

Hitler's Germany Exemplifies Effective Presidential System: Erdogan

ISTANBUL - Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan, who is pushing for executive powers, cites Hitler's Germany as an example of an effective presidential system, in comments broadcast by Turkish media on Friday. Erdogan wants to change the Turkish constitution to turn the ceremonial role of president into that of a chief executive, a Turkish version of the system in the United States, France or Russia. Asked on his return from a visit to Saudi Arabia late on Thursday whether an executive presidential system was possible while maintaining the



unitary structure of the state, he said: "There are already examples in

the world. You can see it when you look at Hitler's Germany. "There are

later examples in various other countries," he told reporters, according to a

recording broadcast by the Dogan news agency. The ruling AK Party,

founded by Erdogan, has put a new constitution at the heart of its agenda after winning back a majority in a November parliamentary election.

It agreed with the main opposition CHP on Wednesday to revive efforts to forge a new constitution. Opposition parties agree on the need to change the constitution, drawn up after a 1980 coup and still bearing the stamp of its military authors, but do not back the presidential system envisaged by Erdogan, fearing it will consolidate too much power in the hands of an authoritarian leader. (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

China Releases Guideline on Military Reform



BEIJING - The Central Military Commission (CMC) has released a guideline on deepening national defense and military reform, about a month after CMC Chairman Xi Jinping called on a military administration and command system overhaul at a key meeting.

According to the guideline, a new structure will be established in which the CMC takes charge of the overall administration of the People's Liberation Army, the Chinese People's Armed Police and the militia and reserve forces, battle zone commands focus on combat preparedness, and various military services pursue development. The overall goal is to achieve progress and concrete results before 2020 in military ad-

ministration and joint operational command, optimizing military structure, enhancing policy systems and civilian-military integration, and building a modern military with Chinese characteristics that can win information age wars.

While 2015 was mainly devoted to the implementation of leadership management and joint operational command reform, the guideline said 2016 will see military cuts, improved combatant personnel and reform of military academies and armed police forces.

The reform will include cutting troops from 2.3 million to 2 million, phasing out outdated armaments, developing new weapons systems and reducing the size of the militia. (Xinhua)

British PM Fighting to Fix EU Frustration in 2016

LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron pledged Friday to fight hard in 2016 to resolve "annoying" features of Britain's relationship with the EU ahead of a planned referendum that could come this year. Cameron said aspects of being in the European Union were the cause of "so much frustration" in Britain -- but ultimately voters would decide whether the country remains in the bloc. He is attempting to rene-

gotiate the terms of Britain's membership, ahead of an in-or-out referendum which must happen by the end of 2017.

No date has been set for the vote, though newspapers and political commentators have speculated that it could well come in 2016. "It's a New Year, and Britain begins it with renewed strength. With a lower deficit and enterprise flourishing, our economy is becoming more secure by the day," Cameron said. "I



am negotiating hard to fix things that most annoy British people about our relationship with the EU," he said in his New Year message. "It is a difficult negotiation with 27 other

countries. But throughout we are driven by one consideration: what is best for Britain's economic and national security. "In the end, you will decide ... (More on P4)...(23)

Ukraine, EU Launch Free Trade Deal

KIEV - A Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) between Ukraine and the European Union (EU) was officially launched Friday after four years of preparation. "The free trade agreement with EU launched! My greetings on the start of Ukraine's economic integration into the European Union," Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko said on his Facebook page. With a ten-year transition period, the DCFTA covers a range of economic sectors such

as agriculture, heavy industry, machine building and light industry, and would gradually remove custom tariffs on over 90 percent of goods traded between Ukraine and the EU. According to the Ukrainian government, the free trade area with the EU would boost Ukraine's annual economic growth by at least 0.6 percent, promote exports by 2-3 percent each year, and create up to 190,000 new jobs. The free trade deal between Ukraine and ... (More on P4)...(24)

Saudi Beheadings Soar in 2015 Under Discretionary Rulings

DUBAI - Saudi Arabia carried out at least 157 executions in 2015, with beheadings reaching their highest level in the kingdom in two decades, according to several advocacy groups that monitor the death penalty worldwide. Coinciding with the rise in executions is the number of people executed for non-lethal offenses that judges have wide discretion to rule on, particularly for drug-related crimes. Rights group Amnesty International said in November that at least 63

people had been executed since the start of the year for drug-related offenses. That figure made for at least 40 percent of the total number of executions in 2015, compared to less than four percent for drug-related executions in 2010. Amnesty said Saudi Arabia had exceeded its highest level of executions since 1995, when 192 executions were recorded. But while most crimes, such as premeditated murder, may carry fixed punishments under Saudi ... (More on P4)...(25)

Ukraine Defaulted on \$3 Billion Eurobond: Russia

MOSCOW - Russia will file a lawsuit against Ukraine after Kiev failed to repay a \$3 billion Eurobond and \$75 million of interest by Dec. 31, the Russian finance ministry said late on Thursday.

The decision was expected as Russia has repeatedly said it would regard non-payment as a default and file a lawsuit. The Eurobond was issued by the government of former President Viktor Yanukovich in late 2013 and bought by Russia in its entirety. "A corresponding lawsuit will be

filed in an English court in compliance with the established procedures," the ministry said on its website.

Ukraine's Prime Minister Arseny Yatseniuk had repeatedly said that Ukraine would not repay the Eurobond at maturity on Dec. 20 and that Kiev was ready to fight the issue in court.

A grace period for repayment expired on Thursday.

The bond was issued just two months before Yanukovich fled in the face of bloody street protests



triggered by his seeking to halt Ukraine's swing toward European integration in favor of closer economic ties with Russia.

