

# EU's Tusk Warns against Brexit Deal 'Threats'

STRASBOURG - The European Union will not bow to British "threats" that it is prepared to walk away from Brexit talks without a deal, the bloc's president, Donald Tusk, said Wednesday.

Tusk said Britain would come off worse than the 27 other EU members if the two-year negotiation process ended without an agreement on the terms of its departure.

"We will not be intimidated by threats and I can assure you they simply will not work," Tusk told the European Parliament in Strasbourg, France.

"The claims, increasingly



taking the form of threats, that no agreement will be good for the UK and bad for the EU, need to be addressed," Tusk said.

"I want to be clear that a no-deal scenario would be bad for everyone but above all for the UK."

British Prime Minister Theresa May said in January that she was ready to leave the EU without a deal on future relations if necessary.

"While I am sure a positive agreement can be reached - I am equally clear that no deal for Britain is better than a bad deal for Britain," she said in a speech. (AFP)

## China, U.S. Communicating on Presidents' Meeting: Premier Li

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said Wednesday that China and the United States are in communication on a meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump.

Addressing a press conference after the conclusion of the annual session of China's national legislature, Li said "diplomatic authorities of the two countries are already engaged concerning a face-to-face meeting" between the two presidents.

The China-U.S. relationship is crucial not just to

the two countries themselves, but also to regional and global peace, security, and stability, he said.

"Hence we must work together to continuously take it forward," he said.

Li noted that China-U.S. ties have been going forward despite various twists and turns, but said he feels optimistic about future China-U.S. relations, because "after several decades of growth of bilateral relations, the two countries now share a wide range of common interests."

Though there are still differences between China and ... (More on P4)... (23)

## European Council President Calls for Unity in Europe's Future Challenges

STRASBOURG - Addressing the European Parliament gathered here Wednesday for its plenary session, European Council (EC) President Donald Tusk stressed the need for unity and mutual trust in a debate on the future of the European Union (EU).

In a debate on the outcomes of the European Council meeting of March 9-10, and in advance of celebrations of the 60th anniversary of signing the Treaty of Rome, Tusk told Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) that he

would personally strive to see Europe face coming challenges as one.

"Considering the interests of the community of 27 countries in the context of the upcoming Brexit negotiations as well as the long-term strategic interests of the EU, I will be urging everyone to strive towards maintaining political unity among the 27," the EC president declared.

Repeating an expression he used following the March European Council meeting, Tusk told MEPs: "If you want to go fast, go



alone. If you want to go far, go together."

Tusk acknowledged, however, that since a European Commission white paper was released earlier this month detailing five possible scenarios for the future of Europe, discussion has centered around questions of a "multi-speed" Europe, and his understanding for concern. "Some expect systemic ... (More on P4)... (24)

## Maritime Migrant Arrivals into EU Nearing 20,000: IOM

GENEVA - The International Organization for Migration (IOM) reported Tuesday that 19,653 migrants and refugees have crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe so far this year, down from over 152,700 over the same period last year.

While the number of entries by sea has registered a sharp year-on-year drop, 2017 has been a particularly deadly year for those seeking to reach European shores by sea.

IOM reported that 525 men, women and children have lost their lives since

the start of the year, 43 more than over the same period in 2016.

Most fatalities this year have been documented on the central Mediterranean route linking North Africa with Italy, where 481 migrants and refugees have reportedly drowned.

A further 44 individuals have lost their lives on eastern and western Mediterranean Sea passages.

A record 5,079 migrants and refugees died last year while crossing the Mediterranean Sea, up from 3,771 fatalities in 2015. (Xinhua)

## Russia Stands Firm on Countering Corruption, Crime: Putin

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin pledged to maintain its course on fighting corruption and crime on Tuesday, as he outlined the priority tasks for the prosecution agencies this year at a meeting of the Prosecutor General Office's Board.

"This (countering corruption and crime in general) calls for systematic, professional work at all stages, from preventing crime to pressing charges in court," Putin said.

Assessing the performance of the prosecution

agencies in 2016, Putin specified that 3,800 criminal proceedings were instituted on corruption charges following prosecutors' investigations throughout the whole year.

