

Obama to Meet Australia, Canada Leaders before Return to US

LIMA, Peru - President Barack Obama planned separate talks with the leaders of Australia and Canada before wrapping up the final foreign trip of his presidency.

Both countries helped negotiate a multinational trade agreement with the U.S. and nine other Pacific Rim countries. But Congress is unlikely to ratify the deal, dealing a blow to Obama's once high hopes of having the agreement become part of his presidential legacy. President-elect Donald Trump says trade deals can hurt U.S. workers, and he opposes the sweeping Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement.



Besides participating in meetings Sunday with other world leaders attending the annual Asia-Pacific Economic Forum taking place in Peru's capital, Obama was sitting down first with Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull of Australia, a U.S. ally and partner in the trans-Pacific trade deal.

The president also planned to speak with Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, whose nation is another TPP partner. Before boarding Air Force One for the flight to Washington, Obama was to answer questions from the journalists who accompanied him to Greece, Germany and Peru. (AP)

Merkel Announces Bid for Fourth Term As German Chancellor

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel has announced that she wants to run for the fourth term in 2017 election, German media Spiegel Online reported on Sunday. She made the announcement in a presidium meeting of the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) led by her on Sunday, as several news agencies reported citing party sources. The 62-year-old also announced her bid for CDU's presidency on Sunday. The CDU will hold election on December 6 at its

National Party Conference in the German city of Essen.

In the past few days, more and more politicians of the Union party, a bloc of CDU and its Bavarian sister party Christian Social Union (CSU), have assumed that Merkel will compete for both offices again.

Sigmar Gabriel, chairman of the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), also made it clear that he was expecting this.

Merkel has been CDU chairman since April 2000 and German chancellor



since November 2005. If she wins for the fourth time in 2017, she has the chance to beat the record holder Helmut Kohl who was 16 years in office. An Emnid survey published by German news-

paper Bild am Sonntag showed that 55 percent of Germans wants a further mandate of Merkel, while 39 percent would not wish Merkel to remain as chancellor after the election in 2017. (Xinhua)

Iraqi Forces Push on Against IS in Eastern Mosul

MOSUL, Iraq - Iraqi troops advanced against Islamic State fighters toward the center of Mosul on Sunday, but were slowed down by sniper fire and suicide bombings as well as concern over the safety of civilians in a city that is home to more than 1 million people.

A few hundred civilians emerged from rubble-strewn front-line neighborhoods in search of safer ground, including women and children, some of them carrying bags or small suitcases. Maj. Gen. Sami al-Arabi

told The Associated Press that his special forces were searching homes in areas retaken from IS, looking for militants and vehicles rigged with explosives. Troops in those areas continue to be hit by mortar and sniper fire, he said. Another Iraqi army commander, Brig. Gen. Haider Fadhil, said four civilians were killed and another four wounded when a suicide car bomb exploded before it could reach the troops it was targeting late Saturday. The troops laid ... (More on P4)...(17)

Syrian Government Refuses UN Truce Terms for Aleppo

BEIRUT - The Syrian government on Sunday refused a U.N. proposal to grant the rebel-held eastern districts of Aleppo autonomy in order to restore calm to the war-torn city.

Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem said the state's institutions "must be restored" across the city and the militants expelled.

At least 164 civilians have been killed since the government renewed its assault on the besieged enclave six days ago, according to the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The U.N. estimates 275,000 people are trapped inside. By Saturday, the government had damaged or destroyed every hospital in the east, according to the Syrian American Medical Society, which supports doctors and hospitals in Syria.

Rebels outside the city have meanwhile launched two unsuccessful offensives to break the government's siege and shelled the government-held western districts.

U.N. envoy Staffan de Mistura had proposed ... (More on P4)...(18)

Erdogan Says Turkey Can Spurn EU and Join Shanghai Pact

ISTANBUL - President Recep Tayyip Erdogan says Turkey should not be "fixated" on joining the EU and has reiterated the idea of joining Russia and China in a Eurasian security group, local media reported Sunday.

His comments come as Turkey's decades-long hopes of joining the European Union have reached a nadir, driven by the aftermath of the July 15 botched coup.

"Turkey should first of all feel relaxed about the EU and not be fixated" about joining it, Erdogan told

Turkish journalists on a plane from Uzbekistan, Hurriyet newspaper and other media reported.

"Some may criticize me but I express my opinion. For example, I say 'why shouldn't Turkey be in the Shanghai 5?'" he said.

