

IOM Confirms Deadly Attack on Refugee Boat off Yemen

GENEVA - The International Organization for Migration (IOM) said Friday that 31 Somalis reportedly lost their lives in an alleged helicopter attack on a refugee boat late on Thursday. "Our people said they know that Somalis were killed in 'an attack,' they do not know if it was a helicopter," IOM spokesman Joel Millman told the press here. "The press is reporting that it was a helicopter, and apparently coastguard of-



officials have confirmed it," he added. Millman confirmed that the vessel "was full of Somalis" and that over 80 survivors were rescued. He warned however that the death toll could be higher since 24 of those saved are in critical conditions. It remains unclear who carried out the attack on the vessel which was believed to be bound for Sudan after setting off from the Yemeni town of Houdaydah. (Xinhua)

4 ASEAN Countries to Discuss Future of TPP in Vietnam: Official

HANOI - Four members of the Association of the Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), who are also the signatories to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), will discuss the future of the TPP in Vietnamese capital Hanoi in May, according to a Vietnamese official. Tran Tuan Anh, Vietnamese minister of industry and trade, was quoted by local Tien Phong (Pioneer) online newspaper on Friday as saying that on the occasion of the ASEAN Economic Ministers' Meeting held recently in the Philippines, Vietnam had

bilateral exchanges with other ASEAN countries, including Brunei, Malaysia and Singapore, on the TPP. "It's too early to make decisions on TPP. ASEAN countries reached a consensus that the upcoming Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting in Hanoi in May will provide a chance for TPP members to evaluate the situation more thoroughly and bring about measures for integration among TPP members in the new context that the U.S. withdrew from the deal," said Anh. (Xinhua)

UN Establishes Interagency Group to Combat Resistance to Antibiotics

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations announced on Thursday the establishment of the Inter-agency Group on Microbial Resistance to be co-chaired by Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohamed and World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Margaret Chan. It will be comprised of high level representatives of relevant UN agencies, other international organizations and individual experts across different sectors, including animal health, agriculture, environment and

others, according to a statement by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. "The objective of the group will be to provide a practical guidance for approaches needed to ensure sustained effective global action to address antimicrobial resistance, including options to improve coordination, taking into account the Global Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance," Guterres said. With resistance to antibiotics, both for humans and animals, having become a global problem, the UN



General Assembly last September adopted a resolution seeking formation of this ad hoc group which now includes 15 international experts from various concerned disciplines and representatives of UN and other international agencies. "Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is one of the most pressing issues globally and not only for ... (More on P4)... (24)

U.S. Treasury Urges Congress to Increase Debt Limit

WASHINGTON - U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin on Thursday urged Congress to raise the debt limit as soon as possible to avoid a potential federal government default. "I respectfully urge Congress to protect the full faith and credit of the United States by acting to increase the statutory debt limit as soon as possible," Mnuchin said in a letter sent to Republican and Democratic leaders in both chambers of Congress. Mnuchin warned that beginning Thursday, the federal government's out-

standing debt was at the statutory limit. It means the Treasury has no room to borrow under standard operating procedures from Thursday. In order to temporarily prevent the government from defaulting on its obligations, the Treasury began using "extraordinary measures" to continue to finance the government's activities, said Mnuchin. These extraordinary measures could help the Treasury have sufficient cash to make essential payments "until sometime ... (More on P4)... (25)

Turkey Migrant Pact Plagued by 'Broken Promises': UN

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)

Indian President Lauds Modi as Good Learner

NEW DELHI - Indian President Pranab Mukherjee on Friday praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi as "a very good learner" who has acquired "in-depth knowledge" on every subject. "Be it foreign relations or economy, Modi has acquired in-depth knowledge on every subject. One can win the election by a majority but you need consensus to rule. This aspect of PM Modi is very good," he said at a media conclave in the Indian capital. Stating that Modi is "a very good learner," Mukherjee



said that the prime minister has his own way of dealing with things and "we must give him credit for that." "I am part of this democracy. I am part of the mass and will melt

into it without leaving a legacy," he added. Modi assumed power in May 2014 general elections after decimating the then ruling Congress party which was ... (More on P4)... (26)

Turkish Politicians Slam EU Court's Headscarf Ruling

ANKARA - Turkish president accused a European Court of Justice ruling, which allows employers to ban employees from wearing the Islamic headscarf, of starting a struggle between Christian "cross" and "crescent" of Islamic world, local media reported. "Where is the liberty of religion? They have started a struggle between the cross and crescent," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Thursday at a rally in Sakarya province ahead of April 16 referendum campaign for constitutional amendment. He suggested that Europe is moving toward the days just before World War II, private NTV reported. The controversial decision drew criticism from Turkish politicians. Turkey's EU Minister and Chief Negotiator Omer Celik stated during an interview with the A Haber news channel ... (More on P4)... (27)

Syrian Air Defenses Shoot Down Israeli Warplane

DAMASCUS - The Syrian air defenses shot down an Israeli warplane, which was one of four Israeli war jets carrying out airstrikes on Syrian military positions in the central province of Homs before dawn Friday, the Syrian army said in a statement, adding that the targeted warplane fell down inside the Israeli airspace. Four Israeli warplanes infiltrated the Syrian airspace at 2:40 am Friday, over the Braji area and targeted one of the military positions near the city of Palmyra in the eastern countryside of Homs, said the military statement. It added that the Syrian air defenses responded to the attack, shooting down one Israeli jet inside the Israeli airspace, and hit another while forcing the rest to flee. "This flagrant attack comes to show the Zionist enemy's support to the terrorists gangs of the Islamic State, and a desperate attempt to lift their collapsed morale," the statement contended. The Syrian army, meanwhile, stressed resolve to confront any future Israeli attack on Syrian positions, adding that the response will be direct by all available means. The Syrian army has been on a crushing offensive in the eastern countryside of Homs against the IS group, succeeding recently to capture the old city of Palmyra and moving forward toward capturing key gas fields in the countryside of that area. But the Israeli media said the airstrikes were targeting Hezbollah-bond weapons shipment. (Xinhua)