"We must continue to tighten control, enhance financial discipline and prevent the misuse, squandering or embezzlement of budget funds in the sphere of government procurement, state defence orders, state property management and



infrastructure projects," Putin added. In his annual parliamentary address in last December, Putin stressed the importance of further development of democratic institutes and civil society in Russia to protect rights and curb corruption. (Xinhua)

## Russia to Launch 500 Missiles in Siberian Drills

VLADIVOSTOK - Russian air defense troops will launch 500 anti-aircraft missiles in Siberian drills to shoot down improvised enemy planes, said Alexander Gordeev, head of the Russian Eastern Military District Wednesday.

"Air defense units will practice by detecting, tracking, identifying and destroying rapid small target missiles.

Around 250 target missiles and two cruise missiles will be used to intimate improvised enemy planes, and some 500 anti-aircraft missiles will be used to destroy them," Gordeev said.



The exercise will use anti-aircraft missile defense systems such as S-400, S-300, Tor, Osa, Strela-10 and Pantsir-S, anti-aircraft guns including self-propelled Shilka and MAN-

PADS like Iгла, according to Gordeev.

A total of some 8,000 troops and over 1,000 pieces of military hardware are involved in the drills.

The ... (More on P4)... (25)

## G20 Finance Ministers to Meet Under America First Shadow

BERLIN - Finance ministers from the world's top nations gather in Germany Friday as fears grow that US President Donald Trump could upend the global economic order with his America First policy. Within two months of moving into the White House, Trump has already torn up the trans-Pacific free trade pact, threatened punitive tariffs against multinationals with factories outside the United States and attacked "currency manipulation" by export giant China.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin makes his first official foreign foray when he joins the G20 gathering of finance ministers and central bankers from Friday in the western German spa town of Baden-Baden. The former Goldman Sachs banker faces scrutiny by Washington's key trading partners for ... (More on P4)... (26)

## U.S. Joins Plant Genetic Treaty: UN Spokesman

UNITED NATIONS - The United States is the newest member of the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture, a UN spokesman told reporters here Tuesday.

He said the treaty is a ground-breaking instrument that works to strengthen global food security by promoting the conservation, sharing, and sustainable use of agricultural plant genetic resources.

"The United States officially deposited its certificate of adherence to the treaty with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) three months ago, triggering a count-down to its entry into force for the country," UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said.

In November 2002, the United States added its signature to the international treaty which aims to ensure better use of genetic diversity to meet the challenge of eradicating world hunger.

At present, 143 countries are now participating in the treaty, with five other countries, namely Argentina, Bolivia, Guyana, Tuvalu and Chile, becoming recently active contracting parties.

Antigua and Barbuda is poised to become so by mid-2017, the spokesman said.

The international treaty's centerpiece is its "Multilateral System" that facilitates access to a globe-spanning collection of plant genetic resources, exclusively for use in research, breeding and training efforts and which includes measures to ensure the fair and equitable sharing of any financial benefits that result. (Xinhua)

## Suicide Bombing Rocks Justice Palace in Damascus, Killing at Least 30

DAMASCUS - At least 30 people were killed and 45 others wounded when a suicide bomber detonated his bomb vest inside the Justice Palace, or the Courthouse, in Syrian capital Damascus on Wednesday, state TV reported.

The bomber was among the people who were waiting for checking to enter the building at noon time on Wednesday.

He was in camouflaged uniform, holding a rifle and a hand grenade, said the report, adding that once he handed over his weapons to the checkpoint police, he was asked for further inspection, he thronged the checkpoint and entered the main hall of the Justice Palace, ... (More on P4)... (27)

## EU-Turkey Deal Has Severe Impact on Health of Asylum Seekers: MSF

ATHENS - A year after the launch of an EU-Turkey deal to stem the migrant flow into Europe, Doctors Without Borders (Medecins Sans Frontieres, or MSF) asked EU member states to change their approach to the crisis, pointing to the impact on the health of asylum seekers.

MSF psychologists in Lesbos island saw a two-and-a-half-fold increase in the percentage of patients with symptoms of anxiety and depression, and a threefold increase in the percentage of patients with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, according to an e-mailed report on Wednesday. "Symptoms of psychosis also increased, all of which coincides

with our teams seeing more patients with severe trauma, and more cases of self-harm and suicide attempts," according to the NGO's document.

