

Kerry Meets Sisi As Egypt Seeks Mideast Peace Role

CAIRO - US Secretary of State John Kerry arrived in Cairo on Wednesday to meet President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, after Egypt called for a renewal of the Middle East peace process.

Even before Sisi had raised the issue, Kerry had planned a visit to discuss the crises in Libya and Syria and to raise concerns about Egypt's harsh crackdown on dissent.

But the top US diplomat is also keen to hear more from the Egyptian leader about how he intends



to help broker peace between his Israeli and Palestinian neighbours.

"He's interested in hearing a bit more directly from the president about

what role he has in mind," a senior US official told reporters, speaking on

condition of anonymity. On Tuesday, in a televised speech, Sisi urged

Israelis and Palestinians to seize what he said was a "real opportunity" and hailed his own country's peace deal with Israel. In 1979, Egypt was the first Arab country to sign a peace treaty with Israel after years of conflict, and today it remains an influential player in the region. Washington believes the only way to end the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is a negotiated settlement resulting in two states side-by-side within recognised borders. But the US does ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

UNHCR Launches Campaign to Provide Shelter for 2 Mln Most-Needed Refugees

GENEVA - The UN refugee agency UNHCR on Wednesday launched a new global campaign to raise more funds mainly from the private sector so as to provide shelter for some 2 million most-needed refugees.

Called "Nobody Left Outside," UNHCR said its efforts to do so were facing a half-billion-dollar deficit, saying that the huge shortfall in funds for sheltering refugees is

severely undermining efforts to tackle the biggest global displacement crisis since World War II.

"Some 60 million people are today forcibly displaced, almost 20 million of them refugees who have been forced to flee across international borders, and the rest people displaced within their own countries. Humanitarian funding is failing to keep pace," the UN agency said in a statement



Wednesday. "Shelter is the foundation stone for refugees to survive and recover, and should be considered a non-negotiable human right," said Filippo Grandi, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. The Nobody ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

EU Warns Poland over Rule of Law, Threatens Action Next Week

BRUSSELS - The European Union expressed concern Wednesday about the rule of law in Poland and warned that it will take action by next week unless Warsaw makes progress on fixing the problem. The EU's executive Commission has been holding informal talks with Warsaw since November amid concerns about the conservative government's respect for Poland's Constitutional Court and the way judges are appointed. The Commission said if

the tribunal "is prevented from fully ensuring an effective constitutional review, there can be no effective scrutiny of compliance with fundamental rights of legislative acts." Warsaw has until Monday to respond. If it does not do so satisfactorily, the Commission could take action under the "rule of law framework," which is aimed at protecting EU values like the rule of law, democracy, equality and the respect of human rights. ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

Turkey Party to Reveal PM Candidate, Erdogan Ally Favoured

ANKARA - Turkey's ruling party will meet on Thursday to announce a candidate to replace outgoing Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu who is stepping down after a power struggle with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, reports said. According to initial indications, Transport Minister Binali Yildirim, a close ally of Erdogan, has emerged as the clear favourite to replace Davutoglu as chairman of the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and

prime minister. The AKP central executive committee will meet at 0800 GMT on Thursday to announce a single candidate for party leadership, the state-run Anadolu news agency said.

The candidate will then be approved as new AKP leader by an extraordinary congress of the party on Sunday.

According to AKP convention, the posts of party chief and head of government automatically go to the same figure. ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

Queen Elizabeth II Outlines Slew of Measures in British Parliament Address

LONDON - Making overseas visitors to Britain pay for health care, building a million new homes and a string of new universities, and introducing driverless cars were among measures outlined by Queen Elizabeth II Wednesday at the state opening of the British Parliament.

At Westminster the queen delivered a speech, written by the government, outlining the program for the new session of parliament.

She said the government will use a strengthening economy to deliver security for working people, to increase life chances for the most disadvantaged and to strengthen national defenses.