DPRK Wishes for Maintaining Traditional Ties with Russia

PYONGYANG - The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Friday expressed its wish to maintain traditional ties with Russia when marking the 68th anniversary of the conclusion of an economic and cultural cooperation agreement between the two countries. The daily Rodong Sinmun (Labor News) said that the conclusion of the agreement between the DPRK and the former Soviet Union on March 17, 1949 was the first of its kind concluded between the DPRK and Russia to provide a legal base for developing mutually beneficial cooperation and exchanges. "Since the ... (More on P4)... (28)

U.S. State Secretary Says all Options on Table for Korean Peninsula Nuke Issue

SEOUL - Visiting U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Friday that all options are on the table to resolve the Korean Peninsula's nuclear issue. Tillerson said during a joint press conference with his South Korean counterpart Yun Byung-se in Seoul that all of diplomatic, security and economic measures and all options will be reviewed for the peninsula's denuclearization. "All options are on the table," said the top U.S. diplomat who arrived here earlier in the day for the second stop of his first East Asian tour since taking office. He visited Japan on Thursday, meeting with Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida. He is scheduled to fly to China on Saturday. Before the press conference, Tillerson toured the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) that has divided the two Koreas since the three-year Korean War ended in 1953 with an armistice. He also visited the truce village of Panmunjom inside the DMZ. Tillerson said a so-called "strategic patience" policy toward the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) has ended, referring to the U.S. foreign policy in the past decade under which Washington had refrained from having talks with Pyongyang before its sincere efforts at ... (More on P4)... (29)

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Silk Road Expo to Open in Xi'an in June

XI'AN - A Silk Road expo will be held in June in Xi'an city in northwest China's Shaanxi Province, the eastern end of the ancient trans-Asian trade routes, provincial authorities announced Friday. The Silk Road International Exposition, or the 21st Investment and Trade Forum for Cooperation between East and West China, will be held from June 3 to 7, according to the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade Shaanxi Sub-Council. There will be 12 exhibi-

tion halls, with a total area of 300,000 square meters. About 20 meetings and forums focusing on the economic belt and common development will be held during the expo. The Republic of Serbia has been confirmed as the guest of honor of this year's expo. The expo is expected to enhance cooperation on food processing, tourism and manufacturing industry between the two countries. Other countries along the Silk Road, including India and Uzbekistan, will also participate. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Becomes 5th Country in World to Adopt Legislation on Climate Change

ISLAMABAD - The Senate, on Friday, passed the Pakistan Climate Change Bill 2017, making the country the fifth in the world to adopt a comprehensive legislation on the issue. The legislation was passed to meet the country's obligations under international conventions relating to climate change and address its effects. Speaking at the occasion, Minister for Climate Change Zahid Hamid said that Pakistan ranks 153rd in greenhouse gas emitting countries, but it is the seventh country most vulnerable to climate-change.

He added that the country is likely to produce four times more greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, and would need \$40 billion to mitigate the effects. On February 28, Sindh Assembly member Shafi Muhammad Jamot said that the province is more prone to climate change due to its geographical location as compared to the rest of the country. Addressing those in attendance at the launch of 'Climate Public Expenditure Review', Jamot said that the government has established a separate department to handle environment-related issues. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran's Top Security Official Blames West for Spread of Terrorism

TEHRAN - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani blasted the western countries, specially the US, for continuing their support for the terrorist groups in the region. "The western countries and the US government not only do not do anything to confront terrorism, but by supporting the terrorist groups prepare the grounds for increasing their presence in the region," Shamkhani said. He reiterated that the US is also supporting Saudi

Arabia in its attacks on the civilians in Yemen. In relevant remarks in late February, Shamkhani blasted the Saudi regime for supporting Israel in the region. "The Riyadh government's policies are based on supporting terrorism and Zionism regime's opportunist approach at a time that regional tensions are escalating," Shamkhani said in a meeting with Syrian Parliament Speaker Hadiya Khalaf Abbas in Tehran. He reiterated that blackmailing through terrorism is a habit of Israel and Saudi Arabia. (FNA)

Uzbekistan Puts a Smile on an Economic Blow to Turkmenistan

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan's President Shavkat Mirziyoyev surprised many when he chose Turkmenistan as the destination for his first foreign visit after his election last December. But just days before Mirziyoyev would exchange smiles with his counterpart Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Uzbek and Chinese officials shelved a project to expand the pipeline that pumps gas from Turkmenistan to China, a major setback for regional energy relations. The so-called Line D ex-

pansion would not have followed the pipeline which already weaves through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan before reaching western China. Instead, the plan was to route it through Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan, in an effort to diversify transit countries and potentially create new markets. But on March 2, China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC) and Uzbekneftegaz, the state-owned companies in charge of the project, indefinitely postponed construction work. (Agencies)

Turkmenistan Offers Qatar to Partake in TAPI Project

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan is interested in discussing the issues related to the participation of Qatar's big financial and investment structures in the implementation of transnational Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project, said Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. He made the remarks during negotiations in Doha,

where the Turkmen president was on a state visit on March 15-16, the Neutral Turkmenistan newspaper reported March 16. Turkmenistan's above-mentioned interest was expressed during negotiations with the Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al-Thani. Berdimuhamedov also noted that Qatar is one of leaders on the export of ... (More on P4)... (30)