

EU Leaders Proclaim European Social Standards to Woo Voters

GOTHENBURG, Sweden - European Union leaders proclaimed a set of 20 "social rights" on Friday in an attempt to make the EU more appealing to voters and counter rising eurosceptic sentiment across the bloc. The set of social rights, supported by all EU governments and institutions, spells out what the EU believes are the foundations of fair and well-functioning modern labor markets and welfare systems. It encompasses principles ranging from equal access to jobs and fair working conditions and wages to social protection and unemployment benefits and training. "Our Union has always been a social project at heart. It is



more than just a single market, more than money, more than the euro. It is about our values and the way we want to live," European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said. "Today we assert our common values and commit ourselves to a set of 20 principles and rights. From the right to fair wages to the right to health care; from lifelong learning, a better work-life balance and gender equality to minimum income," he said. Recent elections in Germany, France, Austria and the Czech Republic, in which populist parties have performed well, have shown citizens have lost confidence in governments or in the European Union. (Reuters)

Turkey Withdraws Troops from NATO Exercise in Norway

ANKARA - Turkey has decided to withdraw its 40 soldiers from a NATO military exercise in Norway after the Turkish Republic's founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and its current president were included among targets of "enemies," President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday. "There was an incident in Norway yesterday. They put up something like enemies board which included Ataturk's picture and my name. These are the targets," Erdogan said in a speech to ruling Justice and Development

Party's meeting in Ankara. "Our Chief of General Staff and EU Minister, who were on their way to Canada, have called us and informed that it was a NATO exercise. We had 40 soldiers there. We decided to withdraw those troops," he said. Erdogan called the move "unacceptable," adding "We would withdraw those troops even if those names are removed." "Such a state can not be an ally of Turkey," the Turkish president said. (Xinhua)

More Work to be Done to Unlock Brexit Talks: May, Tusk

GOTHENBURG, Sweden - British Prime Minister Theresa May and European Council President Donald Tusk agreed on Friday there was more work to be done to advance Brexit talks and discussed ways to take further steps before December, a spokesman for May said. The two had "positive discussions" at a meeting on the sidelines of a summit in Gothenburg, Sweden, the spokesman said in a statement. May also met French President Emmanuel Macron.



"Prime Minister May and President Tusk agreed that there is more work to be done and discussed how to take further steps forward together in advance of the European Council in December," he added. (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

China Sends Envoy to N. Korea, Trump Hails 'Big Move'

BEIJING - China dispatched a special envoy to North Korea on Friday, a trip hailed as a "big move" by US President Donald Trump, who has urged Beijing to pile pressure on its nuclear-armed ally. Diplomat Song Tao was travelling to the North on behalf of President Xi Jinping to brief officials on the recent Chinese Communist Party congress and other "issues of mutual interest", foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said. But analysts expect Song to address the nuclear standoff, which has roiled relations between the two Cold War-era allies as China has backed

United Nations sanctions on North Korea over its missile tests and sixth nuclear blast. Trump, who warned Xi during his trip to Beijing last week that time was "quickly running out" to solve the nuclear crisis, took to Twitter on Thursday to hail the mission as "a big move, we'll see what happens!". The US leader wants China, which accounts for 90 percent of North Korea's foreign trade, to put more economic pressure on the reclusive regime. But experts doubt Song's visit will yield major breakthroughs. "China has virtually no political influence on North Korea. (AFP)

French Parliamentarians to Visit Pakistan to Promote Bilateral Relations

ISLAMABAD - A delegation of five French parliamentarians is all set to visit Pakistan next month and it would be led by member and the newly appointed President of the France Pakistan Friendship Group in the French National Assembly Jean Bernard Sempastous. Ambassador of Pakistan to France Moin ul Haque disclosed this after his meeting with the president and other members of the French Pakistan Friendship Group held at the National Assembly of France in Paris the other day, a statement Thursday said. Briefing the members of the newly re-constituted France Pakistan Friendship Group, the ambassador said democracy had taken firm roots in Pakistan with a strong parliament, independent judiciary and free media. He said the Pakistani

nation through unprecedented sacrifices had defeated the forces of terrorism and extremism. "Today, Pakistan is on the path of peace and development with an impressive growth rate, infrastructure development and improvement of social sector." Expressing satisfaction on the state of Pakistan-France bilateral relations, the ambassador called for more high level exchanges between the two countries. In this respect, he emphasized the important of building linkages between the parliaments of the two countries through regular visits. Jean Bernard Sempastous had assumed the leadership of the Pakistan France Friendship Group in place of Francois Poppo, who would now serve as the vice president of the Group, he added. (Monitoring Desk)

