

# EC Presents Proposals to Reform Common European Asylum System

BRUSSELS - The European Commission (EC) on Wednesday presented proposals to reform the Common European Asylum System by creating a fairer, more efficient and more sustainable system for allocating asylum applications among European Union (EU) member states.

According to the Commission, the basic principle will remain the same - asylum seekers should, unless they have family elsewhere, apply for asylum in the first country they enter - but a new fairness mechanism will ensure no



member state is left with a disproportionate pressure on its asylum system. The proposals also included transforming the ex-

isting European Asylum Support Office (EASO) into a fully-fledged EU Agency for Asylum to reflect its enhanced role

in the new system and reinforcing of the EU's fingerprinting database, Eurodac, in order to better manage the asylum

system and to help tackle irregular migration. On April 6, the European Commission published a communication which

launched the process for a reform of the Common European Asylum System. According to the Commission, the package of proposals released Wednesday was therefore the first major step in the comprehensive reform of the Common European Asylum System. A second stage of legislative proposals reforming the Asylum Procedures, Qualification Directives, as well as the Reception Conditions Directive- will follow, to ensure the full reform of all parts of the EU asylum system.(Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### Chinese Navy to Conduct Drill In South China Sea

BEIJING - Three naval ships of China's Nanhai Fleet left a naval port in Sanya, Hainan Province, on Wednesday, kicking off an annual combat drill in the South China Sea and neighboring waters. The three ships include missile destroyer Hefei, missile frigate Sanya and supply ship Honghu. They will later be joined by missile destroyers Lanzhou and Guangzhou, as well as missile frigate Yulin, which are now carrying out other duties. With three helicopters and dozens of "special war-

fare" soldiers, the fleet will be separated into three groups that will sail to areas of the South China Sea, the east Indian Ocean and the west Pacific, to conduct varied drills. The fleet will mobilize naval air force, garrison forces in the Xisha and Nansha islands, and forces of the Beihai Fleet along the way to take part in the drill. The drill aims to enhance combat readiness and practise coordination between ships and aircraft, and other forces, the navy said. (Xinhua)

### S. Korea Offers \$25 bln Investment Package to Iran

TEHRAN - South Korean President Park Geun-hye offered 25 billion U.S. dollars aid for infrastructure investment in Iran, Petro Energy Information Network (SHANA) reported on Wednesday. According to its 6th Development Plan, Iran wants to invest 185 billion U.S. dollars in its oil infrastructure to establish a giant holding in oil sector by 2020, Park said, adding that her country is ready to offer the financial support package to Iran. She also declared her support for the facilitation of customs and banking affairs between Tehran and Seoul. The visiting South Korean president made the remarks in Iran-South Korea trade meeting

here on Tuesday. In a meeting with Park on Monday, President Hassan Rouhani also pointed to the existing banking issues between Tehran and Seoul, saying that both countries should develop banking relations as a means to expand ties and enhance trade relations to the strategic level. Iran and South Korea were planning for a three-fold increase in their bilateral trade turnover. The target plan for the boost of ties is from current level of six billion U.S. dollars to 18 billion U.S. dollars annually, Rouhani said in a ceremony to sign documents of cooperation between his administration and that of South Korea.(Xinhua)

### Tajikistan to Supply 1000 MW Electricity to Pakistan

ISLAMABAD - The Central Asia South Asia 1000 (CASA1000) project to supply 1000 megawatts electricity, through a 750 kilometer-long transmission line from Tajikistan to Pakistan, would formally be launched in Dushanbe next week. The project, signed between Tajikistan and Pakistan, would be completed at a cost of US\$1.2 billion in two years. The power-import pro-

ject would help Pakistan get cheaper and clean energy to minimize its electricity shortages, Ambassador of Tajikistan to Pakistan Sherail S. Jononov said here on Wednesday. About security of the transmission line passing through Afghanistan, he informed the media persons that Kabul has given a guarantee to ensure security of the transmission line.(Agencies)

### Pakistan may Study other Fighter Aircraft Options, US Told

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan has conveyed to the United States that it does not have the money to buy F-16 jets from its resources and has cautioned that if the stalemate over funding is not resolved it may consider buying some other fighter aircraft to meet its needs. According to a diplomatic source, this was conveyed by Pakistani Finance Minister Ishaq Dar to US Ambassador David Hale at a meeting at the Foreign Office. The meeting was held last week before the controversy of procuring the F-16s became public. Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, PAF