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) -- also called the Shanghai Pact -- is a loose security and economic bloc led by Russia and China. Other members are Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Erdogan said he had already discussed the idea



with Russian President Vladimir Putin and with Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev. Erdogan has several times floated plans for Turkey to join the SCO, a move that could scupper its long-standing EU membership bid. (AFP)

Millions Throng Iraq Shrine Amid Huge Security Deployment

Karbala, Iraq - Millions of Shiite Muslim pilgrims beating their chests in mourning thronged the Iraqi city of Karbala Sunday under the protection of thousands of members of the security forces.

The Arbaeen pilgrimage is one of the world's largest religious events and is seen as a major potential target for suicide bombers from the Islamic State jihadist group.

The commemoration of Imam Hussein's death in 680 AD will culminate on Monday but millions were already packing the city hosting the shrine of the Prophet Mohammed's grandson.

Nusayyef al-Khattabi, who heads the Karbala provincial council, said he expected the total number of visitors over several days to range "between 17 and 20 million". Among them are an estimated three million foreigners, ... (More on P4)...(19)

French Conservatives Voting in First Presidential Primary

PARIS - French conservatives were voting in a nationwide primary for the first time Sunday to choose their nominee for next year's presidential election, after a campaign marked by concerns about immigration and Islamic extremism.

Donald Trump's election as president of the United States is on many voters' minds, as France faces its own wave of populism that has emboldened an outsider with an eye on the presidency.

Lines were long in many polling stations, where voters chose among seven candidates competing in the first round of the conservatives' primary Sunday. A runoff will be held ... (More on P4)...(21)

NATO Chief Says Trump Sees Alliance's 'Enduring Importance'

WASHINGTON - During his history-making 2016 campaign, Donald Trump took heat for suggesting that he would not automatically enforce America's longstanding commitment to coming to the aid of NATO allies if they were attacked. Trump warned that his administration might not help countries that had not met an alliance-wide pledge to spend at least 2 percent of gross domestic product on defense. The brash entrepreneur at one point also called NATO "obsolete."

Since Election Day, President-elect Trump has not publicly repeated those comments, which had alarmed national security



experts and professionals of both parties. And NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg now says that the new president assured him by telephone Friday of his commitment to the alliance conceived to protect Europe from potential aggression by Moscow. "The president-elect and the secretary-general both underlined NATO's enduring importance, and discussed how NATO is adapting

to the new security environment, including to counter the threat of terrorism," according to a NATO summary of their conversation. The Trump transition team did not return an email seeking its version of the back-and-forth. Stoltenberg congratulated Trump on his victory over Hillary Clinton and "said that he was looking forward to working with him ... (More on P4)...(20)

UK Treasury Chief: Brexit Uncertainty Could Drag on Economy

LONDON - Britain's Treasury chief says the economy could face a slowdown because of the uncertainty caused by the U.K.'s decision to leave the European Union.

Philip Hammond said Sunday that "we're going to have an unprecedented level of uncertainty, and that's one of the factors causing many commentators to predict that there will be a slowing of economic growth." Hammond told ITV television that

"we just have to plan to accommodate it."

Prime Minister Theresa May's government says it will trigger formal exit talks with the EU by March 31, but won't give away its negotiating position beforehand.

That has led to economic jitters, as well as speculation and lobbying by those who want to keep close ties with the bloc, as well as those who favor a decisive break. (AP)

Egypt, Jordan Join Hands to Boost Religious Tourism

CAIRO - Jordanian Minister of Tourism Lina Annab said Sunday religious tourism between Egypt and her country will see tangible activity in the coming period, Egypt's official MENA news agency reported.

Annab, who started a two-day official visit to Cairo Sunday, told MENA that progress in tourism cooperation will be seen in the wake of signing around 17 agreements and memoranda of understanding by the two sides. She also said that her talks with Egyptian officials will cover means to activate some tourist routes, particularly the Christian Pilgrimage and the Journey Route of Holy Family, adding that she will meet with Pope Tawadros II of Alexandria and Patriarch of St. Mark Diocese who visited Jordan in September and invited her to visit Egypt.

"Egypt and Jordan are the cradles of civilizations and religions emerged in both nations. Christianity started in Jordan at Al Maghtas area where Jesus Christ was baptized," MENA quoted Annab as saying.

