

NATO Vows to Enhance Collective Defense Against Threats

ISTANBUL - NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg pledged on Monday to expand the military bloc's collective defense against threats with new alliances.

"We have proven that we are able to stand together in the alliance on the main message of collective defense and the will to defend each other," the secretary general said at the 62nd annual session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly held in Istanbul. He noted that NATO is considering boosting its collective defense, projecting stability, strengthening cooperation with the European Union and enlarging the alliance by inviting Montenegro as a new member state. "I urge those countries that have not yet ratified the accession agreement for Montenegro to do so," said Stoltenberg.

NATO is also taking steps to advance



its presence in the Black Sea region and the eastern part of the bloc, including the deployment of four multinational battalions to the Baltic states and Poland.

"There will be a Romanian-led multinational brigade," Stoltenberg said. "And we are working on additional defensive measures in the air and at sea as well."

NATO lawmakers adopted reports on Saturday urging member states to stand firm in supporting Ukraine and maintain a strong stance against what they called continued Russian belligerence.

Stoltenberg assured the international community that the NATO firmly believes in and is firmly committed to a two-track approach to Russia.

"Strong defense coupled with meaningful dialogue," he noted, saying that as ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

British PM Hints She May be Open to Transitional Agreement with EU

LONDON - Prime Minister Theresa May pledged on Monday to address business concerns that Britain could fall off a "cliff edge" into uncertain trading conditions after leaving the EU, hinting at some form of a transitional agreement.

It was the strongest sign yet that May could be open to a deal that would offer Britain time to forge a new trading relationship with the European Union when the up to two-year formal divorce talks are concluded, most

likely in 2019.

Speaking to business leaders at the CBI, a leading business organization in Britain, May moved to ease concerns among company bosses who had been alarmed by a plan to put workers on boards and to tackle excessive executive pay.

But she would not be moved to reveal more of her negotiating hand before she triggers Article 50 of the EU's Lisbon Treaty to launch two years of formal divorce talks, saying business leaders should



understand better than anyone that she did not want anything to jeopardize what she sees as the "right" deal.

Asked about business calls for a transitional deal, she said: "We want

to get the arrangement that is going to work best for the UK and the arrangement that is going to work best for business in the UK."

"I am conscious that there ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

Melania Trump not Moving into White House in January

WASHINGTON - When Donald Trump is sworn in as the 45th president of the United States in Washington on Friday, Jan. 20, his family, including his wife, Melania Trump, and their young son, Barron, will undoubtedly be by his side. But come that Monday, it appears they won't be staying with him in the White House.

The New York Post and TMZ.com report that the 46-year-old future first lady and the couple's 10-year-old son will not

make the move to the nation's capital and will instead remain at Trump Tower in New York City to allow Barron to continue attending private school on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

According to the Post, Melania "will travel to the White House as needed" and "her primary focus is on Barron." The two may make the move to Washington after the end of the school year, the paper added, but currently "no plans ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

Ukraine Says 'No' to Russia on Pro-EU Revolt Anniversary

KIEV - Ukraine on Monday marked the third anniversary of the start of its pro-EU revolution with President Petro Poroshenko's firm rejection of "the Russian world". The so-called Euro-maidan protests lasted three months and culminated in a bloodbath that claimed the lives of more than 100 largely unarmed people and about 20 anti-riot police.

Poroshenko has declared November 21 the Day of Dignity and Peace. He said at a ceremony in

Kiev that the former Soviet republic would never revert to its Moscow-dominated past.

"The Revolution of Dignity put an end to our Russian-Soviet past and the post-Soviet period," said Poroshenko. "It has established a clear demarcation line. "It has separated our Ukrainian and European world from the Russian world." Pro-Western proponents blamed the February 2014 bloodshed squarely on Moscow-backed ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

Turkey Detains two Mayors of SE Province in Anti-Terror Probe

ANKARA - Turkish police detained two suspended mayors in Turkey's southeast province of Mardin on Monday as part of an anti-terror investigation, security sources told Turkish Anadolu Agency. Ahmet Turk, mayor of Mardin city, and Emin Irmak, mayor of the province's Artuklu district, had been suspended and replaced last week. The two suspects were arrested at their homes.