Chief Air Chief Marshal Sohail Aman and Special Assistant Tariq Fatemi also attended the meeting. Initially, the deal for the sale of eight F-16s to Pakistan was to be partially funded through the Foreign Military Financing (FMF) with the US providing \$430 million, while the remaining \$270m was to be paid by Pakistan from its national resources. But after the Congressional hold on subsidising the sale through FMF, the US administration asked Pakistan to make a commitment to buy the jets from its own money. (Agencies)

### Turkmenistan, Islamic Development Bank to Intensify Co-Op

ASHGABAT - The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) signed a memorandum of understanding with Turkmenistan providing for the intensification of cooperation in the field of financing of promising development projects, the newspaper 'Neutral Turkmenistan' reported May 4. IDB President Ahmed Mohamed Ali Al-Madani and President of Turk-

menistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, who was in Saudi Arabia on an official visit May 1-3, took part in the signing ceremony. The headquarters of the IDB is an international financial organization, founded in 1973. It is in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia). "Nowadays, Turkmenistan is one of the fastest developing countries," ... (More on P4)...(28)

## Russia Pulls All Su-25 Fighters out of Syria

MOSCOW - Russia has pulled some 30 aircraft out of Syria, including all 25 Su-25 fighter jets, while its air force continues airstrikes in the country, the Defense said Wednesday. Over the past four days, the Russian Aerospace Forces have conducted 87 sorties to deliver strikes against Islamic State (IS) facilities in the Syrian provinces of Raqqa and Deir ez-Zor, ministry spokesman Igor Ko-



nashenkov was quoted by the RIA Novosti news agency as saying. Russia started airstrikes in Syria in September 2015 at the

request of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. It began to withdraw the main part of its forces in March 2016, as intra-Syr-

ian talks aimed at reaching a political settlement in the war-torn country began in Geneva, Switzerland. (Xinhua)

## US, S.Korea to Hold High-Level Defense Talks in Washington Next Week: Seoul

SEOUL - South Korea and the United States will hold a high-level defense dialogue next week in Washington to discuss a joint response to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)'s nuclear and missile threats, Seoul's defense ministry said Wednesday. The ninth round of the South Korea-U.S. Integrated Defense Dialogue (KIDD), which was launched in 2011, will be held for two days from Monday. Those participating in the talks include South Korea's deputy defense minister for policy



Yoo Jeh-seung and U.S. assistant secretary of defense David Shear. During

the meeting, the two sides will discuss their joint response to the DPRK's "nu-

clear and missile threats," Seoul's defense ministry said. (Xinhua)

## France Announces Dates for 2017 Presidential Elections

PARIS - The two rounds of France's 2017 elections to choose a new head of state was set for April 23 and May 7, the presidency office, the Elysee announced on Wednesday. Voters in overseas territories would cast their ballots a day before election on the French mainland due to time difference, it added in a press release. Election of 577 lawmakers is scheduled for June 11 and 18 while that of senators is set for September 24. In 2012 race to the Elysee Palace, voters

had credited the Socialist leader Francois Hollande to bring them more jobs, ease social strains and bolster economy. With a slumping popularity on broken campaign promises, Hollande said he would announce decision on whether to seek a second term by the end of 2016. Dogged by long-running rise in unemployment, French president has already set reversing jobless claims as condition to extend his stay at the Elysee Palace. (Xinhua)

## U.S. Says it, Allies to Do More to Combat Islamic State

STUTTGART - U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter said on Wednesday that Washington and its allies had agreed to do more in their campaign to defeat Islamic State, but that more risks lay ahead. He made the comment following talks in Germany with defense ministers and representatives from 11 other nations participating in the alliance. He said the United States greatly regretted the death of a Navy SEAL in an at-

tack by the jihadist group in northern Iraq on Tuesday. He named the man as Petty Officer First Class Charles Keating. "These risks will continue... but allowing ISIL safe haven would carry greater risk for us all," he added, using an acronym for Islamic State. "...We also agreed that all of our friends and allies across the counter-ISIL coalition can and must do more as well, both to ... (More on P4)...(22)

