

# France Urges Turkey and EU States to Ease Tensions

PARIS - France urged Turkey and several EU member states to calm tensions and said there had been no reason to prohibit a meeting on its soil on Sunday between Ankara's foreign minister and a local Turkish association. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu addressed a public meeting in eastern France on Sunday a day after the Netherlands barred his plane from landing in a row over Ankara's political campaigning



among Turkish emigrants. "In the absence of a proven threat to public order, there was no reason to prohibit the meeting," the Foreign Ministry said in the statement. "Given the current tensions between Turkey and several member states of the European Union, France calls for a de-escalation". "It also calls on the Turkish authorities to avoid excesses and provocations," the ministry added. (Reuters)

## Iraqi Forces Push Deeper in City Center of Western Mosul

MOSUL, Iraq - Iraqi security forces on Saturday pushed further toward the old city center of the western side of Mosul amid fierce clashes with Islamic State (IS) militants, the Iraqi military said. The federal police and interior ministry special forces, known as Rapid Response, advanced in the neighborhood of Bab al-Toub in Mosul city center, fighting heavy clashes against IS militants in the narrow streets of the old neighborhood, said Lt. Gen. Abdul-Amir Yarallah from the Joint Operations Command in a statement. The troops killed many IS militants and destroyed three car bombs and 20 explosive devices during the battles in Bab al-Toub, the

statement said. The commandos of the Counter-Terrorism Service (CTS) continued their advance inside the neighborhoods of Aghawat and Risala in the west of the old city center, while more CTS troops initiates new advances in the nearby neighborhoods of New Mosul, Nafet and Nablus, leaving many IS militants killed along with destroying five booby-trapped cars and 14 explosive devices, the statement added. Also in the day, the army's 16th infantry division made a new progress in northwest of Mosul's western side, and the troops recaptured two villages, a compound of industry installation and the major ... (More on P4)... (16)

## Death Toll from Damascus Bombing Climbs to 74: Observatory

BEIRUT - The death toll from a double bomb attack targeting Shi'ites visiting a pilgrimage site in Damascus has climbed to 74, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported on Sunday. Most of the dead in Saturday's attack were Iraqi Shi'ites who were going to visit a cemetery near the Old City of Damascus.

There has been no claim of responsibility. The Hezbollah-run al-Manar TV station said it was carried out by two suicide bombers. Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has been supported in the country's war by Shi'ite militias from countries including Iraq, Afghanistan and Lebanon. (Reuters)

## Dutch-Turkish Tension Rises over Diplomatic Row

THE HAGUE - Diplomatic tensions between the Netherlands and Turkey escalated on Saturday night after a convoy of Turkey's Minister of Family and Social Policies Betül Sayan Kaya was halted for hours close to the Turkish General Consulate in Rotterdam. "I am being taken to Germany via the Nijmegen border with democratic and humanitarian values trampled underfoot," Kaya said Sunday on her official Twitter, "I condemn this on behalf of all my citizens."



"The whole world should take a stance against such a fascist implementation in the name of democracy," she added. Kaya entered the country at the German-Dutch

## Merkel Meets Unpredictable Trump Amid Tense Ties

BERLIN - Europe's most powerful leader, Angela Merkel, meets for the first time next week America's flamboyant President Donald Trump whose arrival in the White House has sent shockwaves across the Atlantic. While former US president Barack Obama had labelled Merkel his "closest international partner", there has been little known contact between the German leader and Trump since he took office. Trump's criticism of Germany over issues ranging from its record trade sur-

plus to Merkel's liberal refugee stance, as well as his backing for Britain to leave the European Union, have not gone unnoticed in Berlin. A month after US Vice President Mike Pence delivered a message to Europe underscoring the importance of transatlantic ties, Tuesday's meeting will be scrutinised for clues on whether Trump fully endorses that message. The reserved German leader herself underlined that she is travelling to



Washington not only as Germany's leader, but also as an envoy of the EU. (AFP)