She said the government will bring in legislation to improve Britain's competitiveness and make the United Kingdom a world leader in the digital economy, ensuring the country is at the forefront of technology for new forms of transport, including autonomous and electric vehicles. The development of the Northern Powerhouse

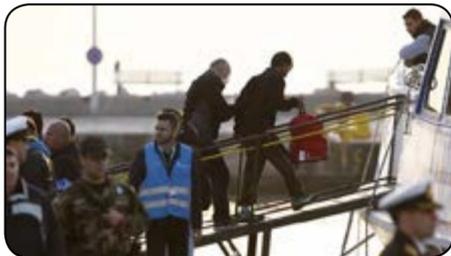


will also be supported to spread economic prosperity across the nation, with home ownership expanded ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Greece Returns Syrian Refugee Family to Turkey

GENEVA - Greek authorities say four of the nearly 55,000 refugees and other migrants trapped there after a series of border closures further north have been returned to Turkey, from which they initially entered the country.

A police statement Wednesday said the four people returned Wednesday were a Syrian couple and their two children. That brings to just under 1,500 the number of people Greece has sent back to Turkey since the beginning of the year. During the same period more than 150,000 reached



Greece in smugglers' boats from its eastern neighbor, although the flow has almost come to a standstill since a March deportation agreement between the European Union and Turkey. That deal has resulted in 400

people being returned. A small tent city has formed on Serbia's border with Hungary where migrants are waiting to cross into the European Union despite border closures and a deal with Turkey to stop ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

Trump 'Says he would Speak to North Korean Leader'

WASHINGTON - Donald Trump said he would speak with North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un, in what would be a dramatic shift in US policy.

"I would speak to him, I would have no problem speaking to him," the Republican presumptive presidential nominee told Reuters in an exclusive interview. Until now, the US strategy has been to try and isolate Pyongyang.

"I would put a lot of pressure on China because economically we have tremendous power over China. People don't realize that," Trump added, talking about China as North Korea's lone ally.

"They are extracting vast billions of dollars out of our country. Billions. And we have tremendous power ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Bulgarian Parliament Approves New Labor Minister

SOFIA - Bulgaria's National Assembly on Wednesday approved Zornitsa Roussinova as the new minister of labor and social policy, marking the fourth reshuffle in the cabinet of Prime Minister Boyko Borissov since it took power in November 2014.

Roussinova's predecessor Ivaylo Kalfin resigned last Tuesday after his party ABV withdrew its support to the government. As many as 135 deputies backed Roussinova, almost double the 68 who voted against her nomination in the 240-seat parliament.

Roussinova has served as deputy minister of labor and social policy since November 2014, and is in charge of international cooperation and European Union affairs. (Xinhua)

Netanyahu 'Close to Agreeing' Israel Unity Government

JERUSALAM - Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is close to agreeing a unity government with the main opposition leader, Israeli media said Wednesday, in a move that could help revive peace talks with the Palestinians.

The head of the rightwing Likud has reportedly been engaged in intense negotiations with Labour Party chief Isaac Herzog in recent weeks in a bid to form a government of national unity.

Herzog, whose party forms the Zionist Union along with the centrist Hatnuah, could present a possible coalition agreement to his party in the coming days, the reports said.

His entry into the government would be closely watched by the international community for its potential impact on the moribund peace process with the Palestinians.

An advocate of an independent Palestinian state, Herzog has been touted as a potential foreign minister - a role ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

Polish PM Wants Bill Clinton's Apology for Political Comment

WARSAW - Former U.S. President Bill Clinton should apologize to the Poles for having said they think "democracy is too much trouble" and want to have an "authoritarian dictatorship," Poland's prime minister said Wednesday. Beata Szydlo called Clinton's words "unjustified and simply unfair." "With all due respect, and without using coarse words (Clinton) exaggerated and should apologize to us," she told Polish state radio on Wednesday. Speaking in New Jersey in support of wife ...*(More on P4)...(26)*

Kremlin Questions About U.S. Investigation of Russian Doping Scandal

MOSCOW - Kremlin on Wednesday questioned the alleged U.S. Justice Department investigation into Russia's so-called state sponsored doping program. "We treat with a certain degree of skepticism, misunderstanding and rejection the cases of extraterritorial application of the jurisdiction of U.S. courts, which have become quite widespread of late," said Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov. Peskov voiced support

to the readiness expressed by Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko to cooperate in investigating and fighting doping abuse on individual basis without casting shadow on honest Russian athletes.

