

Russian PM Urges Countermeasures against EU Sanctions Extension

MOSCOW - Russia will adopt responsive measures to retaliate against the decision of the European Union (EU) to extend sanctions against Moscow till January, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said Monday. At a government meeting, Medvedev asked his deputy, Sergei Prikhodko, to "prepare my appeal to the president with a proposal to extend the presidential decree on restrictive measures by Russia for this period of time," according to the RIA Novosti news agency. He also ordered drafting a government decree to



establish a list of products that would be affected by Russia's countermeasures. The EU announced earlier in the day that it has decided to extend economic sanctions against Russia to Jan. 31, 2016, to ensure Moscow's full implementation of the Minsk agreement reached in February on the Ukraine crisis. The restrictive measures, introduced in response to Russia's alleged role in the Ukraine crisis, were imposed in July 2014 and reinforced in September of the same year. (Xinhua)

Putin to Hollande, Merkel: Ukrainian Forces Must Stop Shelling



MOSCOW - Russia's President Vladimir Putin told French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel in a phone conversation on Monday that Ukrainian forces must stop shelling in Eastern Ukraine, the Kremlin said. The phone conversation took place

ahead of a June 23 meeting of foreign ministers from Russia, Germany, France and Ukraine, the Kremlin said in an emailed statement. "The Russian side stressed again the need for shelling of Donbass settlements by Ukrainian forces to stop immediately," the Kremlin said. (Reuters)

Car Bomb Kills at Least 4 in Syria

DAMASCUS - At least four people were killed and several others wounded Monday when a car bomb went off in a government-controlled area in Syria's southern province of Daraa, the state TV reported. The blast occurred at the entrance of the predominantly-Christian town of Izraa in the countryside of Daraa, said the report, spelling no further details. Daraa, the birthplace of the Syria conflict, has been witnessing intense mili-

tary showdown in recent months, in an attempt by the rebels to strip the government troops of the few remaining positions there. The rebels, mainly the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front, have become in control of large swathes of Daraa, on the Syrian-Jordanian border, and currently posing threat to the nearby province of Swaida, which is largely inhabited by Syrians of the Druze minority, which largely backs the government of President Bashar al-Assad. (Xinhua)

Japan's PM Expects Meeting with S. Korean President to Improve Bilateral Ties

TOKYO - In a meeting Monday with visiting South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said he wished to meet South Korean President Park Geun-hye at an early date to improve bilateral relations. Japanese prime minister told Yun that he was willing to hold summit meetings with Park, which would be the first time the two leaders hold formal talks since they both came into office, Abe in 2012 and Park in 2013, owing to the two countries' on-

going diplomatic spats. Monday marks the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic ties between Japan and South Korea. "Together with President Park, I would like to further improve relations toward the next half a century," Abe was quoted as telling Yun in a meeting at his office earlier Monday. Abe stated that South Korea is one of Japan's most important neighbors and that both countries should aim to develop future relations with mutual trust. (Xinhua)

U.S. MERS Experts Visit S. Korea for Technical Cooperation

SEOUL - A group of U.S. experts on infectious diseases are visiting South Korea, which is suffering from the outbreak of the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), to technically cooperate with South Korean experts in containing the spread, the health ministry said Monday. The group was composed of seven experts on contagious diseases and epidemiological study of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), according to the

Ministry of Health and Welfare. The group was headed by Dr. Susan Gerber, chief of the division of viral diseases at the CDC's National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Diseases. The U.S. experts plan to conduct various activities, including discussion, laboratory analysis and on-site inspection, for about 10 days from Monday, together with experts from the S. Korean CDC and private experts here. (Xinhua)