## Britain Has a Brexit Backup Plan if Talks Fail: Minister

LONDON - Britain is drawing up contingency plans for the unlikely event it has to walk away from divorce talks with the European Union without a deal, Brexit minister David Davis said on Sunday. Prime Minister Theresa May is set to begin exit talks by the end of the month, kicking off Britain's most complex set of negotiations since the end of World War Two. The outcome will shape Britain's political and economic future. Ahead of the start of ne-

gotiations, which could be triggered as early as Tuesday, a committee of lawmakers warned it would be a serious dereliction of duty if the government failed to plan for the possibility of not reaching an exit deal. "I don't think, firstly, that is remotely likely," Davis told the BBC's Andrew Marr Show, responding to the report. "It's in absolutely everybody's interest that we get a good outcome." Parliament's Foreign Affairs committee warned that a breakdown in



negotiations would be a "very destructive outcome," causing economic harm to both sides as well as creating uncertainty and legal confusion for individuals and businesses. "The simple truth is we have been planning for the contingency - all the various outcomes, all the possible outcomes of the negotiations," Davis said. (Reuters)

## Parliament Must not Have Power to Veto EU Exit: Brexit Minister

LONDON - Brexit minister David Davis said parliament must not be able to veto Britain's decision to leave the European Union, urging lawmakers to reject proposed changes to legislation that gives Prime Minister Theresa May the power to begin exit talks. Davis urged lawmakers in the elected lower chamber of parliament to overturn changes made last week by the upper house of parliament which sought to give politicians more power to reject the final terms of Britain's exit. "What we can't have is either house of parliament reversing the decision of the British people - they haven't got a veto," Davis said. (Reuters)

## Britain's Jetty Refurbished for Biggest Warships

LONDON - Britain's Ministry of Defence (MOD) hailed on Saturday the completion of the refurbishment of a historic jetty at Britain's Naval Dockyard in Portsmouth as a major milestone in preparation for the arrival of the biggest warships ever built for the Royal Navy. The jetty, parts of which date back over 90 years ago, has been refurbished to prepare for the first of the Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers. "The completed jetty is a crucial element of the infrastructure package delivered to support the arrival of the carriers into their homeport of Ports-

mouth," Philip Wise, the project manager, said. In order to prepare the port for new warships, the building of the jetty was coupled with the dredging of the approach channel, the inner harbor area and the berth. With the jetty completed, the next phase includes a series of trials to familiarize the port crew with the new facility. The trials started this weekend with the arrival of the 40,000-ton United States Naval Ship Robert E. Peary to test the related processes and equipment. (Xinhua)

## Ancient Palace Revealed under Destroyed Mosul Shrine

MOSUL, Iraq - Iraqi archaeologists think that tunnels dug by Islamic State militants under a destroyed shrine in Mosul have revealed the palace of an ancient Assyrian king who ruled some 2,700 years ago. IS fighters blew up the shrine of the biblical Jonah's tomb in 2014 after taking control of the city. They started digging tunnels into the side of the hill under the shrine, leading to the discovery. Ancient inscriptions and winged bulls and lions were found deep in the tunnels, thought to be part of the palace of King Esarhaddon, who ruled the Neo-Assyrian empire in the 7th century B.C. The militants may have been looking for artifacts to loot. IS was pushed out of eastern Mosul by Iraqi forces in January. The battle continues for western Mosul. (AP)

## EU's White Paper on Future of Europe Meets with Positive Reactions in Italy

ROME - The White Paper on the future of Europe presented earlier this month by the European Commission met with interest and overall positive reactions in Italy. A debate over European Union's (EU) future path is alive in the country, especially ahead of the celebrations planned here on March 25 for the 60th Anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, from which the whole integration process stemmed. The White Paper, unveiled by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker on March 1, outlines five possible scenarios for the remaining 27 member states of the bloc (considering Brexit as done) by 2025. "It is an effective initiative, since it allows the political debate to ignite at European Council level," Carlo Altomonte, professor of Economics of European Integration with Bocconi University in Milan, told Xinhua. "In terms of ability to stir a discussion, the document is well-balanced: the Commission did not take a specific stand, but put all member states before their responsibilities, outlining the risks and opportunities of each scenario," he explained. The White Paper covers a range of possible paths, the first of which would be for the EU27 to "Carrying On" as they have done so far, on the base of already agreed agendas. The second scenario predicts a future EU with "nothing but the single market," for the 27 member states would not be able to agree on common policies on other issues. (Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### Chinese, US Construction Equipment Makers See Big Opportunity with Trump

