

Top UN Officials Call on Member States to Remain Committed to Paris Climate Accord

UNITED NATIONS - Climate change is an unprecedented and growing threat to peace, prosperity and development and addressing it presents an economic opportunity for governments and business, top UN officials said here Thursday, calling upon UN member states to remain committed to Paris climate accord. The statement came at a time when U.S. President Donald Trump is reportedly poised in the coming days to announce his plans to dismantle the centerpiece of former President Barack Obama's climate change legacy, which includes his efforts to help bring the Paris Agreement into being in December 2015.



Trump's moves are intended to send an unmistakable signal to the nation and the world that he intends to follow through on his campaign vows to rip apart every element of what the current U.S. president has called Obama's "stupid" policies to deal with climate change. "We are dealing with scientific facts, not politics. And the facts are clear. Climate change is a direct threat in itself, and a multiplier of many other threats," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said while addressing a UN General Assembly high-level action event aimed at invigorating political momentum on climate... (More on P4)...(31)

Putin Meets French Presidential Contender Le Pen in Kremlin

MOSCOW - President Vladimir Putin granted an audience to French far-right party leader Marine Le Pen in the Kremlin on Friday, bestowing a level of international recognition that has so far eluded her in the countdown to France's presidential election. Opinion polls show Le Pen getting through to the second, decisive round of the French presidential election on May 7 but then losing to centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron. Le Pen, who has said she admires Putin, reiterated

her call for a lifting of the European Union's economic sanctions imposed on Russia over its role in the Ukraine conflict. "We attach great importance to our relations with France, but at the same time we try to maintain equal relations both with the current authorities and with representatives of the opposition," said Putin ahead of his talks with Le Pen. "Of course I know that the election campaign in France is actively developing," said Putin. "We do... (More on P4)...(32)

French DM Says Offensive to Retake Syria's Raqqa to Start Soon

PARIS - French Defense Minister (DM) Jean-Yves Le Drian said Friday that an international military offensive to retake Syrian city of Raqqa from the IS is likely to start "in the coming days." "Today, one can say that Raqqa is encircled, that the battle for Raqqa will start in the coming days," Le Drian told local Cnews television, adding that liberating Raqqa was France's "major objective." "It will be a very hard battle, but a battle that is going to be of utmost importance because once the (Islamic

State's) two strongholds are taken over by Iraqi forces on one side and by the Arab-Kurdish forces on the other, Daesh will really have difficulties existing," he added. Noting it is necessary to "continue applying pressure" on Islamic insurgents in Syria and Iraq, Le Drian said he would meet his American counterpart over the next few days in Washington to discuss the development of the U.S.-led coalition operation in the region. Speaking on the offensive in Iraq, French minister stressed, "Daesh



will lose." "The combined action of the Iraqi forces and the coalition of which France is participating, will gradually lead to the Mosul's reconquest," he added. Mosul, 400 km north of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad, has been under IS control since June 2014, when government forces abandoned their weapons and fled, enabling IS militants to take control of parts of Iraq's northern and western regions. (Xinhua)

Germany Keen to Partner with Bolivia on Lithium Production

LA PAZ - Germany has a "serious and official" interest in partnering with Bolivia to industrialize the South American country's lithium reserves, Bolivian Energy Minister Rafael Alarcon said Thursday. "Germany wants to take part in the industrialization of lithium and to that end, it will submit a specific proposal in the coming weeks," Alarcon told reporters. Germany's Deputy Minister of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, Rainer Bomba, expressed his country's

interest in the sector during a recent visit. A bilateral technical meeting on the lithium initiative has been tentatively scheduled for mid-April. Southwest Bolivia is home to the Salar de Uyuni, the world's largest salt flats, which is estimated to contain at least 50 percent of the world's lithium reserves. Bolivia needs foreign capital to extract and produce lithium, which is widely used in electronic components, on an industrial scale. (Xinhua)

