

# Germany, France Jointly Call for EU Asylum Process Overhaul

ROME - Just days after Italy, Germany and France locked horns over the way the European Union was handling the growing migrant crisis, the three countries joined together to call for a major overhaul of the asylum process for the 28-nation bloc. Italian Minister of Foreign Affairs Paolo Gentiloni announced the new development this week, and was cast by some analysts as an indication that Italy - the country most impacted by the migrant crisis over recent years - was helping to set the European agenda in this area. In a jointly written letter signed by Gentiloni



loni along with his German counterpart Frank-Walter Steinmeier and France's Laurent Fabius, the three ministers cast a new light on what they called the "shortcomings" of the existing European Union

asylum system. Gentiloni, Steinmeier and Fabius also said all European countries should share the burden of accommodating the refugees in a "fair" way. The European Union's current asylum rules date to 1990, and they obligate the country where a refugee arrives to register, process, and determine the validity of the asylum request for the new arrival. Each country's asylum rules could differ from those of its neighbors. That put an extra burden on southern European countries like Italy and Greece, which are close to North...

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## Germany can Cope with Refugees without Raising Taxes : Merkel

BERLIN - Germany can cope with a record influx of refugees this year without raising taxes and without jeopardizing its balanced budget, Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Saturday. With relatively liberal asylum laws and generous benefits, Germany is the European Union's biggest recipient of refugees fleeing war in the Middle East and economic migrants from southeastern Europe. More than 100,000 asylum seekers entered in August, and the about 800,000 refugees and migrants are expected in Germany in total this year - four times last year's level. In light of the



influx, the government plans to introduce a supplementary budget to free up funds for the refugees and to help towns on the frontline that are already struggling to fund accom-

modation and medical care for the new arrivals. "We cannot just say 'Because we have a difficult task now, the balanced budget or the issue of debt are no longer important,'"

Merkel said in her weekly video podcast. In an interview with local newspapers, Merkel promised that Berlin would not raise taxes because of the refugee crisis. (Reuters)

## Italian President Calls for Shared EU Asylum Policy

CERNOBBIO - Italian President Sergio Mattarella called on Saturday for shared asylum rules in the European Union, saying thousands of migrants approaching Europe should not be seen as enemies. Speaking via video link to a conference in northern Italy, Mattarella said he was hopeful the bloc was finally on the road to common rules, after Germany and France joined Italy last week in urging the EU to take a more centrally coordinated approach. "The choice is not between surrendering to an invasion and the supposed defense of 'Fortress Europe,'" said Mattarella, whose role is largely ceremonial but takes on important

powers in times of political instability. Mattarella said the Dublin Regulation, which requires people seeking refuge in Europe to do so in the first country where they set foot, should be replaced with shared, updated rules in order to spread the burden more fairly. "The choice is between a Europe that decides its own destiny and a Europe that doesn't know how to manage events," he said.

Italy, whose southern island of Lampedusa is just 70 miles (112.65 km) from Tunisia in North Africa from where many migrants come, has long called for more support in handling migrants seeking a better life in Europe. (Reuters)

## Iran Parliament to Make Final Decision on JCPOA

TEHRAN - Iran's Parliament (Majlis) Speaker Ali Larijani says the lawmakers are set to take their final decision about the nuclear agreement between Iran and P5+1 group of countries in the coming weeks. Larijani said on Saturday that a 15-member ad hoc committee, which has been set up through lawmakers' vote, is still reviewing the nuclear agreement, dubbed the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). Given the multi-layered nature of the JCPOA, relevant Majlis committees, including the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, are also discussing various aspects of the agreement, he added. The Iranian Parliament on August 19 appointed 15 lawmakers as members of an ad hoc committee tasked with reviewing the Vienna nuclear agreement. The decision

to form the committee was made after Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif attended a Majlis session one week after the conclusion of the agreement on July 21 to hand over a copy of the JCPOA and brief the lawmakers on it. Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on Thursday insisted that the Majlis be involved in the examination of the JCPOA. "I have no recommendation for the Majlis regarding the manner of the review or whether they should ratify or reject it. It is the representatives of the nation who should decide," said Ayatollah Khamenei. On July 14, Iran and the P5+1 countries - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia plus Germany - finalized the text of the JCPOA in the Austrian capital of Vienna. (PressTV)

