

France to Test Air Passenger Data Sharing

PARIS - France will test an EU-wide passenger data sharing system aimed at helping to detect jihadists at two of its busiest airports later this month, a senior interior ministry official said Saturday.

The Passenger Name Record system, approved by the European Parliament in April, will be tested at Paris's Charles de Gaulle airport and that of southeastern Nice before the tests are extended to all French airports, the official told AFP.

He said the system should



be "fully operational" by the end of the year, although EU countries were

given two years to turn it into national law. The idea is to "gradually

link all the airlines" operating in France, the official said. Airlines participating

in the tests will include Air France, Delta Airlines, Air Transat, Etihad and Emir-

ates, the French daily Le Figaro reported.

The European Parliament vote overcame privacy concerns and ended five years of debate that intensified after the November jihadist attacks in Paris and the Brussels bombings in March.

The collection of PNR data will be aimed at helping to prevent, detect, investigate and prosecute terror attacks and other serious crimes such as people trafficking, child pornography, drug smuggling ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

Russia, ASEAN Look to Deepen Cooperation

SOCHI - Russia and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) have reached agreements aimed at boosting cooperation and deepening partnership.

A two-day ASEAN-Russia Commemorative Summit held in southern Russia's Black Sea city of Sochi concluded on Friday with the signing of the Sochi Declaration and a five-year action plan.

Trade between Russia and ASEAN members was 13.7 billion U.S. dol-

lars in 2015, rather modest compared with ASEAN's trade performance with some other countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Russian President Vladimir Putin told the summit.

One of the resounding calls at the summit was for the integration of regional organizations such as the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

All ASEAN countries



voiced support for the integration of those mechanisms, said Putin who expected a free trade zone between ASEAN and the

EEU. Besides, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) is also a promising cooperation ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

UN Envoy to Iraq Urges for Calm, Unity After Green Zone Breach in Baghdad

BAGHDAD - The UN envoy to Iraq on Saturday expressed deep concern about Friday's demonstrations when hundreds of followers of Shiite cleric Moqtada al-Sadr broke into the heavily fortified Green Zone, calling for calm and unity to achieve reforms and confront the Islamic State (IS) group which seizes parts of Iraq's northern and western regions since 2014.

"What happened on Friday shows how events could take a different turn and escalate, causing casualties," UN envoy to Iraq

Jan Kubis said in a statement.

On Friday, Sadr's followers, in the afternoon, crossed security barriers on Jamhouriyah Bridge and marched to a main gate of the Green Zone, while the security forces guarding the government zone opened fire in the air and fired tear gas to disperse the protesters.

Despite the fierce resistance from the security forces guarding the main gates of the Green Zone, the demonstrators managed to enter the prime ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

House Prices Will Plummet if Britain Leaves EU: UK Treasury

LONDON - British house prices could fall by up to 18 percent if the country leaves the European Union, the Treasury says - a claim dismissed as scare-mongering by campaigners for a U.K. exit from the bloc.

Treasury chief George Osborne said leaving the EU would be a "profound economic shock" that would lower property values and raise mortgage rates.

Treasury analysis estimates property prices will be worth between 10 and

18 percent less by 2018 if Britain leaves than if it stays.

British house prices rose 9 percent in the year to March, and the value of property is something of a national obsession - especially in London, where the average home costs 535,000 pounds (\$775,000), more than 10 times the average annual household income.

Some economists think a fall in house prices would be a good thing because it would help new buyers ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

G7 Finance Chiefs Remain Apart on Forex Market, Coordinated Policy

TOKYO - Finance chiefs of the Group of Seven (G7) remained apart over the foreign exchange rate and coordinated step to boost public spending so as to improve world economy growth after their two-day meeting in Sendai in northeast Japan on Saturday.

Japan and the United States failed to narrow their gap over the foreign exchange market. Japan is mulling to continue its monetary easing if necessary after recent appreciation of the Japanese yen, while the U.S. Federal



Reserve has sealed off its loosening policy.