## Turkey Ready to Send Ground Troops to Syria 'if Necessary': PM

ISTANBUL - Turkey is ready to send ground troops into Syria if necessary, Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said on Wednesday, after weeks of deadly rocket strikes on a Turkish region from jihadists across the border. "If it becomes necessary then we will send the ground forces," Dav-

vutoglu told Al-Jazeera television in an interview, when asked if Turkey was mulling sending troops to Syria. "We are ready to take all measures that we need, both inside Turkey and outside, to provide for our own security," he added, according to a transcript published on Al-Jazeera's

Turkish website. The Turkish border region of Kilis -- which lies opposite areas controlled by Islamic State (IS) jihadists in Syria -- has been battered since January by rocket fire from the other side of the border which has claimed 20 lives. Turkey has hit back with ... (More on P4)...(23)

## Russia Develops World's First Air-Droppable Air Defense Missile System

MOSCOW - Russia has started to develop an air-droppable air defense missile system for its airborne forces, which is believed to be the world's first system of its kind, the TASS news agency reported Wednesday. The system, code-named Ptitselov (Fowler), will be based on the BMD-4M Sadovnitsa (Lady Gardener) airborne armored assault vehicle, an unnamed source of the Russian Defense Ministry was quoted as saying. The tracked BMD-4M Sadovnitsa vehicle is fitted with the Bakhcha-U (Gourd Field) turret, comprising a 100-mm and a



30-mm caliber gun as well as a 7.62-mm machine gun. The vehicle, commissioned in 2015, is meant to be used during raids behind the enemy's lines and is capable of reaching a speed of 70 km per hour.

Currently, the main anti-aircraft battlefield assets of the Russian Airborne Forces are various modifications of the Strela-10 (Arrow-10) missile system, whose basic model was put into service in 1976.(Xinhua)

## German, French FMs Meet UN Syria Envoy

DAMASCUS - The Latest on Syria's civil war. The German and French foreign ministers are meeting the U.N. envoy for Syria for talks aimed at expanding a limited cease-fire and getting the stalled peace process back on track. Germany's

Frank-Walter Steinmeier invited French counterpart Jean-Marc Ayrault and the U.N.'s Staffan de Mistura to a meeting Wednesday at a government guest house in Berlin. Steinmeier also met Riad Hijab -- the head of the Higher Negotiations

Committee, the Syrian opposition coalition. The meetings are part of a flurry of diplomacy as officials scramble to restore a limited U.S. and Russian-brokered cease-fire that began in late February. Steinmeier says it's ... (More on P4)...(24)

## Israel Hails NATO Decision to Accept Israeli Mission At Brussels HQ

JERUSALEM - Israel welcomed on Wednesday an announcement from the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) accepting Israeli mission in the headquarters of the organization in Brussels. "This is a goal that we have worked on for many years," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

said in a weekly cabinet meeting on Wednesday, according to a statement from his office. Israel will accept NATO's invitation and open an office at the organization's headquarters soon, the Prime Minister said, adding that the move is an "important expression of ... (More on P4)...(25)

## Kremlin Expects No Breakthrough over Disputed Islands At Putin-Abe Meeting

MOSCOW - The forthcoming meeting between Russian President Vladimir Putin and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is not expected to yield any breakthrough in the two nations' territorial spat, the Kremlin said Wednesday. "This issue will be touched upon in one way or another. But it is hardly possible to expect immediate and serious progress, because this topic is extremely sensitive and requires meticulous and constant work at the experts' level," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. He added that the meeting, scheduled to take ... (More on P4)...(26)

## France Wants Backers of Syrian Opposition to Meet on May 9

PARIS - France plans to invite ministers from countries that support Syrian opposition groups to a meeting in Paris on May 9 to seek ways to break the political and military deadlock in the country, its foreign minister said on Wednesday. Jean-Marc Ayrault told reporters

France had decided on such a step because there appeared no immediate prospect of the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) convening to try to restore a ceasefire wrecked by an upsurge of fighting. "We are fighting (to ensure) the ceasefire ... (More on P4)...(27)