

UNGA to Hold High-Level Session on Countering World Drugs Problem

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) will convene a special session on fighting world drug problem next week, reviewing global progress and challenges.

The high-level session will be held at the UN headquarters in New York from April 19-21. Several heads of state and more than 40 ministers from around the world are expected to attend, said Dan Thomas, spokesman of the presi-



dent of the UN General Assembly, at a press conference here Friday.

"The session will review progress and discuss challenges in countering

the world drug problem and in implementing the 2009 Political Declaration

and Plan of Action on International Cooperation towards an Integrated and Balanced Strategy to Counter the World Drug Problem," said Thomas. The event will consist of a plenary meeting and five multi-stakeholder roundtables. Discussions will be focused on topics including drugs and health, drugs and crime, drugs and human rights, youth, women, children and communities, prevention of drug problems, as well as develop-

ment-oriented, balanced drug control policy and cooperation. A number of other smaller activities, organized by governments and organizations, will also be held during the event. Two important milestones in addressing the world drug problem are the Political Declarations adopted by UN member states in 1998 and in 2009. The latter defines actions to be taken by member states as well as goals to be achieved by 2019. (Xinhua)

Spanish Minister Resigns After Links to Offshore Deals Alleged

MILAN - Spain's acting Industry Minister Jose Manuel Soria resigned on Friday following allegations of links to offshore dealings which emerged after he was named in the Panama Papers.

Soria, who denied all wrongdoing, said he was stepping down to limit any damage to the caretaker government, the conservative People's Party (PP), following reports of alleged links to an offshore company on the British island of Jersey.

Broadcaster La Sexta and news website El Confiden-

cial said they had documents showing he headed an offshore firm with his brother.

The government said acting Economy Minister Luis de Guindos would take on the Industry Minister's brief alongside his current responsibilities.

Soria's resignation comes as Spain faces the likelihood of a second general election in June after a December ballot ended inconclusively. Latest polls have shown the PP gaining ground, despite a string of corruption scandals...

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German DM Europe on Right Path to Manage Security Challenges

BRATISLAVA - Europe is on the right path towards addressing the arduous security challenges it faces, German Defence Minister (DM) Ursula von der Leyen said here on Friday. "This is the pivotal lesson from the common European history and our common European spirit. We should not choose between security and humanity in times of the most difficult challenges, but we should pick a path that merges both of these aspects," said von der

German DM



Leyen at the GLOBSEC 2016 international security conference in Bratislava. European countries demonstrate it in various forms of cooperation in

international organiza-

tions or special coalitions, for example, when fighting the Islamic State (IS) in Syria and Iraq and when searching for political so-

lutions to conflicts.

"The fate of the Middle East is closely linked to our destiny as well. The migration crisis attests to this fact every day," emphasised von der Leyen. The number of refugees searching for a safe haven in Europe is comparable to the number of refugees in Europe after WWII.

"Then as well as now refugees are coming here for just one reason - the basic desire of a human for freedom, peace and security," ... (More on P4)...(23)

Turkish, Iranian Presidents Vow to Boost Ties After Lifting of Sanctions on Tehran

ANKARA - Turkey and Iran on Saturday pledged to boost ties after the lifting of most international sanctions on Tehran, as the presidents of both countries chaired a strategic cooperation council aimed at improving bilateral relationship.

"Our trade volume had previously been 22 billion U.S. dollars, but decreased to 10 billion after sanctions. Now we aim to make it 30 billion. We have agreed to mutually increase our invest-

ments," Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said at a joint press conference with visiting Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in the Turkish capital of Ankara.

The Iranian president joined the third meeting of the Council on High-Level Cooperation between Turkey and Iran in Ankara on Saturday after attending the summit of Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in the Turkish port city of Istanbul on Thursday and Friday.



The Turkish president said they would boost relations despite having differences

on the Syrian crisis. "Our countries should make efforts ... (More on P4)...(24)

Armed Man Opens Fire Inside Mall in Istanbul

ISTANBUL - An armed man opened fire in a crowded shopping mall here on Saturday and wounded one person, Turkish media reported. The Hurriyet daily reported that a retired security official fired at his son-in-law in the Metroport shopping mall in the district of Bahcelievler and severely injured him.

