

UN Expert Stresses Human Rights Protection in New Int'l Climate Mechanism

GENEVA - UN Special Rapporteur John H. Knox on Friday urged states to take safeguards of human rights into account when government representatives meet to negotiate the terms of a new international climate mechanism in Bonn from May 16 to 26. In a letter to Paris Convention's Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), Knox said the climate mechanism would be the first test of states' commitment to the principles of the Paris Agreement drawn up in December 2015 and open



for signature on Earth Day, April 22. The Special Rapporteur on human rights and the

environment recalled that the Paris Agreement was the first environmental treaty to include

a strong commitment to protect human rights when addressing climate change. "The fact that 177

states have signed the Paris Agreement in less than a month is very welcome news, but the hard

work of safeguarding the environment and human rights is just now beginning," he said. He called for the adoption of specific safeguards, such as prior assessments, provisions for public participation, and effective grievance procedures, that would help ensure that proposed projects do not run roughshod over the human rights of indigenous peoples and other communities that are most directly affected by them. "The urgency of addressing climate change does not justify violating the ... (More on P4)...(32)

Putin Warns Russia will Respond to NATO Missile Shield

MOSCOW - President Vladimir Putin has described the development of NATO's U.S.-led missile defense program as a threat to global security and vowed that Russia will take the necessary steps to maintain a strategic parity. Putin, speaking Friday at a meeting with military officials, scoffed at U.S. claims that the shield isn't aimed against Russia but instead intended to fend off a missile threat from Iran. The system in-

cludes a site in Romania that became operational Thursday. Putin said Russia will not get drawn into an arms race, but added that it will modify its military modernization plans "to fend off the emerging threat to Russia's security." He added that Russia "will do everything needed to ensure and preserve the strategic balance, which is the most reliable guarantee from large-scale military conflicts." (AP)

Ex-PM Warns over Use of Immigration in Brexit Debate

LONDON - Former prime minister John Major warned Friday against using immigration as a political football ahead of next month's referendum on British membership of the EU, saying it risked "fuelling prejudice". The former Conservative leader, who wants Britain to stay in the bloc in the June 23 vote, said supporters of a so-called Brexit were peddling "absurd falsehoods" about how mass immigration would end if Britain left

the European Union. "We mustn't overlook genuine concerns, but these should be expressed with care, honesty and balance. Not in a manner that can raise fears or fuel prejudice," Major said in remarks released to the media. The desire to stop hundreds of thousands of EU citizens coming to Britain each year has been a key element of the campaign to leave the bloc, with Nigel Farage's UK Independence Party making the point repeatedly.



Major appeared to be aiming his remarks at those Conservatives who are campaigning for Brexit alongside UKIP. "As the Leave arguments

implode one by one, some of the Brexit leaders morph into UKIP, and turn to their default position: immigration," Major ... (More on P4)...(33)

Belgium to Send 6 Fighter Jets to Syria to Fight IS

BRUSSELS - The Belgian government decided on Friday to send six fighter jets to bomb the positions of the Islamic State (IS) in Syria, reported Belgian broadcaster RTBF. The six F-16 fighter jets will be sent on operations beginning in July, Belgian Defense Minister Steven Van der Plaetse confirmed to RTBF. A debate is expected to take place in the federal parliament regarding the decision, it added. So far, Belgium has only bombed IS positions in Iraq. (Xinhua)



EU Anti-Smuggler Force Ineffective: Report

BRUSSELS - A British parliamentary report says the European Union's operation in the Mediterranean Sea is having no real impact on combatting migrant smuggling. The report by the House of Lords EU Committee said Friday that Operation Sophia has only made a few low-level arrests, although it praised the naval mission for saving some 9,000 lives at sea. Committee chairman Christopher Tugendhat said that "a naval mission cannot disrupt the business model of people smuggling, and in this

sense it is failing." He said smugglers operate from Libya and that "without support from a stable Libyan government, the operation is unable to gather the intelligence it needs or tackle the smugglers onshore." The EU announced on Friday that the operation launched a year ago is set to be extended for 12 months. Austria and Italy say that plans to impose controls on the main crossing between their countries have been put on ice for now due to the small ... (More on P4)...(34)