Annab is expected to meet with a number of Coptic Orthodox Cathedral leaders, Minister of Tourism Yehia Rashed and representatives of the tourism sector particularly travel and tourism agents. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

Trade, Investment Serve as Ballast in China-U.S. Relations

WASHINGTON - With preparations well underway here for the 27th session of the China-U.S. Joint Commission on Commerce and Trade, the rapidly growing economic ties between the world's two largest economies are capturing global media headlines again.

During the meeting, scheduled for Nov. 21-23, the two sides are expected to discuss the implementation of consensus of their leaders, have an

in-depth exchange of ideas over trade issues, and explore new ways to expand their win-win cooperation.

Over the past decades, China and the United States have witnessed closer ties in trade and investment, which have served as the ballast in bilateral relations.

The United States is the second-largest trade partner of China and China the first for the United States. In 2015, ... (More on P4)...(22)

Turkmenistan to Host Int'l Cotton Fair

ASHGABAT - The sixth international cotton exhibition-fair and conference "Cotton Products of Turkmenistan and the global market" will be held in Ashgabat on December 3-4, the Turkmen government said in a message.

"The annual forum is important for exchanging experience and establishing cooperation with in-

terested foreign partners, demonstrating the country's achievements in the cotton production and processing," the message said.

According to the message, the organizers of the event are Turkmenpagta State Concern, State Commodity and Raw Materials Exchange, Chamber of Commerce and Industry ... (More on P4)...(23)

LUKOIL Attracts \$500M to Fund Gissar Project in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - Russia's oil company LUKOIL attracted a straight loan of \$500 million from a consortium of banks in order to finance the project on development of the Gissar gas and condensate fields in Uzbekistan, LUKOIL said in a message.

The consortium includes Intesa Sanpaolo Bank Luxembourg S.A. (Luxembourg), Natixis (France), Mizuho Bank Ltd. (Japan), UniCredit S.p.A. (Italy), VTB Bank Deutschland AG (Germany), ING Bank N.V. (the Netherlands),

AO Raiffeisenbank (Russia) and Raiffeisen Bank International AG (Austria). LUKOIL joined the Southwest Gissar project in March 2008. There are seven fields in the contract area in the Kashkadarya Region of Uzbekistan. The PSA for the project was signed in January 2007 for a term of 36 years and came into effect in April 2007.

LUKOIL Uzbekistan Operating Company, a subsidiary of LUKOIL, is the sole operator of the contract area. (Trend)

Nearly 250,000 Pakistanis Deported from 2012-2015: Report

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's overall debt and liabilities have soared to an all-time high and have crossed Rs2.2 trillion - an increase of Rs0.8tr since the PML-N government came to power, said the recently released National Data Summary released by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP).

The SBP summary shows that on September 30, 2016, the country's overall domestic debt and liabilities stood at Rs14.79tr, whereas the external debt and liabilities stood at \$72.98 million on June 30, 2016.

In the present government's three years, the domestic debt and li-

abilities showed an increase of Rs5,255bn and external debt more than Rs2,500bn.

According to official documents in June 2013, the overall debt and liabilities were at the level of Rs14.32tr under which domestic debt and liabilities stood at Rs9.52tr and external debt and liabilities were recorded at Rs4.8tr.

SBP data on Sept 30, under the heading of central government debt, mentioned that domestic debt stood at Rs14.39tr in which long term debt stood at Rs7.9tr and short term debt stood at Rs6.48tr.

The data further shows ... (More on P4)...(24)

Iran Ready to Help Iraq Hold Arba'een Rituals: First VP

TEHRAN - Iranian First Vice President Es'haq Jahangiri says the Islamic Republic is ready to provide Iraq with necessary assistance to hold religious rituals commemorating Arba'een, the 40th day after the martyrdom anniversary of Imam Hussein (PBUH), the third Shia Imam.

Jahangiri made the remarks upon his arrival in the holy Iraqi city of Najaf on Sunday at the head of a delegation to march toward the holy city of Karbala to perform the rituals of Arba'een, one of the most revered religious occasions on the Islamic

calendar. "The Iraqi government's capability to aptly welcome and host pilgrims and the simultaneous command of the big battle for [the key northern city of] Mosul shows the high strength of the country," the Iranian vice president said.

He once again reaffirmed Iran's full support for the Iraqi government and nation in their fight against terrorism.

Since October 17, the Iraqi army, volunteer Shia and Sunni fighters as well as Kurdish Peshmerga forces have been engaged ... (More on P4)...(25)