## US, S. Arabia to Continue Security Cooperation in Middle East

WASHINGTON - The U.S. and Saudi Arabia will continue security cooperations in the Middle East, "in particular to counter Iran's destabilizing activities," the White House said Friday. "The two parties affirmed the need to continue efforts to maintain security, prosperity and stability in the region and in particular to counter Iran's destabilizing activities," accord-

ing to a joint statement on the meeting between President Barack Obama and King Salman bin Abdul Aziz of Saudi Arabia. "In this regard, King Salman expressed his support for the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) between Iran and the P5+1 countries, which once fully implemented will prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and thereby en-

## Clinton Refuses to Apologize for Using Private Email System

WASHINGTON - Hillary Clinton on Friday refused to apologize for using a private email account and server, but said she was sorry for causing confusion among the voters. When asked by MSNBC anchor Andrea Mitchell whether she was sorry for exclusively using her private email account and server rather than a State Department email account while helping the agency, Clinton insisted she had done nothing wrong. "It was allowed and it was fully above board. The people in the government knew that I was us-

ing a personal account," Clinton said. However, Clinton said it would have been better if she had two accounts and she took responsibility for her choice. "I certainly wish that I had made a different choice and I know why the American people have questions about it," she said. The controversy around Clinton's emailing practice burst into public view earlier August after the inspector general for the U.S. intelligence community revealed that two of the thousands of emails held by ... (More on P4)...(21)

## Truce Upheld for First Time in Eastern Ukraine: President



KIEV - Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said Saturday that the Western-backed truce signed in Minsk in February had been respected this week for the first time, despite pro-Russian rebels claiming a civilian had been killed. "I have some good news. There has been no shooting on the front for a week," Poroshenko said in televised remarks. "This is the first week that the Minsk agreements are being implemented." Poroshenko added that soldiers were still perishing in the conflict zone by stepping on landmines or in car crashes, but that none had died in battle. On Friday, a Ukrainian soldier was killed in the blast of an "unknown explosive device" in the Lugansk area, one of the two eastern regions controlled by pro-Russian rebels. In a fresh bid to end the violence, the Ukrainian government and representatives of Moscow-backed separatists last week agreed to strive to end all ceasefire violations starting on Tuesday. The Western-brokered ceasefire agreed in February had been punctuated by deadly incidents on an almost daily basis. But the truce was nonetheless undermined on Wednesday when two civilians were killed and four soldiers wounded in an ambush while taking part in an anti-smuggling operation. Self-proclaimed separatist authorities announced Saturday that a civilian near the rebel stronghold of Donetsk had been killed by shots fired by the Ukrainian army. (AFP)

## British PM Visits Madrid to Discuss Refugee Crisis



MADRID - British Prime Minister David Cameron visited Spain on Friday to discuss with his Spanish counterpart Mariano Rajoy the current refugee crisis in Europe. Both Cameron and Rajoy have shown themselves to be opposed to their respective nationals accepting more refugees from the Syrian conflict, despite the traumatic images of their struggles to reach Europe. Rajoy told a press conference Friday afternoon that in the meeting he and Cameron had discussed economic matters, tourism, EU reform and international issues, as well as the question of migration. Rajoy failed to give a commitment to take any new asylum seekers. "Asylum requests this year are triple than they were last year," he said, adding that the quota issue will be reas-

sessed later this month.... Spain is constantly giving asylum to people...and we are going to meet our commitments." Cameron was more forthcoming over what Britain would do: "given the scale of the crisis and the suffering of the people, today I can announce that we will do more, providing resettlement for thousands more Syrian refugees," he said. The British prime minister said his country would "provide a further 100 million pounds (151.7 million U.S. dollars)" in aid, of which 60 million pounds (91 million dollars) of this funding will be used to help Syrians still in Syria. "The rest will go to neighboring countries, to Turkey, Jordan and Lebanon, where Syrian refugees now account for one quarter of the population," Cameron said. (Xinhua)