EU Extends Economic Sanctions against Russia By Six Months

BRUSSELS - The European Union (EU) announced Monday that it has decided to extend economic sanctions against Russia until Jan. 31 of 2016 to ensure it fully implements Ukraine peace accords. According to a press release issued by the Council of the EU, this move followed an agreement at the European Council in March, when EU leaders agreed in principle to roll the sanctions over by linking them directly to the ceasefire brokered by Paris and Berlin in Minsk that runs to December this year. The restrictive measures, which were introduced in response to Russia's alleged "destabilizing role" in the Ukrainian crisis, were imposed in July 2014 and reinforced in September 2014. The sanctions targeted certain exchanges with Russia in the financial, energy and defense sectors and dual-use goods. Moscow has repeatedly denied



related allegations, stressing that the concept of sanctions is counterproductive. (Xinhua)

NATO to Take New Steps to Strengthen Collective Defense

BRUSSELS - NATO will take new steps to strengthen collective defense at a ministerial meeting this week, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said Monday during a press conference at NATO headquarters. "The main issue will be how NATO adapts to a new and more challenging security

environment," he said, adding that, "This is an environment which is more complex and more demanding than it has been for a long time."

The decisions to be made will include further increasing the strength and capability of the NATO Response Force and speeding up political and mili-

tary decision-making. As well, setting up a new logistics headquarters within the NATO command structure and better coordinating and managing the movement of forces across the Alliance territory and their central supplies are among other decisions to be undertaken. (Xinhua)

EU Urges to Move Relationship with ASEAN to Strategic Level

BRUSSELS - European Union foreign ministers agreed Monday that the EU and the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) must work together to move their relationship to the strategic level. The call was made as the foreign ministers met in Luxembourg for a Council of the EU conference.

According to an official statement, the EU side reiterated the move to an EU-ASEAN strategic partnership would be matched by the EU's presence at the region's strategic table, including at a summit level through the EU's involvement in the East Asia Summit process. The EU side stressed the importance of EU-ASEAN coop-



eration on connectivity, saying the EU had valuable assets to support ASEAN in achieving its connectivity goals and was looking forward to stepping up mutually-beneficial cooperation also through dedicated mechanisms on sustainable and inclusive economic integration,

trade and border management. The EU will provide financial support from its cooperation programs, through the European Investment Bank, the Asia Investment Facility and the bilateral assistance programs by EU member states. (Xinhua)

Iraq Treads on Bloody Blade as Army Battling Tit-for-Tat with IS

BAGHDAD - A total of 25 people were killed and 28 wounded on Monday in air strikes, clashes with the Islamic State (IS) militants and violent attacks across Iraq, security sources said.

In the western province of Anbar, at least three soldiers were killed and six others wounded in mortar barrage by IS militants on a military base in east of the IS-held city of Fallujah, some 50 km west of Baghdad, a provincial security told Xinhua on condition of anonymity. Meanwhile, the army helicopter gunships pounded the IS positions in Haiyakil area, just south of Fallujah, and killed an IS local leader and five of his aides, the source said. In addition, five soldiers were killed and seven injured in an ambush by IS militants in Khasfa area in east of the town of ... (More on P4)... (25)

UN Report on War Crimes Arouses Backlash from Israel, Palestine

GAZA/JERUSALEM - The Islamic Hamas movement on Monday welcomed a recent United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) report accusing Israel of committing war crimes during last summer's war on Gaza. The UNHRC fact finding mission was appointed in September to investigate violations of international and hu-

manitarian law during the war. Israel has been lobbying against the commission ever since and refused to officially cooperate with it. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu Monday slammed findings by the UN report which found evidence of war crimes during last summer's war on Gaza, deeming it "biased." "The report is

biased," Netanyahu said at the start of his Likud faction meeting at the Knesset (parliament). "Israel did not commit war crimes," said Netanyahu. "Israel defended itself and did so in accordance with international law," he added. He also lashed out at the UNHRC, saying "it does everything but protect human rights." (Xinhua)

Denmark's Incoming PM Set to Form Minority Govt.

