

China, U.S. to Hold Security Consultation

BEIJING - China and the United States will hold their eighth Consultation on Strategic Security and Multilateral Arms Control in Washington D.C. on Thursday, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Wednesday.

Lu Kang told a daily press briefing that Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Li Baodong and U.S. Under Secretary of State Rose Gottemoeller will co-chair the meeting.



The two sides will exchange views on the current world security situation, China-U.S. security cooperation, global nuclear governance, outer space safety and missile defense, he said. "We hope this consultation will promote strategic mutual trust and contribute to building a new type of major-country relations between China and the United States," Lu added. (Xinhua)

British Business Survey Finds Majority of Firms Back Remaining in EU

LONDON - A majority of British businesses back remaining in the European Union (EU), a survey released by industry representative body the British Chambers of Commerce (BCC) revealed.

The BCC survey showed 54.1 percent of business leaders were in support of staying in the EU, a subject which will be put to a referendum in Britain on June 23.

According to the survey results, a large majority of leaders at exporting firms (59.5 percent) were in favor of remaining, and support dropped to a minority for remaining (42.8 per-

cent) among firms which carried out business only in the domestic British market.

Adam Marshall, BCC acting director general, said that the difference in the numbers between those wanting to remain in the EU and those wanting to leave had narrowed over the past weeks.

Marshall added: "Although a clear majority of the businesspeople we surveyed continue to express a preference to remain in the EU, the gap between 'Remain' and 'Leave' has narrowed significantly in recent weeks."

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Ukraine Talks Made Progress on Security Issues: German FM

BERLIN - Talks between Germany, Russia, Ukraine and France produced several agreements aimed at improving security in eastern Ukraine but no deal on holding local elections in the separatist region controlled by Russia-backed rebels, a top German diplomat said Wednesday. Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier, who hosted the talks at a lakeside retreat near Berlin, said the atmosphere was better than at their last meeting in Paris but acknowledged there had been no breakthrough. "In the area of security,

we made significant progress," he told reporters, citing a plan to separate military units along the front line and to create demilitarized zones. "There were proposals from both sides with concrete coordinates and deadlines." The parties also agreed to improve communications and to halt military training along the front lines to prevent any escalation of the conflict, he said, cautioning that the plans still have to be put into action. Steinmeier warned earlier that the 2015 Minsk peace accord for Ukraine would be undermined if



there was no progress on its implementation, and that could escalate the

conflict that has already killed more than 9,300 people in two years. (AP)

Turkey Vows to Use "All Alternatives" to Fight IS Along Borders

ISTANBUL - No other country is fighting against the Islamic State (IS) as Turkey is, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Wednesday.

"No other country has more casualties to Daesh (IS in Arabic) than Turkey," Erdogan said in a televised speech at the 10th meeting of the General Staffs of the Balkan countries.

The Turkish president claimed that other countries from an anti-IS coalition did not take any

steps including necessary intelligence-sharing to fight the group.

"Turkey is expected to take all necessary measures on its own," he said, noting that Turkish security forces have killed up to 3,000 IS militants in Syria and in Iraq alone.

The president rejected as "unfair, relentless and baseless" claims made by some countries about Turkey offering support to the IS. "The portrayal of Turkey as a country that helps Daesh -- excuse me if this will sound



harsh -- is despicable," he said, adding that Ankara knows which Western countries have contributed to IS weapons inventory. A team

of Turkish special forces reportedly conducted operations in IS-held areas in northern Syria on May 7 to destroy missile ... (More on P4)...(19)

Britain Raises Threat Level from N.Ireland Terrorism

LONDON - The security threat level to Britain from Northern Ireland-related terrorism has been raised from moderate to substantial, Home Secretary Theresa May said in a statement to parliament on Wednesday.

"This means that a terrorist attack is a strong possibility and reflects the continuing threat from dissident republican activity," May said.