NATO Aims for Tillerson Meeting on March 31: Diplomats

BRUSSELS - NATO foreign ministers aim to meet the new U.S. secretary of state on March 31 if no other allies object, alliance diplomats said, ending a furor about Rex Tillerson's decision to skip a planned April meeting to attend a summit with China. If no agreement is found soon, the meeting will go ahead as scheduled on April 5-6, three diplomats said. There has also been discussion about a gathering before the G7 foreign ministers meeting in Italy on April 10-11, which Till-

erson will attend, but March 31 is the preferred date, diplomats said. A NATO official said there was no decision yet. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told Reuters in an interview this week that both NATO and the United States were looking for a new date for talks. Reuters exclusively reported on Monday that Tillerson, a former top executive at Exxon Mobil



Corp who worked with the Russian government, would skip his first meeting with all NATO foreign ministers for a U.S. visit by the Chinese president and travel to Russia in April. (Reuters)

Turkey to Reappraise Relations with EU

ANKARA - Turkey will continue its economic relations with the European Union but will review all political and administrative ties, including the migrant deal after the upcoming referendum, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Thursday.



In an interview with broadcaster CNN Turk, Erdogan slammed that European countries violated the European values by banning Turkish officials from attending rallies. Turkey made great efforts to develop ties with the

bloc and received nothing in return, Erdogan noted. "The real cause of the problems the EU facing right now is some member states' attitude," he said. The president stressed that the problems with Europe

were caused by some EU countries, while also acknowledging Brexit decision. The diplomatic row came to a high between Turkey and Germany and other... (More on P4)...(33)

Russian Telecom Watchdog Blocks over 23,000 Webpages Containing IS Propaganda

MOSCOW - More than 23,000 webpages containing propaganda of the Islamic State (IS) were deleted or blocked by Russian telecommunications watchdog Roskomnadzor, local newspaper "Izvestia" cited the service as saying Friday. The IS terror group is known for its successful online propaganda and social media recruitment, targeting primarily young people from around the world, and its online activities in Russia focus on the spread of video and printed materials. "A major portion of the banned online content was found on the Russia social network 'VKontakte' and on YouTube. Both web platforms had deleted or blocked such kind of content," said "Izvestia". The watchdog's action came after the Prosecutor General... (More on P4)...(34)

Syrian Issue and Trade Bans Remain Hurdle as Turkey, Russia Pledge to Boost Ties

ANKARA - Hurdles remain amid Turkey and Russia's pledge of healing rift and boosting bilateral ties, as both sides still have problems with issues over Syrian and bilateral trade.

Russian charge d'affaires in Turkey was summoned on Thursday, as row spiraled after a Turkish soldier was killed by sniper attack from the Syrian border, where the Kurdish Syrian Democratic Union Party (PYD) elements are in control, and the Russian military elements were recently deployed. Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan met in Moscow in early March for the resumption of Russian-Turkish High Level Cooperation Council since the relations were suspended after Turkey downed a Russian warplane in 2015. The airspace violation problem, which stemmed from the jet downing incident, is also a sign of wide discrepancy in dealing with Syrian crisis.

The icy Turkish-Russian ties began to thaw in June, 2016 when Erdogan wrote a letter to Putin to express his deep sorrow over the jet incident. Ankara and Moscow have long been at odds over the conflict in Syria, where Russia supports President Bashar al-Assad and Turkey backs rebel factions fighting to topple the Syrian regime. Ankara recently tuned down its objection against Assad and brokered a ceasefire deal with Russia using its leverage on Syrian rebel groups. However, the differences over Syria, particularly on military cooperation with the... (More on P4)...(36)

Turkey's Erdogan Targets German Intelligence Chief

ANKARA, Turkey - Turkey's president has hit out at the head of Germany's intelligence service for suggesting that Berlin is not convinced U.S.-based cleric Fethullah Gulen played a role in last year's failed coup. Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday accused the BND foreign intelligence chief Bruno Kahl of making the remarks on behalf of Germany's leaders, who he said backed Gulen's movement. Kahl told Der Spiegel magazine that Turkey tried to "convince us on a number of different levels. But they haven't yet been successful." Gulen denies orchestrating the coup attempt... (More on P4)...(35)

Sri Lankan PM Says Spread of Dengue Part of Health Crisis in Asia

COLOMBO - Sri Lanka's Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on Friday informed his parliament that the spread of dengue in the island country was part of a health crises looming in Asia. A report quoting Wickremesinghe said that the spread of dengue in Sri Lanka and the spread of diseases in other Asian countries were a part of one health crisis in the region. "Diseases such as fever and even bird flu are spreading in Asia, and millions of poultry are being destroyed in South Korea today. And the spread of diseases in Sri Lanka may be a part of this crisis," Wickremesinghe said.