Monday's arrests are the latest in a series of investigations with elected municipal officials.



On Nov. 17, the mayor of Tunceli province Mehmet Ali Bul, the mayor of Van province Bekir Kaya from the Democratic Regions Party (DBP), a social democratic Kurdish political party, and four other mu-

nicipal officials were arrested.

Earlier this month, 13 lawmakers from the Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) were arrested. Ten, including co-leaders Selahattin Demirtas and Figen ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Yuksekdag, remain in custody for trial on terrorism-related charges.

DBP co-head Sebahat Tuncel was detained outside the courthouse in the southeastern Turkish province of Diyarbakir on Nov. 4, amid a wave of detentions that targeted senior politicians of the Kurdish issue-focused Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). In October, the DBP co-mayors of Diyarbakir, the largest city in the southeast, were arrested and jailed pending trial on terrorism charges. ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Hungarian Economic Model Successful: PM

BUDAPEST - Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban said on Monday the Hungarian economic model was a success.

Speaking on public radio, Viktor Orban said the minimum wage could be increased significantly and corporate taxes reduced.

The government was in negotiations with the private sector to increase the minimum wage of unskilled workers by 15 percent and the minimum wage for skilled jobs by 25 percent.

The current minimum wage is 111,000 forints per month (about 382 dollars) and the higher minimum is 128,000 forints.

Orban also spoke of reducing the corporate taxes to nine percent, which would make it the lowest tax in the region and hopefully attract international businesses.

He said the wage hikes and tax reductions were part of a six ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

Britain's Royal Navy has 'Woefully Low' Number of Warships, Warns MP

LONDON - Britain is at risk of not having the naval maritime strength to deal with threats the country faces right now, the chairman of a parliamentary committee warned Monday.

The House of Commons Defense Committee Report said the Ministry of Defense (MoD) had yet to explain how it would replace its 13 ageing frigates, due to leave service at the rate of one per year between 2023 and 2035, whilst maintaining even the "woefully low" number of operational vessels currently available and the skilled workforce to renew them. The chairman of ...*(More on P4)...(26)*

Obama 'not Optimistic' about Syria's Future

WASHINGTON - US President Barack Obama is "not optimistic" about Syria's future and said the chaos could persist for "quite some time" as the United Nations warned that time was running out to avoid a humanitarian catastrophe in the city of Aleppo, which has been pounded by air strikes for nearly a week.

Obama, who will be succeeded on January 20 by Donald Trump, said that he told Russian President Vladimir Putin on the sidelines of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation summit in Peru that he was deeply concerned about the bloodshed in Syria and that a ceasefire



was needed. He warned that Syria's second city was likely to fall, and that Russian and Iranian backing for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad had made the situation untenable for the opposition. Syria: 'All Aleppo hospitals destroyed' "I am not optimistic about the short-term prospects in

Syria," he said at a summit of Pacific leaders in Lima. "Once Russia and Iran made a decision to back Assad and a brutal air campaign and essentially a pacification of Aleppo regardless of civilian casualties, children being killed or wounded, schools or hospitals being destroyed, ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Merkel's Center-Left Rivals Face Pressure to Name Challenger

BERLIN - Germany's main center-left party pushed back Monday against pressure to decide quickly on a challenger to Angela Merkel in next year's election after the chancellor announced she will seek a fourth term, insisting that it will wait until January. The Social Democrats lost the chancellorship to the conservative Merkel in 2005 and currently serve as her junior partners in a "grand coalition" of Germany's two biggest parties.

Party leader Sigmar Gabriel, who is also Merkel's vice chancellor and economy minister, has yet to decide whether to run. European Parliament President Martin Schulz is also considered a strong possible contender. Whoever takes on the task faces an uphill struggle to dislodge Merkel, who said Sunday she would seek another four-year term. The Social Democrats trail Merkel's Union bloc by 10 percentage points ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

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Parliamentary Election Held in Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - Some 90.27 percent of people cast their votes in some constituencies of Turkmenistan during the parliamentary election held Nov. 20 in the country, the Central Election Commission of Turkmenistan said in a message on Monday.