"As a result of this change, we are working closely with the police and other relevant authorities to ensure appropriate security measures are in place,"

she said. The level was substantial when the rating was first published by the MI5 domestic intelligence service in 2010 but was lowered to moderate in 2012. Substantial is the third highest level out of five after critical, which means an attack is expected imminently, and severe, which means an attack is highly likely. The threat to Northern Ireland itself, which was riven by three decades of conflict and where there are still strong sectarian tensions despite the signing of a peace agreement ... (More on P4)...(20)

UN Commission of Inquiry on Syria Condemns Unlawful Attacks

GENEVA - The UN-mandated Independent Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic on Wednesday condemned "in the strongest terms" recent attacks on civilians and civilian infrastructure, notably on hospitals and clinics in the city of Aleppo city and on an internally dis-

placed persons' camp in Idlib. "Aerial bombardments, ground shelling, and rocket fire have consistently been used in deliberate, indiscriminate, and disproportionate attacks on areas where Syrians civilians live and where they struggle to survive," the commission said in a statement issued Wednesday. The state-

ment said that since the attacks against Al-Quds hospital in Aleppo on April 27, there have been over a half dozen attacks on other medical facilities in the area; all of which are specifically protected sites under international humanitarian law.

Scores of civilian victims and medical personnel ... (More on P4)...(21)

German Police Investigate 40 Refugees for Terror Links: Media

BERLIN - Germany's federal investigators have opened cases against dozens of people who have arrived in Germany seeking asylum for suspected terror links, German media reported on Wednesday.

Since the beginning of the refugee wave last year, the German Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA) has received some 369 tip-offs about potential suspects, according to German newspaper "Neue Osnabruecker Zeitung". Forty of these tip-offs have become more concrete, prompting investigations of some individuals on suspicion of belonging to a terror organization and prepar-



ing a serious crime. "More terror attacks cannot be ruled out," a spokesperson for the BKA told the newspaper, adding, however, that they currently have no concrete evidence of a planned attack.

In response the BKA's statistics, Wolfgang Bosbach, interior affairs expert for Chancellor An-

gela Merkel's CDU party, warned that there are massive problems with the registration of refugees when they arrive in Germany.

In recent months, some 60 percent of new arrivals have reached Germany without passports or identity papers, Bosbach said. "The dangers ... (More on P4)...(22)

Cambodian PM to Visit Russia

PHNOM PENH - Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen will pay a working visit and attend an ASEAN-Russia commemorative summit in Russia on May 17-21, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Wednesday.

During the visit, Hun Sen will meet Russian President Vladimir Putin and hold talks with his Russian counterpart Dmitry Medvedev, the statement said. "Moreover, a number of important documents will be signed to enhance and expand productive cooperation between Cambodia and Russia," it added.

According to the statement, the Cambodian leader will also hold meetings with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Xuan Phuc on the sidelines of the ASEAN-Russia commemorative summit on May 19-20 in Sochi.

Hun Sen's entourage will include Foreign Minister Prak Sokhonn, Economy and Finance Minister Aun Porn Moniroth, and other members of the government. (Xinhua)

15 Al-Shabaab Militants Killed in Central Somalia

MOGADISHU - At least 15 Al-Shabaab militants were killed and weapons recovered on Wednesday in a joint security operation at an area close to Galcad town in Galgudud region in central Somalia.

Governor of Galcad town, Qadar Muhumed Ali told journalists that it was a special operation carried out by Somalia National Army (SNA) backed African Union peacekeeping mission (AMISOM) forces against Al-Shabaab militants in the region and ended successfully. "Somali government's Special Forces together with Amisom carried out the operation at Cel-timir location close to Galcad town here in Galgudud region. The forces killed 15 Al-Shabaab fighters including three senior commanders who are known in this region, one of them used to be head of this town. We recovered 15 guns in a successful operation," Muhumed said. The mayor ... (More on P4)...(23)

Olympics Should be Postponed Due to Zika: Canadian Professor

LONDON - With the opening ceremony in Rio de Janeiro less than three months away, a Canadian professor has called for the Olympics to be postponed or moved because of the Zika outbreak, warning the influx of visitors to Brazil will result in the avoidable birth of malformed babies.

