

UNEP Urges World to Avoid Border Walls, to Save Biodiversity

CANCUN, Mexico - Countries must unite to defend biodiversity instead of building border walls, Erik Solheim, executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) said Friday.

"The United States, Mexico, Europe and China, if they work together toward common solutions, they can achieve miracles, such as the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals," said Solheim, ahead of the 13th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biologi-



cal Diversity (COP13) to be held from Dec. 4-17 in Cancun, Mexico.

"It is crucial for all countries and sectors to work together to attack the problems afflict the planet, such as the lack of biodiversity," the official added.

Solheim also took shots at U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's plan to build a border wall along the Mexican border to keep immigrants out. Pointing out that global efforts have achieved landmark results, such as reducing hunger in Africa ... (More on P4)...(16)

UNHCR Steps up Aid to Iraqis Fleeing Mosul

UNITED NATIONS - The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), in coordination with its partner, Muslim Aid, has been stepping up assistance to displaced Iraqis and residents in the newly retaken towns and villages east of Mosul in north Iraq, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said here Friday.

"The agency has begun distributing thousands of blankets and quilts as temperatures plummet in northern Iraq," Dujarric said at a daily news briefing here.

More than 76,000 people

have now been displaced since the start of the military offensive to retake Mosul.

Currently, UNHCR has six camps ready to receive people displaced from Mosul and surrounding towns and villages, he added.

On Oct. 17, Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi, who is also the commander-in-chief of the Iraqi forces, announced the start of a major offensive to retake Mosul, the country's second largest city, in a bid to liberate the ... (More on P4)...(17)

Britain's Approach in China Must Go Beyond Commercial Ties: Foreign Secretary

LONDON - Britain's Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said Friday Britain's approach in China and East Asia must go beyond the quest for exports or commercial contracts, although they are vital. "It is right that we should make a distinctive approach to policy-making as regards China and East Asia," Johnson said at Chatham House in London. In the first major foreign policy speech since his appointment, Johnson said Britain should be realistic enough to accept that the international order needs to change, stressing

that Britain was one of the first Western countries to join the China-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). Johnson also called on all members of NATO to spend 2 percent of their gross domestic product (GDP) on defense and backed U.S. President-elect Donald Trump's criticism of the contribution other countries make to the alliance. Describing NATO as the "most durable and successful" defensive alliance in history, Johnson said Trump had a point over spending. (Xinhua)

UN Warns of Worsening Humanitarian Situation in Aleppo

UNITED NATIONS - The humanitarian situation continues to deteriorate in Syria's Aleppo City, where an estimated 31,500 people are displaced from areas in eastern Aleppo retaken by the government of Syria, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters here Friday.

"This includes around 26,500 people displaced to government-held areas or Sheikh Maqsood, as well as some 5,000 people who are displaced within east Aleppo," Dujarric said at a daily news briefing here. "The UN and partners are



scaling up their humanitarian response in Aleppo and responding to the needs of the newly displaced in all areas they can access with shelter, food, and health assistance," he said. "Today, three UN inter-agency teams are be-

Syrian Army Captures More Areas in Eastern Aleppo

DAMASCUS - The Syrian army continued to advance in rebel-held areas in the northern city of Aleppo on Friday, amid reports that the rebels are threatening to kill civilians who leave toward government-controlled areas.

Government forces advanced Friday in the southern part of the rebel-held areas in eastern Aleppo city, capturing al-Masariyah area and the eastern parts of the Bab al-Nayrab neighborhood, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The fresh progress is part of a broad military campaign the army and allied fighters have recently ... (More on P4)...(21)

Idea of Inclusive Development to be Retained in Germany's G20 Presidency

BERLIN - The idea of inclusive development will be retained in Germany's Group of 20 (G20) presidency, a Chinese official said Friday.

Chinese Vice Finance Minister Zhu Guangyao made the remarks at a G20 finance and central bank deputies meeting in Berlin.

Citing the blueprint for strong, sustainable, balanced and inclusive world economic growth set in the G20 Hangzhou Summit in September, Zhu said the international gathering has "substantially promoted the global economic governance and produced historical fruits."