The gunfire erupted after the son-in-law told his father-in-law that he was planning to terminate his marriage with his

daughter, Hurriyet said. The security forces have closed the entrances and exits to the mall, while the incident sparked concerns among the Istanbulites as words spread over the social media claiming "panic at the mall, gunfire heard." Istanbul has been on heightened alert over the possibility of more terror attacks, as the metropolis and Ankara, the national capital, have come under a series of bombing attacks in recent months. (Xinhua)

Merkel Criticized, Lauded for Allowing Comic's Prosecution

BERLIN - Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision to allow the possible prosecution of a TV comic for writing an intentionally offensive poem about Turkey's president prompted mixed reactions in Germany on Saturday.

Some commentators praised the move as a vote of confidence in the country's justice system while others accused Merkel of kowtowing to Turkey, whose president had filed a legal complaint against

the comic.

In the unusual move, Merkel called a short-notice news conference Friday to personally announce that her government had granted Turkey's request to let prosecutors examine a criminal complaint against the comic for writing an intentionally offensive poem about Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Under German law, the government has to grant permission before ... (More on P4)...(26)

Battle Goes on After Constitutional Reform Passes in Parliament of Italy

ROME - After the Italian parliament gave its final green light to a key constitutional reform earlier this week, political reactions dominated Italy's domestic debate across the entire party spectrum. The approval of the reform was seen as a clear boost for Prime Minister Matteo Renzi and his center-left cabinet in the immediate aftermath of the vote.

The constitutional bill was at the core of Renzi's agenda since he was appointed prime minister in February 2014.

Its passage through the parliament after almost two years of work, and sixth consecutive readings in both chambers, would benefit the Renzi's political stature and the perception of his ability to

deliver promised reforms, according to some media analysts.

Yet, opposition parties and civil society groups that campaigned against the reform were already preparing for a national referendum through which the constitutional overhaul must be confirmed or rejected by voters.

According to the cabinet, the reform would streamline Italy's law-making process, by demoting the senate and putting an end to the current "perfect bicameralism" system.

Adding to a new electoral law that grants a majority premium to the winner party, it would also allow more political stability to the country and strengthen the government's action, ... (More on P4)...(28)

Battle Over Obama Immigration Actions Lands Before Supreme Court

WASHINGTON - The impassioned election-year debate over President Obama's immigration executive actions lands Monday before a short-handed Supreme Court, where justices will consider a fundamental question: how much power does the president truly have?

The justices plan to hold 90 minutes of oral arguments dealing with Obama's bid to spare millions of illegal immigrants from deportation.

A coalition of states calls it an executive power grab. "President Obama's executive action is an affront to

our system of republican self-government," said Sen. Orrin Hatch, R-Utah, who supports those states. But the White House contends the president's authority is clear, and the policies humane and reasonable. Obama has promoted his program as a plan to "prioritize deporting felons not families."

It's a case that will be closely watched in an election season where Republican front-runner Donald Trump has made immigration enforcement a centerpiece of his campaign. The outcome also could have considerable bearing on Obama's legacy,



potentially determining whether his lame-duck bid to go around Congress is upheld or ruled an over-reach.

At issue Monday is whether as many as 5 million illegal immigrants can be spared deportation - including those who

entered the U.S. as children, and the parents of citizens or legal residents. The programs - known as Deferred Action for Parents of American Citizens and Permanent Residents (DAPA) and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals ... (More on P4)...(27)

EU Might Extend Support to Farmers Hit By Russian Ban: Commissioner

BRUSSELS - The European Commission will consider taking additional measures to support farmers hit hard by a Russian ban on Western food imports, said EU agriculture commissioner Phil Hogan weeks after the bloc announced a new support package for farmers hit by the Russian ban.

"We will continue to monitor the situation and introduce additional measures if necessary," said Hogan earlier this month in an interview with Xinhua. "I am prepared to use all

possible tools available within the financial constraints and the tight legislative framework we operate to support farmers," said the commissioner.

The focus of the support package introduced in March was on the dairy, pig meat, fruit and vegetable sectors.

It included measures such as placing products into storage to reduce surplus supply, allowing producers to freeze milk production, relaxing EU limits on state subsidies and doubling intervention ceilings for ... (More on P4)...(29)

Most Americans Say Rich People Do Not Pay Enough in Taxes: Gallup

WASHINGTON - Six in 10 Americans believe that wealthy Americans pay too little in taxes, according to a Gallup poll released Friday.

The April 6-10 poll was conducted during a presidential election year in which taxes have been a major area of focus for the candidates.