Meanwhile, Mutko also expressed his surprise at U.S. Justice Department's decision to probe Russia. The minister claimed that doping is "not the problem with Russia only," while suggesting creating a unified international

anti-doping system that could exclude all possibilities of manipulations. The New York Times quoted on Tuesday two unnamed sources as saying that the U.S. Justice Department had opened an investigation into "state sponsored doping" by dozens of Russian top athletes.

In their inquiry, U.S. prosecutors are expected to scrutinize anyone who might have facilitated ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

Neighbor News

Xi Stresses Adherence to Family Planning Policy

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping said at a conference of the Family Planning Association on Wednesday that China must adhere to the basic state policy of family planning for the long term.

"The population issue has always been an overall, long-term, strategic issue facing our country," said Xi in a written instruction to the conference in Beijing. "For quite a long time in the future, China's basic national condition of a large population will not fundamentally change. The population pressure on economic and social development will not fundamentally change. The tensions between population and resources and environment will not fundamentally

change," said Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee.

Xi spoke highly of the efforts of the family planning association over the years, adding that it should earnestly perform its duties, guide the people to correctly understand the adjustment to the family planning policy, and provide relevant services. Since January 1, China has allowed all married couples to have two children. This follows an earlier easing of the policy in 2013 allowing couples to have a second child if either parent was an only child. The latest change ended the "one child" policy since it was implemented in the late 1970s. (Xinhua)

Pakistan, China Discuss Trade Corridor

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan Army chief Gen Raheel Sharif's two-day visit to Beijing focused on the \$46-billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which India has objected to because it passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.

The CPEC is a key component of President Xi Jinping's "Belt and Road Initiative" connecting China's Xinjiang region to Pakistan's Gwadar port.

Sharif's visit, which concluded on Tuesday, and his meetings with the top leadership in

Beijing, including Premier Li Keqiang, came within days of the US releasing a report that claimed China could open a naval logistics hub in Pakistan to support its presence in the Indian Ocean.

Not too many details were shared about the meetings that the powerful Pakistan Army chief had with Li and Fan Changlong, vice-chairperson of China's Central Military Commission that is headed by President Xi Jinping. But there was little doubt that the CPEC was in focus. (Agencies)

EU Underlines Concerns About Serious Human Rights Situation in Turkmenistan

BISHKEK - The European Union and Turkmenistan held the eighth round of their Human Rights Dialogue in Brussels.

The Turkmenistan delegation was led by Mr Vepa Hajiyev, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was accompanied by the Director of the National Institute for Democracy and Human Rights, the Chairperson of the parliamentary committee on the protection of human rights, and a senior official from the Ministry of Interior. The EU delegation was led by Toivo Klaar, Head of the Central Asia Division in the European External Action Service. The parties discussed a range of issues

and the EU expressed its readiness to support concrete reforms. The EU welcomed the recent adoption of the National Human Rights Action Plan and encouraged Turkmenistan to consult international experts on the reform of the Constitution.

The EU underlined its concerns about the serious human rights situation in Turkmenistan, including the use of torture, and requested information on the status and location of prisoners who have disappeared in detention. The EU raised individual cases and urged the Turkmenistan government to release a number of specific prisoners. (AKI)

Presidents of Iran, Croatia Call for Closer Anti-Terror Cooperation

TEHRAN - Iran and Croatia have emphasized their determination to step up Tehran-Zagreb cooperation in the fight against terrorism and extremism, particularly in the troubled Middle East region. In a joint presser following a Wednesday meeting with his Croatian counterpart, Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic, in Tehran, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said the two sides have agreed to enhance their anti-terrorism cooperation given the current wave of terror threats plaguing some regional states.

Rouhani said his earlier talks with Kitarovic focused on the need to expand bilateral anti-terrorism cooperation, among other issues of mutual interest.

Elsewhere in his remarks, the Iranian president called for closer relations between Tehran and Zagreb in various areas, especially economy, culture and tourism, saying the visit by Kitarovic at the head of a high-ranking economic delegation shows the political will in Croatia to bolster trade ties with the Islamic Republic. (PressTV)