COPENHAGEN - Denmark's incoming Prime Minister Lars Loekke Rasmussen was given a mandate on Monday to form a minority government after attempts to form a majority government failed over the weekend. "I have got a broad mandate to form a government under my leadership," said Rasmussen after hold-

ing a second meeting with Queen Margrethe II on Monday to obtain an official directive to form a minority government. Rasmussen had begun negotiations to form a majority government on Saturday, after the center-right coalition won last Thursday's parliamentary election. However, the hope of

a majority coalition was dashed as the four center-right parties disagreed on several key issues, especially on public sector spending. "I honestly tried, but realized it was not possible," said Rasmussen. Analysts here predict that Rasmussen's Liberal Party, known as Venstre in Danish, will either ... (More on P4)... (24)

Neighbour News

Iran, Syria, Iraq to Coordinate Efforts against Terror: Minister

TEHRAN - Iran, Iraq and Syria will meet in the Iraqi capital Baghdad soon to discuss how they can effectively fight terror, Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli said on Monday. The upcoming tripartite meeting is expected to coordinate their efforts in fighting violence, extremism and terrorism in the region, Fazli told a joint press conference with visiting Syrian Interior Minister Muhammad Ibrahim al-Sha'ar. The "terrorists" of Islamic State (IS) militant group have distorted the image of Islam and, in collaboration with the West, the United States and their regional allies,

have posed challenges to the unity among Muslims, he was quoted as saying by official IRNA news agency. Iran and Syria signed a memorandum of understanding on Monday to exchange expertise in security issues and campaigns against illicit drug smuggling and human trafficking, according to the report. Al-Sha'ar arrived in Tehran on Sunday to hold talks with senior Iranian officials on anti-terror cooperation. Terrorism is the common enemy of Iran and Syria, and the battle against all types of terrorism requires firm determination of the two countries, al-Sha'ar said upon arrival in Tehran. (Xinhua)

Turkmen Gas Chemical Plant Project Among 10 Top Projects in Eurasia

ASHGABAT - The project of construction of a gas chemical plant in Kiyarly village on the Caspian coast in Turkmenistan has been named by UK-based Trade & Export Finance (TXF) one of the ten top projects funded by export credit agencies in Europe and Eurasia in 2014. The decision was made during a meeting of authoritative international financial and insurance organizations and journalists in Paris earlier in June, the State News Agency of Turkmenistan report-

ed. The gas chemical complex, which is currently under construction in Kiyarly village, is designed to process five billion cubic meters of natural gas and produce 386,000 tons of polyethylene and 81,000 tons of polypropylene per year. The project is implemented jointly by the TOYO Engineering (Japan) and a consortium of LG International Corporation and Hyundai Engineering Corp. Ltd (South Korea). The total cost of the project is US \$3.4 billion. (TCA)

China to Conduct 3rd National Agriculture Survey Next Year

BEIJING - China will conduct its third national agriculture survey in 2016, following surveys in 1997 and 2006. The survey will collect basic information about agriculture, rural areas and farmers. The data will be used by the central authorities to inform decisions, according to a statement

released on Monday by the State Council, China's cabinet. The survey is expected to focus on primary industry employment; land use and transfer; agricultural production and structure; large-scale farming; and industrial management of agriculture, it said. (Xinhua)

NGOs will Now Operate Under Interior Ministry: Nisar



ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali while speaking to the press on Monday said that Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) will now operate under the Interior Ministry instead of the Economic Affairs Division. The minister said that the high-level inter-ministerial committee, set up under Special Assistant to PM Tariq Fatemi for reviewing laws and regulations regarding accreditation and working conditions of INGOs working in Pakistan, had recommended that NGOs should op-

erate under the interior ministry. He also stressed that there should be a transparent accountability system with regards to NGOs. "We should know where their money is coming from and what it's being used for." Nisar said the matter would likely be tackled within the next three to six months. "A lot of NGOs are doing work that governmental institutions are not equipped or able to do. We welcome these NGOs but we will not allow any NGO to work here if they operate in conflict with our values." (Agencies)