

UN General Assembly President Puts Conflict Prevention on Top Priority

UNITED NATIONS - UN General Assembly President Miroslav Lajcak on Friday outlined his priorities for 2018, putting conflict prevention above all. Addressing a General Assembly meeting, Lajcak said that he would put conflict prevention, partnerships, financing and integration as four priorities of his work in 2018. "We need a stronger focus on peace when it still exists. We should be acting faster, and sooner, when there is a peace to keep, rather than scrambling for solutions once it has been lost," he said.



Speaking of partnerships, Lajcak noted that "we need to make existing partnerships more active and efficient. And we need to create new ones." As for financing, the president said that the UN's peacebuilding and sustaining peace activities "are chronically underfunded." "By adopting the 2016 Sustaining Peace resolutions, we committed to addressing this issue. The Secretary-General's report, due to be released next month, is likely to contain concrete proposals. We need to give them serious consideration." (Xinhua)

South Korea and North Korea to Hold Working-Level Talks on January 15

SEOUL - North Korea and South Korea have agreed to hold working-level talks at the Tongil Pavilion on the North Korean side of the truce village of Panmunjom on Jan. 15, South Korea's unification ministry said in a statement on Saturday. The delegation led by the unification minister Cho Myung-kyun, will be sent to hold talks on the prospects of North Korea sending its performance art group to the Winter Olympics in South Korea, the ministry said in a statement. Inter-Korean talks

are held alternately at the Peace House, which is on the South Korean side of Panmunjom in the demilitarized zone, and Tongil Pavilion in the North. The ministry said earlier on Saturday that North Korea had proposed holding talks on Jan. 15 about the matter. "In addition, the ministry also requested for a quick response for South Korea's proposal on Jan. 12 to have working-level talks about the North's participation in Pyongchang winter Olympics," added the ministry. (Reuters)

BRUSSELS - The post-Brexit budget of the European Union (EU) is to pose a test for its unity when the bloc is under pressure to draw its blueprint for the next multi-year financial framework after Britain leaves a big hole in it. It is estimated that Britain, as a net contributor to the EU budget, will after its exit leave a shortfall of more than 12 billion euros (14.6 billion U.S. dollars) per year in the budget. With its current seven-year budget period ending in 2020, the EU's executive arm European Commis-

sion (EC) plans to present the blueprint of the next multi-year budget in May. However, the pressure facing the EU is not confined to the reduced receipts by Brexit. The bloc has set new goals in areas such as migration, internal and external security, among others, incurring more expenditures. This may result in a much larger financial gap. EC chief Jean-Claude Juncker on Jan. 8 called on the 27 members states to pay more money into the bloc's coffers. Juncker said the next EU budget should



be more than 1 percent of the bloc's gross domestic product (GDP). Juncker also implied there would be less money for some programs. The cohesion policy and the common agricultural policy

(CAP) are likely to be the worst hit. However, it's easier to be said than done. Either increasing contributions or scrapping projects may make some member states unhappy. (Xinhua)

Post-Brexit Budget Hole to Pose Test for EU Unity

Trump's Nuclear Strategy Seeks New Weapons to Counter Russia



WASHINGTON - With Russia in mind, the Trump administration is aiming to develop new nuclear firepower that it says will make it easier to deter threats to European

allies. The plan, not yet approved by President Donald Trump, is intended to make nuclear conflict less likely. Critics argue it would do the opposite.

The proposal is spelled out in a policy document, known officially as a "nuclear posture review," that puts the U.S. in a generally more aggressive nuclear stance. It is the first review of its kind since 2010 and is among several studies of security strategy undertaken since Trump took office. In many ways it reaffirms the nuclear policy of President Barack Obama, including his commitment to replace all key elements of the nuclear arsenal with new, more modern weapons over the coming two

decades. It says the U.S. will adhere to existing arms control agreements, while expressing doubt about prospects for any new such pacts. The Trump nuclear doctrine is expected to be published in early February, followed by a related policy on the role and development of U.S. defenses against ballistic missiles. Where the Trump doctrine splits from Obama's approach is in ending his push to reduce the role of nuclear weapons in U.S. defense policy. (AP)

Turkey Will Not Accept "Privileged Partnership" with EU: Minister

ANKARA - Turkish EU Minister Omer Celik said that Turkey will not accept a "privileged partnership" with the EU, state-run Anadolu Agency reported Saturday. Speaking in an interview with local news channel Haberturk on Friday, Celik said, "If we are offered a privileged partnership, we will not even consider it." "No one can offer a second-class status to Turkey in its EU relations," he stressed. The minister's comments came after German politicians recently proposed the "privileged partner-

ship" for Turkey, instead of full EU membership. Turkey had applied for the EU membership in 1987 and accession talks began in 2005. Ties between Ankara and the EU have been strained since the July 15, 2016 failed coup attempt. The EU insists on Turkey to change its anti-terror law to benefit a lingering visa-free travel deal. Ankara has repeatedly criticized the EU's lack of solidarity with the Turkish people against the failed coup attempt and double standards in fight against terrorism. (Xinhua)