Germany's emphasis on securing the con-

May's Brexit Plans Face British Supreme Court Test

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May's government launches a challenge on Monday against a court ruling that it requires parliamentary approval to start the process of leaving the European Union, a decision that could upset Britain's Brexit plans.

If the Supreme Court, the United Kingdom's highest judicial body, dismisses the government appeal it could derail May's timetable for triggering Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty and leaving the EU.

The government's legal fight comes against a backdrop of claims by some politicians and newspapers that establishment judges want to thwart the Brexit process. It will be the most high-profile and complex case the court has considered since it came into being seven years ago and is due to last for four days. For the first time all its 11 justices will sit on the panel with the verdict due later in January. "The case raises



difficult and delicate issues about the constitutional relationship between government and parliament," Brenda Hale, the Supreme

Court's Vice-President said in a speech last month. "What is meant by the exercise of the executive ... (More on P4)...(18)

Oil Prices Extend Rally on OPEC Deal, Weaker Dollar

NEW YORK - Oil prices increased for the third consecutive day following the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)'s decision to cut production and a weaker U.S. dollar. OPEC decided on Wednesday to cut production by 1.2 million barrels per day to 32.5 million for the first half of 2017, which prompted immediate market trading frenzy. The deal was the first of its kind since 2008.

However, crude prices were pressured by data showing an increased U.S.

oil rig count and a bargain hunting sentiment.

The oilfield services company Baker Hughes reported Friday that the country's rig count rose by three to a total of 477 this week.

A weaker dollar, on the other hand, helped offset some pressure. The dollar slipped against other major currencies on Friday after the release of a nonfarm payroll report from the country.



The West Texas Intermediate for January Delivery increased 0.62 U.S. dollars to settle at 51.68 dollars a barrel on the New York Mercantile Exchange,

while Brent crude for February delivery added 0.52 dollars to close at 54.46 dollars a barrel on the London ICE Futures Exchange. (Xinhua)

Hungary FM Calls for Early Start of Macedonia's EU Accession Talks

SKOPJE - Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto on Friday called for negotiations on Macedonia's accession to the European Union (EU) to start as soon as possible. Speaking at a joint press conference with Macedonian Foreign Minister Nikola Poposki here, Szijjarto said the fact that Macedonia was not yet an EU member state was unacceptable, according to local media reports. According to him, Macedonia was expected to guard the Schengen zone from refugees arriving in the EU, while the EU was not prepared to start negotiations with Macedonia on its accession to the bloc. Szijjarto said such a situation has to be tackled. The Hungarian Foreign Minister also believed Macedonia should have joined NATO ... (More on P4)...(20)

Russia Sees Trump as Conduit for Eased Sanctions

WASHINGTON - Russia's government denies that it tampered in the U.S. election or even took sides. But now that the results are in, members of President Vladimir Putin's United Russia party aren't holding back. "It turns out that United Russia won the elections in America," Viktor Nazarov, the governor of Omsk, Russia, declared in a radio interview.

Long before Donald Trump was on the radar of American voters, Russia had deep interests in the outcome of elections around the world. But 2016 presented a unique window.

Motivated by years of crippling economic sanctions and decades of post-Soviet setbacks, the Russians were keener than ever to pounce; the race for the White House, plagued by party infighting and scandal, was easy bait.

For Putin, sanctions relief is a gateway to the ultimate goal of establishing Russia as the political and economic equivalent of the United States. Trump, who has extolled Putin's leadership and called for a tempered approach to U.S.-Russia relations, may be a conduit to achieving that. "It's much more about institutions, not about personalities," said Robert Amsterdam, an international attorney who has a number of high-profile Russian clients. Putin "was seriously impacted by the sanctions because it targeted his closest friends and now they think Trump is going to change that." (AP)

Nieghbor News

Xi Says Military Must be Smaller, but more Capable

BEIJING - China's armed forces must be smaller but more capable, and if reforms are not properly carried out the military risks falling behind, affecting its ability to wage war, Chinese state media on Saturday cited President Xi Jinping as saying. Xi unexpectedly announced in September last year that he would cut troop numbers by 300,000, or some 13 percent of the world's biggest military, currently 2.3-million strong.