The parliamentary election was held at the constituencies in Akhal and Mary regions of Turkmenistan.

"Several candidates have been registered for one MP seat," the message said. "The election was

held in accordance with the principles of democracy and transparency."

As many as 75,568 voters were registered to take part in the parliamentary election in three constituencies of Turkmenistan. The Central Commission for Election and Referendums in Turkmenistan reported that the final results of the voting will be released soon.

In accordance with the constitution of Turkmenistan, the country's parliament adopts laws, makes changes and ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

Pakistan Army Chief to Retire on Schedule: Military

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan Army Chief General Raheel Sharif, who is due to retire on Nov. 29, started his farewell visits in the country on Monday.

"Chief of the Army Staff kicks off his farewell visits beginning from Lahore today," army spokesman Lt Gen. Asim Bajwa said. Raheel, who was appointed the army chief on Nov. 29, 2013, addressed a huge gathering of Army and the paramilitary Rangers troops while on

his farewell visit to Lahore Garrison. "Thanking all ranks of the Army and Rangers for their services under his command," he said, adding that it was a matter of great pride for him to have commanded the finest army in the world. Calling the accomplishment of peace and stability no ordinary task, he said "it was our sacrifices and joint national resolve that helped us in off-setting all odds ...*(More on P4)...(29)*

Iran Keen on Offshore Energy Projects in Europe, Africa

TEHRAN - Iran said Monday it is ready to participate in offshore energy projects in the European and African countries, reported the semi-official Fars news agency.

"Iran is planning to cooperate with foreign companies by exporting technical and engineering services as well as participating in joint projects abroad," said Abolqasem Rahmani, Managing Director of Iran's Off-

shore Engineering and Construction Company (IOEC).

The IOEC already signed agreements with a Dutch company to exchange equipment for such projects, added Rahmani. "Iran possesses unrivaled equipment and experience in offshore projects in the region, and the country is quite capable of exporting such services to other countries," he added. (Xinhua)

Malaysia Willing to Deepen Cooperation with China in Various Fields: Deputy PM

KUALA LUMPUR - Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said on Monday that Malaysia is willing to deepen cooperation with China in various fields, including military cooperation.

Zahid, also home minister of the country, made the remarks here when meeting with Fang Fenghui, a member of China's Central Military Commission (CMC) and chief of the Joint Staff Department under the CMC.

Highlighting Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak's recent visit to China, Zahid said the in-depth exchanges between the leaders of the two countries have yielded fruitful results.

Malaysia stands ready to push for the continuous development of the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries, he stressed.

Fang, for his part, said the Chinese leadership attaches great importance to China-Malaysia relations. "The two militaries have made great progress in friendly exchanges and pragmatic cooperation in recent years," he said.

Fang called on both sides to earnestly implement the important consensus reached by their leaders on bilateral ties and relations between the two militaries, consolidate traditional friendship, cement trust, enhance exchanges and collaboration so as to promote the sound and stable development of their military ties.

On Monday, the senior Chinese military official also met with Malaysia Defense Minister His-hammuddin Hussein and held talks with Zulkifeli Bin Mohd Zin, chief of the Malaysian defense force. (Xinhua)

Uzbekistan, Novosibirsk Region Set to Develop Textile Cooperation

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan has established trade cooperation with Novosibirsk region in development of textile industry, said head of Bukhara region.

According to him, the agreement has been reached during the working meeting of the delegation of Novosibirsk region with the Uzbek side, reported adv.ru. The businesses circles of Novosibirsk region and Uzbekistan discussed preliminary agreements that may be signed in the

near future. Uzbekistan is one of the main trade partners of Russia among the Central Asian region. The country is on the 4th place among the CIS countries on the mutual trade with Russia. In terms of import, Russia remains the number one country for Uzbekistan with the share of 21.1%. Russia imports from Uzbekistan mainly textile products, food, vehicles, equipment, agricultural products, metals and etc. (AKIpress)