Climate Talks Wrap up with Progress on Paris Rulebook



BONN, Germany - Global talks on curbing climate change wrapped up Friday, with delegates and observers claiming progress on several key details of the 2015 Paris

accord. The two-week negotiations focused on a range of issues including transparency, financial assistance for poor nations and how to keep raising countries' targets for cut-

ting carbon emissions. "We are making good progress on the Paris agreement work program, and we are on track to complete that work by the deadline," Fijian Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama told diplomats hours before the meeting in Bonn, Germany, was due to conclude. Bainimarama, who presided over the talks, faced the challenging task of reconciling the often conflicting positions of rich and poor countries, especially when it comes to what each side needs to do to

curb climate change. Signatories of the Paris agreement want to keep global warming significantly below 2 degrees Celsius (3.6 Fahrenheit) by the end of the century. That goal won't be achieved unless countries make further efforts to sharply reduce carbon emissions caused mainly by the burning of fossil fuels. Observers say the U.S. delegation played a largely constructive role during the talks, despite the Trump administration's threat to pull out of the Paris accord. (AP)

Merkel's Conservatives Offer Greens Compromise to Salvage Talks

BERLIN - Germany's would-be coalition partners resumed talks on Friday after all-night negotiations failed to produce a breakthrough, with Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives saying they would compromise further on climate change policies to secure a deal. The conservatives, the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens remained divided on climate policy and immigration, but agreed to continue past their self-imposed deadline into

the weekend. "I go into these negotiations with the intention, despite all the difficulties, of carrying out the task voters gave us of forming a coalition," Merkel said as she arrived for the next round. "It will be tough, but it's worth going into round two." Volker Kauder, the parliamentary floor leader of her Christian Democrats (CDU), said they were prepared to compromise further on reducing emissions from coal-fired power stations to assuage Green concerns. (Reuters)

U.S. Issues Europe Travel Alert over Terrorist Attack Concern

WASHINGTON - The United States issued a Europe travel alert on Thursday, warning its citizens of the "heightened risk of terrorist attacks" throughout the region. Citing widely-reported incidents in multiple European countries recently including France, the United Kingdom and Sweden, the U.S. State Department said it remained concerned about the potential for future terrorist attacks. The incidents demonstrated that the Islamic State militant group and Al-Qaeda and their affiliates were still capable of planning and executing terrorist attacks in Europe, said the State Department in a statement released in the day. The statement also warned of self-radicalized extremists who may conduct attacks "with little or no warning." (Xinhua)

S. Koreans have Best Feeling toward Xi Among Leaders of 4 Powers: Survey

SEOUL - South Koreans had the best feeling toward Chinese President Xi Jinping among the leaders of four powers relating to the Korean Peninsula issue, a local survey showed Friday. According to the Gallup Korea poll, 29 percent of respondents said they had the best feeling toward President Xi among leaders of China, the United States, Japan and Russia. Xi was followed by U.S. President Donald Trump gaining a 25-percent popularity. Russian President Vladimir Putin came next with 14 percent. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe earned 6 percent. The result was based on a survey of 1,003 adults conducted from Tuesday to Thursday. (Xinhua)

UNSC Rejects Bolivia's Draft Resolution on Chemical Attacks Probe in Syria

UNITED NATIONS - The UN Security Council on Thursday rejected a Russian-drafted resolution submitted by Bolivia on the renewal of the mandate of an investigation of chemical weapons use in Syria. The text, which was drafted by Russia with minor modifications at the last minute, was put to vote as a Bolivia-sponsored draft resolution. The text was rejected as only four members of the council voted in favor, failing to meet the threshold of nine votes for adoption. Seven council members voted against it with four abstentions.