Some 1,000 Refugees, Migrants Rescued Off Italy: UN Refugee Agency

GENEVA - About 1,000 people, including refugee families and unaccompanied children, were rescued Thursday, the UN refugee agency UNHCR said on Friday. In one operation, some 500 people travelling in two fishing boats that had departed several days earlier from Egypt were rescued off Sicily, southeast of Cape Passero, UNHCR spokesperson William Spindler told reporters during a regular press briefing. He cited the Italian coastguard as saying that among this group, there are some Syrians and Iraqis, as well as people from other nationalities.



"Disembarkation of the 1,000 people rescued yesterday is taking place today at four different locations in southern Italy and will probably last the whole day. UNHCR staff will be present and will be giving information and assistance to the per-

sons rescued," he said. According to the latest figure of the International Organisation for Migration, 188,075 refugees and migrants have reached Europe by sea this year, up from 91,860 in the first five months of ... (More on P4)...(36)

Obama Hosts Summit of Nordic Leaders At White House

WASHINGTON - His fellow Democrats may be arguing about whether to hold up places like Denmark and Norway as liberal utopias, but President Barack Obama isn't hesitating. Apparently well past concerns about being branded a socialist, Obama on Friday celebrated five Nordic nations as mod-

els of reliability, equality, generosity, responsibility, even personal happiness. As he welcomed a group of Nordic leaders to the White House, he owned up to thinking perhaps the small, havens of social liberalism should take the reins every now and then. He joked: "Why don't we just put all these small countries in charge for

a while." The remarks opened a White House summit with the leaders of Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland and Denmark. Obama and the leaders are due to discuss a slate of issues weighing heavily on the region - including concerns about Russian aggression, long-term plans for managing t ... (More on P4)...(35)

Singapore's Finance Chief in Stable Condition: PM

SINGAPORE - Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said on Friday that Finance Minister Heng Swee Keat's condition is stable, but he will remain in the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) for some time. Lee updated his Facebook after he had visited Heng at the ICU in Tan Tock Seng Hospital on Friday evening. "He was sedated. His condition is stable, but he will remain in the ICU for some time. He is in very good hands, like all patients at the National Neuroscience Institute (NNI)," Lee wrote. Lee also spoke with Heng's family. "It is a tough time for them. They are touched by the sympathy and support from so many Singaporeans, and asked me to thank everyone for their prayers and good wishes," said Lee. Heng underwent neurosurgery on Thursday evening. He suffered a stroke suddenly during a cabinet meeting. Many Singaporeans are praying for him and wishing him a speedy recovery. (Xinhua)

Brazil Interim Government Gets to Work in Crisis

BRASÍLIA - Brazil's interim president Michel Temer was expected Friday to launch urgent economic rescue measures as he kicked off his new administration a day after his predecessor was suspended to face an impeachment trial. The former vice president's new business-friendly cabinet held its first meeting Friday morning, just hours after his boss-turned-nemesis, Dilma Rousseff, quit the presidential palace. The swift transfer of power ended 13 years of rule by the leftist Workers' Party, which helped lift tens of millions of people from poverty with progressive social programs but became mired in corruption scandals, recession and political paralysis. Now Temer will have to steer clear of the vast graft scandal engulfing Brazil's political and business elites, while working to fix the economy. "We don't ... (More on P4)...(37)

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Iran, EEU Move Closer to Free Trade Deal

TEHRAN - Iran said on Friday that it has started to look into the possibility of launching free trade with Eurasia Economic Union (EEU). The issue has been reportedly discussed in a meeting between Mojtaba Khosrow-Taj and EEU Trade Minister Veronica Nikishina in Moscow. Iran's local media have reported that the two have discussed the formation of a working group to study Iran-EEU free trade. The working group will also prepare a free trade agreement that will be put before Iran and the EEU to be signed in June.