"But for the games, would

anyone recommend sending an extra half a million visitors into Brazil right now?" University of Ottawa professor Amir Ataran, who specializes in public health, said in an article published this week in the Harvard Public Health Review.

Brazil is by far the country most affected by Zika, a mosquito-borne virus

which has now been scientifically proven to cause a range of disturbing birth defects, including babies born with abnormally small heads and neurological problems.

In February, the World Health Organization declared the epidemic to be a global health emergency. The WHO says ... (More on P4)...(24)

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China, Ukraine Agree to Facilitate Two-Way Travel

KIEV - China and Ukraine have agreed to facilitate two-way travel to promote business and tourism, local media reported Wednesday.

The agreement was reached Tuesday during the Ukrainian-Chinese consultations on consular issues at the level of heads of consular services, according to a statement from the Ukrainian Foreign Ministry.

"The two sides have reached an agreement in principle on the implementation of practical steps for mutual simpli-

fication of the travel regime, developed a road-map for joint actions in liberalizing visa procedures and a plan for the effective cooperation of the involved authorities in providing appropriate assistance to citizens abroad," the statement said.

According to the Ukrainian Ministry of Economic Development and Trade, more than 11,000 Chinese citizens visited Ukraine in 2015, compared with about 5,000 travelers in 2014. (Xinhua)

Gen. Raheel Urges Sharif to Resolve Panama Issue

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Army chief Gen. Raheel Sharif on Tuesday weighed in on the government-opposition row over the Panama Papers probe by asking Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif to resolve the issue at the earliest.

Gen. Sharif, according to a well-placed government source, conveyed the pointed message to the prime minister in a one-on-one meeting before another huddle on national security at PM House.

The army chief's view was that the protracted controversy over Panama Papers investigation was

affecting governance and national security and, therefore, the issue needed to be urgently brought to a close.

"Gen. Sharif believes that the issue is causing instability and insecurity," the source said.

The crisis erupted after Panama Papers leaks revealed offshore financial assets of Nawaz Sharif's children. Although the leaked documents had disclosed offshore companies of several other leading politicians, the opposition has been demanding that the probe should start with the prime minister's family. (Agencies)

Tajikistan's Banking Sector Slides Closer to Crisis

DUSHANBE - Tajikistan's second largest private bank Tajiksodirotbank (TSB) is seeking help from the government and the EBRD to avert a potential liquidity crisis.

The bank, which has assets of TJS3.8bn (\$483mn), will discuss the capital injection on the fringes of the annual EBRD Annual Meeting in London this week.

"Tojiksodirotbank, one of the country's systematically important banks, needs financial assistance in the current situation," it said in a statement, saying it had been "negatively affected by the economic and financial crisis".

Tajikistan's banks have

been hit hard by the country's economic problems, much of them linked to declining exports and remittances with Russia, which have left many of the country's businesses and individuals unable to repay their loans to banks and microfinance institutions.

"Due to worsened macro conditions, performance of many players [has] deteriorated, which is mainly reflected in the growth of impaired loans, reduced profits and capital erosion," EBRD Director for Financial Institutions in Russia and Central Asia George Orlov told bne IntelliNews. (Agencies)

Iran doesn't Need US Consent for Defense: Leader's Advisor

TEHRAN - A top adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei says Iran will take whatever measure it deems appropriate to strengthen its defenses and does not need US consent.

"To defend itself, the Islamic Republic will aptly take the necessary measures, whether some like it or not," Ali Akbar Velayati said, Tasnim News Agency reported on Wednesday.

"The Islamic Republic does not ask any country or international or non-international organization for permission to defend itself," the Iranian official said. The remarks by Velayati came after US State Department

spokeswoman Elizabeth Trudeau called Iran's ballistic missile tests "provocative and destabilizing" in potential breach of UN Security Council 2231.

The resolution calls upon Iran not to undertake any activity related to ballistic missiles "designed to be capable of" delivering nuclear weapons, including launches using such ballistic missile technology. Iran says it has no such missiles. Back in March, the US, Britain, France, and Germany also wrote to the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, claiming that Iran's earlier ballistic tests had involved missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. (PressTV)