Americans' attitudes on whether upper-income Americans pay too little in taxes are split along political lines. Three-quarters of Democrats say the rich pay too little, compared with less than half of Re-

publicans, Gallup found. Americans are generally on board - as they consistently have been in recent decades - with the concept that wealth and income should be distributed more equally in the United States. Americans also tend to agree that upper-income Americans pay too little in taxes and that the rich should be more heavily taxed in order to achieve a more even distribution of wealth.

These attitudes are divided along partisan lines, with wide gaps in opinion ... (More on P4)...(30)

Neighbor News

EU to Open Office in Iran to Promote Ties

TEHRAN - Iran and the European Union (EU) agreed here on Saturday to promote ties by opening an EU office in Tehran in the future, the state IRIB TV reported.

The consultations were made in Tehran for future cooperation of Iran and the EU in a number of areas ranging from economy, environment to regional issues, migration and human rights.

The announcement was made after the meeting of the visiting EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini and Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Saturday.

"We believe that the cooperation between Iran and the EU could help the development of the country and promote peace in

the region," Zarif said in a joint press conference with Mogherini.

He said that the mutual political and economic interests are tied to the nuclear agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, adding that the two sides will boost cooperation to remove the remaining obstacles on the way of its full implementation.

Zarif urged the United States to eliminate what he called the barriers to the banking and financial cooperation of western banks with Iran.

Mogherini said the EU would encourage European banks for greater engagement with Iran's economy.

"We are doing all what we can to reassure our ... (More on P4)...(21)

Premier Li Stresses Innovation For Higher Education

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang has called on the country's higher education institutes to boost science and technology research to help with economic development.

Li made the remarks on Friday during his visits to Tsinghua and Peking, two prestigious universities in Beijing, according to a press release issued on Saturday.

"Innovation requires one's own efforts as well as the ability to look to, and learn from, advanced experiences and concepts from overseas," Li said after being briefed on Tsinghua's major research and development projects concerning new-generation nuclear technology, new energy vehicles, next-generation internet, and condensed matter physics.

Li called for universities to be better coordinated with each other and science and technology institutes to avoid parallel research at the same

level and to utilize talent and resources more efficiently.

At a life science research center, the premier underscored that there should be a more flexible mechanism to attract high-caliber talent and motivate their research so China would take the lead in the world in core technology and contribute to the health of everyone the world over.

While talking with teachers and students at the School of Architecture, Li urged them to make full use of their talents as the country is in the phase of new-type urbanization and rural construction.

During his visit to the Peking University, Li noted that currently, economic and social development faces "many hard choices," and both macroeconomic control and development upgrades rely on theoretical and practical advancements. According to Li, as traditional ... (More on P4)...(25)

Iran, Pakistan to Hold Joint Naval Drill

TEHRAN - Commander of Iran's Army Navy has said his forces and Pakistani fleet will hold a joint military drill in Strait of Hormuz.

Rear Adm. Habibollah Sayyari who was speaking to Arabic-language Al-Alam TV program 'From Tehran' on Saturday, said that a Pakistani naval fleet would participate in a single-day military drill in Bandar Abbas waters; "we have visits to port cities of all countries in the region by our navy fleet; we have also in agenda exchange of navy fleets in a plan dubbed 'peace and friendship' with southern and northern waters; the expeditions seek to consolidate security in

international waters, especially Gulf of Aden and Bab al-Mandab Strait for our trade ships and oil tankers," he told the program.

"During recent 2 or 3 months, we dispatched a navy fleet to Indian eastern ports and Gulf of Bengal to participate in ceremonies to commemorate Indian Independence Day, and to communicate the message of our respect to the country's independence and glory," he added. "Our 40th navy fleet currently navigates in Gulf of Aden and Bab al-Mandab Strait and watches the waters closely to ward off any piracy attack," Sayyari told the program. (MNA)

Magnitude 4.8 Earthquake Shakes Eastern Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - A magnitude 4.8 earthquake took place on Saturday morning in eastern Uzbekistan, according to the country's Digital Seismic Network.

The earthquake struck near the Central Asian former Soviet nation's border with Kyrgyzstan. Tremors were felt in the

country's capital, Tashkent, as well as in the cities of Fergana and Namangan.

The quake was registered at the depth of 10 km (over 6.2 miles), 160 km (99.4 miles) to the east of Tashkent. There were no immediate reports on casualties or damage. (Monitoring Desk)