He said his government had taken several measures to control the spread of dengue in Sri Lanka and nearly 800 members from the security forces had been deployed throughout the country to curb the situation. According to statistics from the Epidemiology Unit of Sri Lanka, over 20,000 people have been infected with dengue within the first three months of this year with 41.38 percent of dengue cases reported from the Western province. Thirteen deaths have also been reported. The highest numbers of dengue cases were reported during the third week of 2017. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

Xi, Putin Extend Congratulations to China-Russia Inter-Party Forum

MOSCOW - Chinese President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin sent congratulatory messages to the sixth meeting of the China-Russia inter-party dialogue mechanism and the fifth China-Russia inter-party forum, both of which were held Thursday in Kazan, Russia. In his message, Xi said that China and Russia should continue their lasting friendship and stand firm in deepening the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between the two countries. The Communist Party of China (CPC) and the United Russia Party (UR) have maintained close ties, and their interactions

have played a positive role in enhancing mutual trust and safeguarding world peace and development, the Chinese president said. After nearly 10 years of development, the China-Russia inter-party dialogue mechanism and the China-Russia inter-party forum have become significant platforms for exchanges between the two leading parties, Xi noted. For his part, Putin said that Russia-China relations have reached an unprecedented high level and have become an exemplar of relations between major countries. The coordination between Moscow and Beijing in resolving major... (More on P4)...(37)

Sharif, Mamnoon Urge Pak Nation to Work for Unity on Pakistan Day

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain and Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Thursday have urged the nation to forge the principles that inspired the Muslims of subcontinent to create a separate country. President Mamnoon Hussain said in his separate message on the auspicious occasion of Pakistan Day that, it is indeed a matter of satisfaction that the nation is striving to address various challenges under a democratic dispensation. The Prime Minister in his

message said 23rd March is an unforgettable day of our national history. This day reminds us that with constant determination and unity under an honest leadership, the unachievable targets can be easily achieved, PM added. The prime minister said during the last three years the Army, security agencies and people have rendered sacrifices to make Pakistan peaceful. He said the government has maintained its focus on accelerating economic prosperity and progress. (Daily Times)

Iran President to Pay Visit to Russia for Key Talks

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is to set off for Moscow at the official invitation of his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin. Heading a high-ranking politico-economic delegation, Rouhani will leave Tehran for Moscow on Monday to hold talks with Putin and other senior officials of the country, Iranian president's deputy chief of staff for communications and information, Parviz Esmaili, said on Friday. He added that the sides would discuss leading bilateral, regional and international issues. He noted that Iranian and Russian officials would sign agreements to bolster cooperation in legal

and judicial sectors, roads and urban development, technology and communications, energy and sports. Esmaili said Iranian entrepreneurs and tradespeople would also hold negotiations with their Russian counterparts and sign deals to strengthen cooperation between the two countries' private sectors. Pointing to prominent positions of Iran and Russia in the region and the world, the official said the continuation and development of mutual relations, the ways to promote regional stability and security and the fight against terrorism would be among the main topics on the agenda of the talks. (Presstv)

Russian, Uzbek PMs to Discuss Economic Cooperation

TASHKENT - Prime Ministers of Russia Dmitry Medvedev and Uzbekistan Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov will discuss economic cooperation with Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov in Moscow, reports the press service of the Russian government today. "Representative of the

Russian government Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov will consider issues of economic cooperation, implementation of the projects in energy, transport, agricultural and humanitarian spheres," said the statement. (AKI)

CSTO Calls on Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to Strengthen Cooperation with Organization

TASHKENT - The Collective Security Treaty Organization calls on Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan to strengthen ties with the CSTO, reports Kommersant newspaper. The CSTO Secretariat on March 22 presented report on the threat of international terrorism and religious extremism to the CSTO member countries from Central Asian and Afghan territories. The report was mostly

dedicated to the role of the CSTO in maintaining stability and security in Central Asian region. The authors of the report call on Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan, not-aligned countries, to strengthen cooperation with the CSTO claiming that the Organization has the necessary mechanisms and means that allow to reduce the level of threat. The CSTO military and... (More on P4)...(38)