.S. officials accusing Russian President Vladimir Putin of corruption, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Friday. "We find the statement of my colleague in the White House unacceptable from the point of view of the general practice of international relations, and from the point of view of bilateral Russian-American relations. We believe



this statement is outrageous and offensive," the RIA Novosti news agency quoted Peskov as saying. "We will wait for some

further explanations on the part of the supreme leadership of the United States," Peskov said. Earlier this week, British Broadcasting

Corporation (BBC) published a video showing U.S. Department of Treasury official Adam Szubin... (More on P4)... (30)

## Japan, US FMs Hold Talks over Possible DPRK Rocket Launch

TOKYO - Japanese Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on Friday discussed the possibility that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) may be gearing up to test a long-range rocket. In talks held by phone, the pair agreed that the possibility of the DPRK launching a long-range rocket existed based on recent intelligence gathered and urged the DPRK to exercise restraint.

"We will work closely with the United States and other countries involved and take all possible measures to ensure the safety of our people," Kishida told local media after his call with Kerry. Kishida and Kerry also discussed a possible UN Security Council resolution on the nuclear test that the DPRK carried out on Jan. 6 in contravention of past resolutions, local media reports said. The DPRK last launched



what was described as a long-range rocket in December 2012, although the DPRK maintained it was launching a satellite. (Xinhua)

## UN Security Council Welcomes Somalia's Election Plan

UNITED NATIONS - The Security Council on Thursday commended the Somali government for seeking consensus on an electoral model for 2016. "A peaceful, transparent electoral process in 2016 will mark a historic step forward for all Somalis, and will be fundamental for the country's continued progress toward democracy and stability," said the council in a press statement. The 15-nation UN body issued the statement after it heard a briefing by

Michael Keating, UN envoy for Somalia. According to Keating, there will be a 275-member lower house of parliament based on power sharing among clans and a 54-member upper house based on equal representation of existing, emerging and prospective federal states plus additional seats for Puntland and Somaliland. "The members of the Security Council recognized that the proposed model requires compromises from all... (More on P4)... (31)

## AU Pledges Action on Migration, Child Marriages

ADDIS ABABA - The African Union (AU) on Friday reiterated its commitment to stop the illegal migration of African youth to developed nations alongside child marriages that are a blot to the continent's image. Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko, AU Commissioner for Social Affairs, said at a press briefing that the continental body has focused on innovative measures to contain illegal migration and eradicate child marriages. "The migration crisis in Africa has reached alarming proportions. Our youth are risking lives to enter Europe in the belief there are more opportunities there," Kaloko told reporters on the sidelines of the AU summit in Addis Ababa. He regretted that an exodus of African youth will undermine the continent's quest for sustainable development. The African Union has prioritized speedy implementation of social and... (More on P4)... (32)

## Italy, Germany Share Populism as Common Enemy in Europe: Renzi

BERLIN - Italy and Germany are united in opposing political populism as they seek to tackle Europe's economic and immigration problems, Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi said on Friday. "We don't agree on everything naturally," Renzi told reporters following a meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. "But we believe together that fighting unemployment today in Europe means combating populism. We have the same adversary: Populism." Renzi has repeatedly challenged



insistence on austerity in the European Union as a way of weathering slow growth, urging more state spending. Both countries are also struggling to manage Europe's biggest immigration crisis since World War Two. (Reuters)

## Cameron Closes in on EU Benefits Deal

BRUSSELS - British Prime Minister David Cameron made a final push on Friday in Brussels to seal a deal on curbing welfare benefits for migrants in a bid to prevent Britain becoming the first country to leave the EU. Cameron met European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker to discuss a "migration brake" that would meet his key demand -- a four-year limit before EU workers in Britain can claim welfare payments. As he headed to the talks aimed at finalising a deal before a crucial summit on February 18 and a referendum expected in June, Cameron warned that the EU's counter offers were "not yet strong enough" but still promising. "It's encouraging that people like the European Commission are coming forward with new ideas but there's still a long way to go before we see something that we can actually agree," Cameron told the BBC. The negotiations to prevent a so-called "Brexit" from the 28-nation EU come amid a series of crises for the bloc including the biggest influx of migrants and refugees to Europe since World War II. Cameron and Juncker shook hands for the cameras in front of British and EU flags as the British premier arrived but both refused to answer questions such as "who pulls the brake?" - "Won't accept discrimination" - In a sign of the urgency of the talks, Cameron cancelled a visit to Denmark and Sweden to hold Friday's working lunch with Juncker, the head of the EU's powerful executive, whose appointment Cameron opposed in 2014. (AFP)