Meanwhile, Japan called for boosting public spending so as to drive global economy, but Germany is

reluctant to following the suggestion. Local reports said that the policy gap among the finance chiefs may shadow the outcome the G7 leaders Ise-Shima

summit which will be held next week in Mie Prefecture in central Japan. During the finance ministerial meeting, the ministers ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Turkish Red Crescent, Volunteers Extend Welcoming Hand to Refugees

ANKARA - Furkan Yilmaz, a sophomore from Yildirim Beyazit University in Ankara, takes delight in helping people who are less fortunate.

One Monday afternoon, when he had no classes, the 20-year-old metal engineering major joined two other college students to hand out food supplies to refugees living in a neighborhood in Ulus in the capital city's old district.

The three, all volunteers with Turkish Red Crescent, were visiting Iraqi Turkmen refugees, like Hasan, an Iraqi Turkmen in his 40s.

Hasan, who only gave his



first name, lives with his wife, his grown-up son and two daughters, one suffering cerebral palsy, in an apartment on the ground floor of a dilapidated four-story building. The supplies, including

rice, flour, oil, pea and canned tomato jam, were packed in boxes with Turkish Red Crescent logos. Yilmaz, the Beyazit student, said the food deliveries bring joy to the ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

DPRK Proposes Talks Between North-South Militaries

PYONGYANG - The Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) on Saturday sent a notice to South Korea offering to hold talks between the military authorities of the two sides to "defuse military tension" on the Korean Peninsula, the state media KCNA reported.

The National Defense Commission of the DPRK proposed to its South Korean counterpart a working-level contact for the talks between the militaries "at the date and place both sides deem convenient in late May or early June," the KCNA reported.

The talks aims to defuse military tensions, create a confidence-building ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Singapore President to Pay First State Visits to Italy, Holy See

SINGAPORE - Singapore President Tony Tan Keng Yam will make state visits to Italy and the Holy See for the first time from May 22 to 29, according to a statement from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) on Saturday.

The visit to Italy will showcase growing ties between Singapore and Italy in a range of sectors including trade, education, culture, design and research. The visit to the Holy See will showcase the longstanding ties between Singapore and the Holy See, it added.

According to MFA, the visit to Italy will comprise visits to Rome and Venice. Tan will receive a ceremonial welcome in Rome and meet President Sergio Mattarella. He will also meet with Prime ...*(More on P4)...(26)*

Australian Firm Names Russia, Putin in MH17 Compensation Claim

MELBOURNE - An Australian law firm has filed a compensation claim against Russia and President Vladimir Putin in the European Court of Human Rights on behalf of families of victims of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17, shot down in 2014, media reported.

The jetliner crashed in Ukraine in pro-Russian rebel-held territory on July 17, 2014, killing all 298 people on board, including 28 Australians.

The aircraft, which was en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, was shot down by a Russian-made surface-to-air missile, the Dutch Safety Board concluded in its final report late last year. Fighting was raging in eastern Ukraine between Russian-backed separatists and Ukrainian government forces when the aircraft was downed and many Western experts and governments blamed the rebels.

Australia's Fairfax media reported on Saturday that 33 next of ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

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China, Thailand Start Joint Military Exercise

SATTAHIP - Thai and Chinese marine corps held an opening ceremony for a joint military exercise codenamed Blue Strike 2016 here on Saturday. The opening ceremony, held at Sattahip Naval Base, Chon Buri province, was presided over by Royal Thai Navy Fleet Commander Naris Prathumsuwan and Wang Hai, deputy commander of Chinese Navy. The joint exercise includes joint training at sea and on land, evacuating people from conflict-affected areas and disaster relief in counter-terrorism occasions.

Wang said the drill manifests the perseverance and ability of marine corps from both countries in counter-terrorism and maintaining peace in the region and the world.

Naris said the drill would help boost the long-standing relationship between Thailand and China and the exercise was aimed at increasing cooperation between the two forces by sharing practical knowledge and experiences.

The military drill is the third one of its kind, following the Blue Strike 2010 and Blue Strike 2012 joint training exercises.

During the opening ceremony, marines also gave performances as a way of exchange. Chinese marines presented kung fu while their Thai counterparts performed Muay Thai.