## Neighbour News

### Iran Starts Aerial Drill to Boost Defense Capabilities

TEHRAN - Iran's air force kicked off a massive aerial exercise in the country's central province of Isfahan on Saturday to boost defensive capabilities. In the two-day drill, various types of interceptor fighter jets, bombers, military transport aircraft, communication and reconnaissance planes, tanker aircraft and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) will participate, spokesman for the war game, General Roozkhosh, was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency. A whole range of home-grown missiles and bombs will also be used in the war game, including smart heavy and semi-heavy bombs, as well as laser and radar-guided missiles, Roozkhosh said. The Iranian air force will conduct reconnaissance and data transfer missions, strike air and ground targets

and practice civil defense tactics, according to Press TV report on Saturday. The drill, which will be carried out in three phases over an area of 400,000 square kilometers, aims to improve commanders' skills, upgrade systems, test different defense achievements and demonstrate the military prowess of the country. On Friday, Iran's Air Force Commander Brigadier General Farzad Esmaili said his country keeps a close watch on the enemy's aerial threats in distances as far as 3,000 kilometers outside the country's borders. Iran's "defense line" is not confined to the geographical borders, and thanks to the home-grown air defense gear, Iran's air defense can detect the "enemy's breath" in distances above 3,000 km, Esmaili was quoted as saying by Tasnim. (Xinhua)

### China Ratifies WTO's Trade Facilitation Agreement

BEIJING - China has ratified the protocol of World Trade Organization's (WTO's) Trade Facilitation Agreement (TFA), the Ministry of Commerce said in a statement on Friday. China became the 13th member formally accepting the protocol on Sept. 4 when Yu Jianhua, China's ambassador to the WTO, submitted an instrument of acceptance to Director-General Roberto Azevedo, according to the statement. The Trade Facilitation Agreement will enter into force once two-thirds of the WTO members have completed their domestic ratification process. China called on

the other members to pick up speed in adopting the protocol in order to facilitate international trade and lower the trade cost. Concluded at the WTO's 2013 Bali Ministerial Conference, the TFA contains provisions for expediting the movement, release and clearance of goods, including goods in transit. It also sets out measures for effective cooperation between customs and other appropriate authorities on trade facilitation and customs compliance issues. It further contains provisions for technical assistance and capacity building in this area. (Xinhua)

### Pakistan Spends \$1.9bn on Major Anti-Taliban Offensive

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan has spent 1.9 billion U.S. dollars so far on the major operation against the militants in North Waziristan tribal region, officials said on Friday. The comments came a day after a parliamentary committee was informed that more than 3,500 terrorists have been killed and nearly 300 security personnel have lost lives during the operation launched in June last year. The Pakistani Taliban, other Pakistani armed groups and foreign militants had turned North Waziristan as their major operational base for attacks in Pakistan and also across the border into Afghanistan. The army backed by fighter jets has almost cleared the region of the Taliban and foreign mili-

tants during the operation codenamed "Zarb-e-Azb." The operation is now in its final phase as troops are now battling the fleeing militants in the rugged mountains. Pakistani Foreign Ministry spokesman Qazi Khalilullah said that the government has spent 1.9 billion dollars from the country's own resources. He described the operation as a success and said Pakistan is also sharing the "impact of the operation with the Afghan side during bilateral meetings." Afghanistan had also been calling for the operation in North Waziristan as it insisted that members of the Haqqani Network were hiding there. On Afghanistan, the spokesman Pakistan secu... (More on P4)...(23)

### Tajikistan, China Sign Currency Swap Deal

DUSHANBE - Tajikistan's central bank said Friday that it had signed a currency swap agreement worth about 3.2 billion yuan (500 million U.S. dollars) with China's central bank. The agreement was signed here Thursday during a meeting between Jamshed Nurmahmadzoda, chairman of the National Bank of Tajikistan (NBT) and Zhou Xiaochuan, governor of the People's Bank of China (PBOC). The deal lasts for three years, and can be extended upon agreement by both

sides, the NBT said in a statement on its website. The agreement, said the NBT, aims to support the balance of international payments, the exchange rate of the national currency, enhancement of energy, agrarian mining sectors and development of small and medium-sized enterprises in Tajikistan. To promote international use of the yuan, China has signed currency swap agreements with more than 20 countries and regions since the onset of the global financial crisis in late 2008. (Xinhua)