Khosrow-Taj, who is in Moscow for a major exhibition on Iran's trade potentials, has further discussed facilitating customs regulations with EEU member states in his meeting with Nikishina. He has also called on the Union to use Iran's trade capabilities in different areas. The EEU in May 2015 gave the initial go-ahead to signing a free trade agreement with Iran. Accordingly, a proposal to the same effect was approved by all members of Union in a meeting in the Armenian capital, Yerevan. (PressTV)

Xi Stresses Civil Air Defense for China's Development

BEIJING - President Xi Jinping said Friday that civil air defense should serve as an "indestructible shield" protecting the Chinese people, calling it a key part of the country's development in the next five years. Xi, general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and Central Military Commission chairman, made the remarks while meeting with representatives attending a national conference on civil air defense. "Civil air defense is a long-term national strategy... It has contributed to safeguarding national security and facilitating economic and social

development since the country's reform and opening-up," Xi said. Xi urged those working in civil air defense to always remember their responsibility and make new contributions to the building of a stronger modern civil air defense system. The civil air defense system should improve their capabilities, providing shield against air raids during wartime, serving the public in peace time and offering support in cases of emergencies, Xi said. Xi congratulated 65 cities, 35 groups and 45 individuals cited for their outstanding contributions to the civil air defense cause. (Xinhua)

Kazakhstan's Humanitarian Aid Arrives in Tajikistan



DUSHANBE - Kazakhstan is continuing to provide disaster relief to Tajikistan and the first train cars carrying Kazakhstan's humanitarian aid have reportedly arrived in Dushanbe. According to the Kazakh Embassy in Dushanbe, an official handover of humanitarian aid to the Tajik authorities took place here on May 11. The aid was handed over to the Agency for State and Material Reserves of Tajikistan. In all, Kazakhstan will send eighteen trains cars loaded with

food products for victims of floods and mudslides to Tajikistan. The humanitarian aid worth 873,000 U.S. dollars reportedly includes wheat flour, meat and milk cans, dried vegetables, vegetable oil, butter, macaroni, and tea. We will recall that Kazakhstan this year provided the first humanitarian aid to Tajikistan in February. The assistance reportedly included preserved milk products, canned meats, vegetable oil, butter, and macaroni. (Asia-Plus)

CJP Declines to form 'Toothless Commission' on Panama Leaks

ISLAMABAD - Chief Justice of Pakistan (CJP) Anwar Zaheer Jamali on Friday declined the government's request to form a "toothless" judicial commission to probe revelations that have surfaced in the Panama data leaks. The government had last month sent a letter to the Supreme Court registrar, requesting that the chief justice constitute a high-level judicial commission to investigate the veracity of the allegations against the premier and his family. In response to the gov-

ernment's request, a letter issued by the SC registrar says: "The formation of a commission under the Pakistan Commission of Inquiry Act 1956 (Act VI of 1956), looking to its limited scope will result in the constitution of a toothless commission, which will serve no useful purpose." The letter observes that the terms of reference (ToR) of the proposed commission are so "wide and open" that "it may take years" for the commission to conclude proceedings. (Agencies)

NATO, Polish Leaders to Break Ground for Defense Site

WARSAW - Poland's foreign minister says the nation's security will be significantly changed by a U.S. missile defense system which is being set up in the country's north. Witold Waszczykowski and NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg will be among officials who will break the

ground Friday for an interceptor site at a former Polish Airforce base in Redzikowo. Poland has been seeking NATO and U.S. troops' presence on its territory and in the region because of increased activity by Russia and Waszczykowski helped negotiate part of the deal

with Washington. NATO says the site is part of a larger system to protect Europe and the U.S. from ballistic missile threats from the Middle East, once it is completed in 2018. The system has angered Russians who believe it is directed against them. (AP)