Sattahip Naval Base, where the headquarters of Royal Thai Marine corps is located, is the biggest naval base in Thailand. (Xinhua)

Iran FM Urges 'More from US' on Nuclear Deal

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif urges Europe and the US to take "practical steps" towards lifting banking and economic sanctions on Iran under last year's nuclear agreement between Tehran and the P5+1 group of countries.

"We have not fully achieved what we must have, and more measures need to be carried out by the US," Zarif said in a joint press conference with New Zealand's Minister of Foreign Affairs Murray McCully in Tehran on Saturday.

Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council - the United States, France, Britain, China and Russia - plus Germany signed a nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), on July 14, 2015

following two and a half years of intensive talks. Under the deal, which took effect on January 16, all nuclear-related sanctions imposed on Iran by the European Union, the Security Council and the US would be lifted. Iran has, in return, put some limitations on its nuclear activities. Zarif added that massive presence of economic enterprises and political delegations from different countries in Iran indicate the international community's keenness to cooperate with Iran. He noted that the US hostile policies and sanctions imposed on Iran by Washington and the international community against Iran have created obstacles in the way of the Islamic Republic's economic cooperation with other countries over the past decade. (PressTV)

Turkmenistan, UAE to Bolster Bilateral Ties

BISHKEK - President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov signed the order on further development of cooperation between Turkmenistan and the United Arab Emirates, reports the president's press service. The President approved members of the Turkmenistan-UAE Cooperation Committee,

which is aimed to expand bilateral trade, economic, scientific, technical, cultural and humanitarian relations. Deputy Chairman of the Cabinet of Ministers, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov was named as Co-Chairman of the Turkmenistan-UAE Cooperation Committee. (AKIpress)

Pak-China Premiers Exchange Congratulations over 65th Anniversary of Diplomatic Ties

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif exchanged messages on Saturday to congratulate the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Li said in his message that Pakistan is China's

good neighbor, good friend, good partner and good brother. Over the past 65 years, China and Pakistan have always adhered to the five principles of peaceful coexistence, have trusted each other politically, have cooperated with and benefited each other economically, and ...*(More on P4)...(29)*

S. Korean PM Calls for Improved Ties with Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - South Korean Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn called for efforts to boost economic ties and cooperation with Uzbekistan on Saturday, also urging additional efforts to jointly develop new overseas markets. The call came at a cer-

emony marking the construction of a chemical plant in Ustyurt, Uzbekistan, under a joint development project called "Surgil."

"The Surgil gas plant is a milestone of cooperation between South Korea and Uzbekistan, and the ...*(More on P4)...(30)*

Brazil Deficit Much Worse than Thought: Minister

BRASILIA - Brazil's projected budget deficit for this year will be nearly twice as big as forecast when Dilma Rousseff was president, the new finance minister said Friday.

Rousseff's government vastly overestimated tax revenues from an economy in deep recession, minister Henrique Meirelles told a press conference.

Rousseff's government had calculated the primary deficit - the government's deficit excluding debt payments - at 96 billion reais (\$27 billion) ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

G20 Summit to be "Great Opportunity" to Advance Global Economic Agenda

WASHINGTON - The 2016 Group of Twenty (G20) Summit will be a great opportunity for the world to push forward the global trade agenda and promote economic governance and reform, a U.S. global economics expert told Xinhua in a recent interview. There is a great opportunity for the bloc to advance the international trade agenda by seeking new approaches to finalize the long-stalled Doha round of trade liberaliza-

tion talks, said Matthew Goodman, a senior adviser for Asian economics at the U.S. think tank Center for Strategic and International Studies. As a former official who helped U.S. President Barack Obama for the preparation of the G20 and G8 summits, Goodman suggests China take the advantage to push forward agendas not only on global trade and economic governance, but also on infrastructure, economic reform and growth as well

as energy efficiency. On setting agenda on financial regulatory reform, Goodman said it will benefit both China and the international financial system. Financial regulatory reform, which aims to provide a better regulatory framework for banks, has become a focus of the G20 summit since 2008. "That agenda has made a lot of progress but there is probably more work to be done," he said. (Xinhua)