The cuts come at a time of heightened economic uncertainty in China as growth slows and the leadership grapples with painful economic reforms. In October, hundreds of previously demobilized soldiers protested in Beijing. The lay-offs are part of broader reforms to modernize the military, moving away from the old Soviet-era command module and putting more emphasis on high-tech... (More on P4)...(23)

Extension of Anti-Iran Sanctions to Harm U.S. Int'l Reputation: FM

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Saturday criticized the recent U.S. vote for the extension of Iran Sanctions Act (ISA) and said this will harm the international reputation of the United States, official IRNA news agency reported.

"The U.S. officials are obliged to stop these sanctions," Zarif told IRNA upon arrival in New Delhi of India.

Last week, the U.S. House of Representatives voted for the extension of the ISA for another 10 years, which was endorsed by the U.S. Senate on Thursday. The bill has still to be signed by the U.S. president to become a law.

"Even if the sanctions bill

is signed by the U.S. president, it won't be practical," Zarif said, adding that it will discredit the United States in the international community.

On Friday, Iran declared the possible extension of the U.S. sanctions against the Islamic republic as a violation of an international deal on Iran's nuclear issue clinched in July 2015.

"As it was repeatedly announced by senior Iranian officials, the recent decision by the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate to extend sanctions against Iran runs counter to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action," said Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qasemi. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Sending Envoy to Meet Trump Team

WASHINGTON - The prime minister's special assistant for foreign affairs, Tariq Fatemi, is coming to the United States this weekend to meet officials of the Trump transition team. "Besides meeting members of the transition team, Mr Fatemi will meet officials of the outgoing Obama administration," said Pakistan's Ambassador to the United States Jalil Abbas Jilani. US President-elect Donald Trump is scheduled to take the oath on

Jan 20 but he has already set up a provisional team, encouraging foreign leaders and officials to visit his headquarters in New York for familiarisation meetings.

Mr Fatemi, who is coming on a two-week official visit, is also expected to meet some members of this team and in Washington, "he will also meet new US lawmakers elected last month," Mr Jilani told a news briefing at the embassy. "This ... (More on P4)...(24)

UAE Focuses on Intensifying Co-Op with Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - The UAE's new strategy opens up the opportunities for the intensification of cooperation with Turkmenistan, UAE Ambassador to Turkmenistan, UAE Ambassador Hasan Abdullah Al Adhab said in an interview with Neutral Turkmenistan newspaper.

He added that great success, especially in the economic sphere, has been achieved in the de-

velopment of the bilateral partnership since the opening of the UAE embassy in Turkmenistan. "We will make every effort to strengthen and develop these relations in various fields," the ambassador added.

The diplomat added that renewable energy sources are one of the priority areas for Turkmenistan. The UAE is ready for ... (More on P4)...(25)

Pre-Election Silence in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - Today, December 7, marks the last day before the presidential elections in Uzbekistan.

A day of silence has been declared in the country. The day of silence before the presidential elections has been announced for the first time. Relevant amendments to the law "On elections of President of the Republic of Uzbekistan" have been made by the Uzbek parliament at the end of 2015.

While introducing these amendments, members of the Uzbek parliament were guided by the belief that the day of silence

allows voters to decide independently on their preferences, without the impact of pre-election campaign, and make a weighted decision on voting for a particular candidate. Holding pre-election campaign on the day of voting and a day before the voting is prohibited, according to the law. Only appeals to voters to visit polling stations are allowed on the day of silence.

Earlier, Chairman of Uzbekistan's Central Election Commission (CEC) Mirza-Ulugbek Abdusalomov called on voters to ... (More on P4)...(26)



tinuity of these consensus reflects its commitment to further enhancing them, said Zhu.

The just concluded meeting in Germany set the work priorities of G20 members in the next year. Participants vowed to boost the tenacity of ... (More on P4)...(22)