## Neighbor News

### Rouhani Pessimistic on Syrian Peace Process



PARIS - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has voiced pessimism over the prospects for peace in Syria, ahead of talks set to open in Geneva on Friday. "It's our hope to see these negotiations succeed as quickly as possible," Rouhani told French media late Thursday following a two-day visit. "But I would be surprised if they succeed very soon, because in Syria there are groups fighting the central government but also fighting each other," said Rouhani, whose regime backs Syrian leader

Bashar al-Assad. "There is interference in the internal affairs of Syria," he added in the interview with France 24, Le Monde and France Culture. "The solution should be political, but it will be difficult to arrive at a conclusion in the space of a few weeks, a few meetings. That would be too optimistic, because the Syrian question is too complicated." The United Nations said it still expected the Syria peace talks to begin later Friday, despite uncertainty over whether key opposition groups would attend. (AFP)

### China Rejects Criticism of its Human Rights Records

BEIJING - A Foreign Ministry spokesperson on Friday rejected criticism of China's human rights records by an international group, asking them to view the development in China in an objective, fair and rational manner. "Just as the saying goes, 'only your feet can tell whether the shoes fit.' Only the Chinese people themselves are in the best position to comment on their human rights situation," spokesperson Hua Chunying said in Beijing at a regular press briefing, in response to the criticism of Human Rights

Watch. "We hope relevant sides can look at China's social development in an objective, fair and rational manner. China is a country based on the rule of law, and any violator would be punished according to the law regardless of his status or so-called 'freedom of speech,'" Hua said. She added that human rights is an important component of China's economic and social development, and China is advancing the human rights cause in accordance with national conditions and people's needs. (Xinhua)

### Tajikistan Listed Among World's Fastest-Growing Tourist Destinations

BISHKEK - The United Nations World Travel Organization has released its latest Travel Barometer, featuring the countries where arrivals rose fastest in 2015, reported the Daily Mail. Leading the pack was Paraguay where tourism grew a whopping 97 per cent in 2015, making it the fastest growing travel destination of last year, closely followed by Tajikistan which saw 94 per cent more visitors than the previous year. Off the beaten track,

Tajikistan became better known in 2015, with 414,000 tourists flocking to the country in Asia. The home to 8.2 million people, which borders Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, saw a 94 per cent increase in the amount of visitors it received in 2015. Known for its lush green landscapes and rugged mountains used by hikers and climbers, the central Asian country took home the second spot for this year's fastest risers. (AKIpress)

### 230 Institutions Sealed, 53 Warned Against Gaps in Security in Pakistan

ISLAMABAD - More than 230 educational institutions in Rawalpindi division, including 138 government-run schools and colleges, were sealed - not because of freezing temperatures, but due to inadequate security - police and security officials said on Thursday. In addition, as many as 53 educational institutions in the Rawalpindi division, including Rawalpindi Medical College, on Thursday received final notices to improve security arrangements by Sunday, or the head of the institution would be booked. In Jhelum, 15 educa-

tional institutions, including 10 government and five private schools were sealed, Chakwal saw four schools sealed and three others were given warnings by the administration, while in Wah Cantt, police said, the principal of a private educational institution was threatened. In Attock, police and intelligence agencies completed a fresh survey of security arrangements at educational institutions and found 205 schools and colleges, including 127 government and 78 private institutions, lacked adequate security. (Agencies)

## Dutch Jets to Bomb Islamic State Targets in Syria

THE HAGUE - The Dutch government on Friday agreed to extend its role in the U.S.-led coalition against Islamic State to include the bombing of targets in Syria, it said in a statement. A Dutch squadron of six F-16 warplanes is already stationed in the region, but has been limited to striking Islamic State positions in Iraq. The aircraft

will now also target sites in eastern Syria, it said. "The progress that has been made in Iraq won't stand if IS remains in a position to support the fight in Iraq from eastern Syria," Defence Minister Jeanine Hennis-Plasschaert said. The Netherlands is also considering sending more military equipment to support... (More on P4)... (33)

## Opposition NLD to Make Successful Gov't: Myanmar Parliament Speaker

NAY PYI TAW - Myanmar's outgoing Speaker of the Union Parliament U Shwe Mann anticipated Friday that the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD), led by Aung San Suu Kyi, would make a successful ruling government. Winning the 2015 general election, the NLD is organizing the new government by not taking up all the available

posts held but reserve for other parties and ethnic nationalities as well as for outside experts, Shwe Mann told a press conference after the end of the final session of present term of the parliament (2011-16) in Nay Pyi Taw. However, he disclosed that no offer for taking up certain post in the new parliament or... (More on P4)... (34)