Through the nearly 300 mental health consultations MSF teams conducted in Samos island, they have seen a similar deterioration and an escalation in self-harm and suicide attempts in recent months. In 2016, MSF medical teams in 20 locations across Greece carried out 72,740 health consultations.

The EU-Turkey agreement was signed on March 18, 2016, and came into effect two days later. The goal of the deal is to put an end to ... (More on P4)... (28)

## Nieghbor News

### China-Russia Trade Turns for Strong Growth: Premier

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said Wednesday that China-Russia trade relations have turned the corner and achieved strong growth.

The outcome should be attributed to the joint efforts from both sides, he said while addressing a press conference after the conclusion of the annual session of China's top

legislature.

Two-way trade recorded a big surge in the first two months this year, showing there is still tremendous untapped potential in China-Russia economic and trade ties and the two economies are highly complementary, Li said. He added that the goals set for the two-way trade can be achieved. (Xinhua)

### Pakistan Military to Ensure Security for Economic Corridor

ISLAMABAD - The Pakistani military will provide whatever support is required to ensure the security of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a Pakistani officer said.

Pakistan's military spokesperson Asif Ghafoor said in a news conference in the Pakistan embassy in Beijing that the Pakistani army has constructed nearly 900 kilometers of road, "which is one of the basic prerequisites to activate the CPEC."

The economic corridor, the planning of which started in 2013, links Kashgar in China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and Gwadar Port

in Pakistan's Baluchistan region. An important part of China's Belt and Road Initiative, the corridor is seeing the construction of a number of projects such as highways, railways and energy facilities.

According to a speech published on the website of the Chinese embassy in Pakistan, Ambassador Sun Weidong said that 18 "early harvest projects" of CPEC are under construction, and have created more than 13,000 jobs for the local people.

Sun also said some energy projects will be completed to help further address Pakistan's energy shortage. (Daily China)

### Iran, Russia to Consider "Cooperation Roadmap" in Rouhani's Visit to Moscow

TEHRAN - Iran and Russia will consider a sketch of cooperation roadmap during the upcoming visit by the Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to Moscow, semi-official Mehr news agency reported Tuesday.

The two sides will hopefully reach an agreement on a roadmap for medium or long-term cooperation, Iranian Communications and Information Technology Minister Mahmoud Vaezi said.

In addition, over 11 documents will be signed between the two countries during Rouhani's visit to Russia, Vaezi was quoted as saying.

"Although the value of trade exchange between Tehran and Moscow had a 70-80 percent increase in 2016 as compared to 2015,

the capacity for cooperation between the two sides is much higher than this," he said. He praised the progress between the two countries on customs relations, mentioning the creation of the "green customs corridor" to facilitate the cargo transportation. "Besides, we have had good talks on oil and gas cooperation and it has been decided that negotiations would continue to finalize the contracts in the remaining time before Rouhani's visit to Moscow in late March," the Iranian minister said. Moreover, Vaezi said that Iran and Russia's gas giant Gazprom are in talks on investment in gas fields in southern Iran, semi-official Fars news agency reported. (Xinhua)

### Uzbekistan, Turkey have Potential for Development of Relations

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan and Turkey have a huge still unused potential for developing bilateral relations in the political and diplomatic, trade and economic, investment, military and technical, tourism, logistics and other spheres, according to Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's congratulatory message.

Mirziyoyev's message was addressed to his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan in

connection with the 25th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations. In his message, Mirziyoyev expressed confidence that by joint efforts Uzbekistan and Turkey will be able to bring the comprehensive and long-term partnership to a qualitatively new level for the sake of the prosperity of the fraternal peoples. In his reply message, the Turkish president also stressed the ... (More on P4)... (29)

### IOI Seminar on Caspian Sea Underway in Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - The International Ocean Institute (IOI) is holding a 10-day seminar in Avaza, Turkmenistan, which will end on March 16.

The seminar, titled "The Caspian Sea - Sustainable Development and Management", is being held with the support of Turkmenistan's Foreign Ministry and State Enterprise for Caspian Sea Issues, the Turkmen government said in a message. Experts

of various ministries and agencies of Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia and Turkmenistan, as well as the maritime economy, politics, management, ecology and maritime law experts and scientific consultants of the IOI are invited to the event. The message says that special attention was attached to the creation of a legal base of cooperation of the Caspian littoral states. (Trend)