Ukraine, which has separately reached an agree-

ment with private creditors to restructure its sovereign and sovereign-guaranteed debt, insists the Eurobond is commercial debt and that it cannot ... (More on P4)...(26)

980 Killed in Iraq Violence in December: UN

BAGHDAD - Violence has claimed the lives of 980 Iraqis in December, up from 888 the previous month, the United Nations said on Friday. The U.N. Assistance Mission for Iraq, known as UNAMI, said in a statement that 506 of those killed in December were civilians, while the rest were security forces, including Kurdish peshmerga and paramilitary troops. It added that 1,244 civilians were wounded in December. The worst-affected province was Baghdad with 261 killed, followed by Ninevah province ... (More on P4)...(27)

Al-Qaida Gunmen Kill 3 Pro-Gov't Soldiers in Yemen

ADEN - About three pro-government soldiers were killed and three others injured when suspected al-Qaida gunmen attacked a checkpoint in Yemen's southern province of Abyan on Friday, a military official told Xinhua. The military official said that scores of al-Qaida gunmen launched an armed attack on pro-government soldiers positioned at a checkpoint in the entrance of Ahwar area in southern Abyan province, former al-Qaida main stronghold. "But, the attack was successfully foiled and about three soldiers were killed and three others injured," the local military official said on condition of anonymity. Yemen, an impoverished Arab country, has been gripped by one of the most active regional al-Qaida insurgencies in the Middle East and the affiliate of the Islamic State. Security situation in the country has deteriorated since March when war broke out between the Shiite Houthi group, supported by former President Ali Abdullah Saleh, and the government backed by a Saudi-led Arab coalition. More than 6,000 people have been killed in ground battles and air strikes since then, half of them civilians. (Xinhua)

U.S.-Backed Alliance Advances Against IS in Syria's North: Spokesman

BEIRUT - A U.S.-backed alliance of Syrian Kurdish and Arab fighters advanced against Islamist insurgents in the north of the country on Friday, capturing at least one village in Aleppo province, a spokesman and a monitoring group said.

Fighters from the Democratic Forces of Syria seized the village of Tanab near the town of Azaz after heavy clashes with the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front and the powerful Ahrar al Sham, spokesman Talal Selo told Reuters. "We liberated Tanab," he said.



Britain-based monitoring group the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the Democratic Forces of Syria had also captured the village of Tat Mrash. Selo said he could not yet confirm its capture. It came just days

after the alliance seized a dam from Islamic State further east, cutting one of its main supply routes across the Euphrates. Since the U.S.-backed alliance was formed last October, its fighters have ... (More on P4)...(28)

Boko Haram Plans to use Beggars for Attacks in Nigeria: Military

LAGOS - The Nigerian Army on Friday alerted residents of restive northeast Borno State on a planned attack by Boko Haram terrorists using beggars and other strategies. Spokesperson for the military special operation against insurgency, Col. Mustapha Anka, made this known in a statement reaching Xinhua in Maiduguri, the state capital. Under the plan, concealed explosives in bundles of firewood are to be placed in crowded and strategic areas of Maiduguri and envi-

rons to cause havoc, Anka said. According to him, the terrorists had also devised a new means of attracting the public by shouting Boko Haram to create panic. He said the general public should be weary of a terrorists plan to deceive the public by way of shouting Boko Haram to create panic in order to lure unsuspecting public for maximum casualty while detonating their bombs during and after the new year celebrations. Anka reminded the public to be ... (More on P4)...(29)

Germany Welcomes New Year with Hope Amid Refugee Crisis

BERLIN - The crowd counted down, and then the fireworks lit up the sky over Brandenburg Gate during the celebration for the New Year in Berlin. The famous countdown to midnight, the live music, and the huge fireworks display once again attracted hundreds of thousands of guests from around the world to Berlin's best-known landmark on the last night of 2015. "Personally, I think 2015 is a beautiful year," said Matthias, a tourist from Munich, when looking back at the past year.

"From a social point of view, 2015 is for me a very defining year, which began with the German Wings crash, the refugee debate and the attacks in Paris, that the seemingly perfect world in Europe is not infallible, and besides, very vulnerable," he added.

German Chancellor Angela Merkel once called 2015 a "turbulent and very difficult year" for Europe. The number of refugees registered in Germany officially reached one million three weeks before the end of 2015. "Refugees" was also named the word of this year in the German language.

"I wish that they could learn the German language well to be socially integrated in this country as soon as possible," said a German-Chinese Yu Hongping from Berlin, who also admitted that he felt concerned when many refugees were sheltered in the district where he has lived for a decade. (Xinhua)

Iran to Stand by Iraq, Syria in Anti-Terror Fight: Official



TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official has reiterated the Islamic Republic's support for Syria and Iraq in their fight against terrorism, stressing that there is "no military solution" to the ongoing crises gripping the two Arab countries.

In an exclusive interview with PressTV, Ali Akbar Velayati, a senior adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei, said Iran will continue to stand by Syria and Iraq in their anti-terror battles at the behest of the governments in Baghdad and Damascus. "The security of [the]

region is the security of Iran," said Velayati, adding, "If Iraq or Syria or any other neighboring country is in danger..., we should not remain indifferent. So...on the base of the request of the legal governments of Baghdad and Damascus, we have tried to help these two governments to fight against terrorism." Referring to the international talks on the crisis in Syria, Velayati said the Islamic Republic only supports intra-Syrian dialogue aimed at ending the violence in the Arab state, rejecting any negotiations with terror groups. (PressTV)