Russia and the United States tabled rival texts for vote at the Security Council on Thursday. At the beginning of the afternoon session, Russia's UN ambassador Vassily Nebenzia asked the council to vote on the U.S. text first. The U.S. ambassador, Nikki Haley, objected, cit-

ing procedural rules that draft resolutions should be voted in the order of their submission. Nebenzia requested a vote on the procedural matter. The motion was rejected by the council as only three members voted in favor. Seven members voted against it and five abstained. (Xinhua)

Top Nuke Envoys of S. Korea, U.S. Discuss Korean Peninsula Nuclear Issue

SEOUL - Top nuclear envoys of South Korea and the United States discussed the Korean Peninsula's nuclear issue, Seoul's foreign ministry said Friday. Lee Do-hoon, South Korea's special representative for Korean Peninsula peace and security affairs, met with Joseph Yun who represents the United States at the currently stalled six-party talks to discuss the denuclearization of the peninsula. They met in South Ko-

rea's southern resort island of Jeju on the sidelines of a UN conference on disarmament and nonproliferation, according to Seoul's foreign ministry. During the meeting, Lee and Yun discussed follow-up measures to denuclearize the peninsula. They highlighted the constructive roles played by major countries such as China and Russia, vowing to strengthen strategic communications with relevant countries. (Xinhua)

Morocco, France Agree to Strengthen Bilateral Partnership

RABAT - Morocco and France have given a new impetus to their bilateral partnership, signing several new agreements covering various bilateral cooperation fields. The agreements were signed during the 13th Moroccan French High-level Meeting held here on Thursday under the chairmanship of Moroccan and French Prime Ministers Saadeddine El Othmani and Edouard Philippe. The two countries inked a loan agreement of 40 million euros and a grant agreement of 400,000 euros. The loan agreement was signed between the transportation company of Rabat-Sale and the French Development Agency to finance the extension of line 2 of the Rabat-Sale tramway. Another agreement concerns a subsidy of 500,000 euros, along with the loan of 30 million euros to finance line 2 of the Casablanca tramway. The two-day visit of Philippe was also marked by the organization of a Moroccan-French business forum held in the Moroccan city of Skhirate, which saw the participation of nearly 150 French and Moroccan companies. Held under the theme "Morocco-France: Building Bridges for Growth and Employment," the forum is co-organized by the Moroccan General Confederation of Enterprises and the France-Morocco Business Leaders Club, in partnership with the Movement of French Enterprises International. The forum aimed at developing new areas of economic cooperation between the companies of the two countries and exploring the paths of a shared development in Africa. (Xinhua)

Iran Warns Saudi over 'Baseless Claims', 'Destabilizing' Role

TEHRAN - Tehran has warned Riyadh against keeping up its rhetorical blame game against Iran and its divisive policies in the region a day after the Saudi foreign minister once again targeted Iran with a flurry of baseless accusations against the Islamic Republic. Speaking to Reuters, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel Jubeir said Thursday that the kingdom's actions in the Middle East were a response to what he called "Iranian aggression." Responding to the allegation, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi highlighted the Saudi regime's "highly destructive actions" in the region, saying the Riyadh regime cannot evade its

responsibility for such policies by resorting to blame games and political gestures. Qassemi cautioned Riyadh against maintaining its long-winded rhetoric against Iran as well as its destabilizing and divisive moves in the region. The countries of the region have seen no positive action on the part of the Saudi government over the recent several years, he added. The Iranian official further said the kingdom has been violating human rights, trying to sow division among Arab and Muslim countries, repeating and propagating unfounded and baseless claims, and laying economic siege on its neighbors. (PressTV)

EU, Turkmenistan Mull Topical Regional Issues

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan's Foreign Ministry hosted a meeting with the European Union Special Envoy for Afghanistan, Ambassador Roland Kobia, the Turkmen Foreign Ministry said in a message Nov. 17. The sides exchanged views on topical issues of the regional agenda, discussed the current security situation in Afghanistan and the mechanisms of regional cooperation of the Central Asian countries and Afghanistan. The parties expressed

support for a peaceful settlement of the situation in Afghanistan and noted the importance of further cooperation within the EU-Central Asia dialogue on security with the participation of Afghanistan. Noting Turkmenistan's interest in ensuring security, peace and sustainable development in Central Asia and Afghanistan as well as the country's positive experience, proposals were made to consolidate joint efforts in this direction, says the message. (Trend)