LAS VEGAS, the United States - The Chinese construction moguls who came to this desert oasis spoke words of praise for the new American president and the prospect of increased trade between the two most powerful economies in the world. "I slept in Trump Towers last night and the hotel was excellent," said Min Wang, president of the XCMG, the ninth largest construction equipment maker in the world with 2016 revenues of 3.6 billion U.S. dollars. "Please tell President (Donald) Trump we collaborate well with American companies, and our products are of very good quality and are priced well," Wang said, whose equipment is exported to 170 countries around the globe. Last year, the Chinese construction titan was the personal guest of Brazilian President Michel Temer to discuss rebuilding the infrastructure of the world's ninth largest economy with a GDP of

1.8 trillion dollars. With Trump saying he will rebuild America's "highways, bridges, tunnels, and airports," he is describing infrastructure components that define China's explosive growth during the past two decades. "It's without governmental regulations to slow down the construction which is why China can accomplish so much, so fast," said Denver Republican analyst James Ryder. "Trump and the Chinese are the perfect partners," Ryder, a retired oil executive, told Xinhua. Wang and the bevy of wealthy Chinese construction businessmen who attended 2017 Con-Expo this week weren't the only ones giving compliments to America's new president. "The people attending this show are workers - they supported Trump and we know he represents our interests," Steve Norman told Xinhua. (Xinhua)

### Iran Unveils Advanced Indigenous Armored Tank

TEHRAN - Iran on Sunday unveiled a home-grown state-of-the-art tank called "Karrar," Tasnim news agency reported. The domestically-manufactured tank is a clear sign of the high capability and creativity of the Defense Ministry's experts, Iranian Defense Minister Brig. Gen. Hossein Dehqan was quoted as saying. Upgrading armored military tools is one of the main strategies of the Defense Ministry, Dehqan said in the ceremony to unveil the tank.

"The Karrar advanced tank, with its numerous features and capabilities, can play a major role in implementing the strategy of upgrading military hardware," he said. He added that Karrar is one of the most advanced tanks in the world and can fully satisfy the needs of the Iranian armed forces. He referred to some advanced features of the tank, saying that it is equipped with electro-optical fire control system, laser rangefinder, ballistic computer, and is capable to hit fixed and mobile targets. (Xinhua)

### Pakistan Army Fights Tribal Zone Insurgency with Needles and Thread

ISLAMABAD - A battle-hardened commander in the Pakistani army, he has spent the last eight years in the rugged tribal zone of North Waziristan, a notorious stronghold of the Taliban and Al Qaeda. From his base in the main town of Miranshah, he speaks about how more than 800 of his men have died in the two-year operation to bring peace to the region.gh But as he hops into his car for a guided tour around town, his war-weary tone lightens up as he talks about his new counter-insurgency tactic. It doesn't involve guns or tanks, but needles, thread and mixing bowls. And the open-

ing salvo will take place at a newly-built school, which will soon be running embroidery and cooking classes. "We're hoping to get women to enrol so that they can go on to set up their own boutiques and maybe even cafes," beams Gen Hassan. "Women didn't used to run businesses in this part of the world - we're trying to change that." Whether any local menfolk will try to enrol in the classes remains to be seen. Gun-loving and religiously conservative, North Waziristan's tribesmen are not known for their interest in sewing, much less for sharing classrooms with women. (Agencies)

### Uzbekistan, Italy Inked Several Deals

TASHKENT - A delegation of business circles and farmers of Namangan region visited Italy, Jahon news agency reported. During the visit, the delegation of Uzbekistan familiarized with the experience of the Italian partners. The Uzbek delegation also visited several enterprises to study storage, sorting, processing and packaging of agriculture products. The delegation of Uzbekistan held talks with representatives of the Confederation of Italian producers and private

enterprises, Chamber of Commerce "Italy-Uzbekistan" and Zanotti. After the negotiations, the Uzbek and Italian businesses signs five protocols on supply and assembly of cold equipment in Namangan region to process 4,000 tonnes of fruits, vegetables, meat and milk products a year. The drafts of five documents were prepared to sign. Within these documents, it is planned to purchase equipment for processing and storing 10,000 tonnes of products. (AKI)