UN Chief Lauds G77 and China's Role in Multilateralism, Climate Action

UNITED NATIONS - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Friday lauded the role of the Group of 77 (G77) and China in promoting multilateralism and development, and fighting climate change. "You have been a central pillar in the defense of multilateralism - and these are not easy times for multilateralism, and you have been absolutely crucial in making sure that development remains in the centrality of the action of the United Nations," Guterres told a handover ceremony of the G77 chairmanship from Ecuador to Egypt. The two largest economies of the G77 - China and India - are strongly committed to the leadership in climate action, said Guterres. "At a moment when others are failing, I see the largest economies of the Group of 77 and China to be assuming the leadership in climate action to make sure that we don't suffer the dramatic and devastating impacts of climate change." He commended the G77's role in shaping the international debate on migration. The promotion of regular migration, of more opportunities for legal migration is in the center of any engagement of the international community, he said, adding that he counted on the G77 to be in the center of the debate that would lead to an agenda centered on people and on human dignity. The United Nations is leading an initiative to formulate a global compact on migration. He said the world body and the G77 share views on a more democratic United Nations. "I believe the Group of 77 will be particularly attentive to the need to make sure that any reform gives effective contribution to a more balanced and democratic United Nations, where power is better distributed and justice can prevail more easily." (Xinhua)

Canada Hopes G7 Summit Serves as Springboard for New Ideas

OTTAWA - Canada hopes the upcoming G7 summit it is hosting will serve as a springboard for fresh ideas on key issues including climate change, the global economy and security, the lead organizer told AFP. "The G7 serves well as a proving or testing ground for discussions that could eventually go into the G20 or the United Nations or international financial institutions," Peter Boehm, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's G7 representative, said in an

interview with AFP. "The beauty of these summits is that there is informal dialogue between leaders," said Boehm, who has participated in several past summits. Canada assumed the G7 presidency at the start of January and will host the leaders of Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and the United States in the picturesque resort village of La Malbaie on the shores of the Saint Lawrence River from June 8-9. The agenda for the 44th Group of Seven industrialized nations summit in-

cludes advancing gender equality and women's empowerment, the implementation of the Paris climate agreement, and the global economy. Boehm said the discussion on climate change will "inevitably include energy and renewable forms of energy" and "more broadly the resilience of coastal communities." "We've seen a very bad hurricane season," he noted. "Many of the islands affected by these terrible hurricanes have lost their tourism economies." (AFP)

Merkel Risks Leading Weak 'Losers' Coalition for Germany

BERLIN - Germany's veteran chancellor Angela Merkel, often called the world's most powerful woman, will embark on a fourth term with diminished influence and little vision for shaping Europe's future, analysts say. After wrapping up more than 24 hours of talks Friday between her conservatives and the Social Democrats on forming a new "grand coalition" government, Merkel insisted the preliminary deal would break the deadlock in Germany and pave the way to a "fresh start" for Europe. But before the ink was even dry on the roadmap for her new administration, observers branded Merkel and the team

she's likely to lead a "losers" coalition with little ambition or power to tackle the major challenges facing the country and the continent. "In fact this 'grand coalition' is only a mini-coalition with just 53 percent" of seats in parliament following the September election that saw both parties cede millions of voters to the far-right, anti-immigration AfD party, political scientist Karl-Rudolf Korte of Duisburg-Essen University said. This compares with the lavish, nearly 80-percent majority the parties enjoyed during Merkel's previous term, he told public broadcaster ZDF. (AFP)

Russia Deploys More Surface-to-Air Missiles in Crimean Build-up

MOSCOW - Russia deployed a new division of S-400 surface-to-air missiles in Crimea on Saturday, Russian news agencies reported, in an escalation of military tensions on the Crimean peninsula. Russian annexed Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, triggering economic sanctions by the European Union and United States and a tense stand-off in the region. The U.S. said in December it planned to provide Ukraine with "enhanced defensive capabilities," which officials said included Javelin anti-tank missiles. Moscow's latest deployment represents the second division armed with S-400 air defense systems on the peninsula, after the first in the spring of 2017 near the port town of Feodosia. The new division will be based next to the town of Sevastopol and will control the airspace over the border with Ukraine, the RIA news agency reported. The new air defense system, designed to defend Russia's borders, can be turned into combat mode in less than five minutes, Interfax news agency quoted Viktor Sevostyanov, a commander with Russia's air forces, as saying. Russia's defense ministry says the S-400 systems, known as "Triumph", can bring down airborne targets at a range of 400 kilometers and ballistic missiles at a range of 60 kilometers. They were first introduced to the Russian military's arsenal in 2007, the ministry said. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

China's Xi to Step up Fight on Financial Risk in 2018

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping plans to bring his growing power to bear on reining in financial risk as his second five-year term as Communist Party leader begins in earnest. But his efforts could create instability in an economy already facing the threat of trade friction with the U.S. Last month's meeting of the Central Economic Work Conference barely touched on the issue of China's mounting debt, leading some to hope that the government might ease its recent clampdown on the financial system. But it looks likely to escalate instead as Beijing ramps up its war on financial

risk. "The idea that we've given up on reducing debt is a misunderstanding," said Yang Weimin, deputy head of the Office of the Central Leading Group on Financial and Economic Affairs. Yang was among the officials who drafted a statement on China's economic priorities issued after the meeting. Financial risk was named alongside poverty and pollution as the top problems for the government to tackle through 2020. "Naturally, reducing debt is included in curbing financial risk," a Communist Party insider said. (Agencies)

CPEC Expedites Prosperity, Development in Country: Shehbaz

LAHORE - Punjab Chief Minister Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif has said that projects of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) expedited the process of prosperity and development in the country. He said this while talking to Pakistan Railways Minister Khawaja Saad Rafique who called on him here on Saturday. He said the CPEC had become a game changer for Pakistan. He said the PML-N government had set a record of transparency and services during the last four years, adding that completion of projects during the period was exemplary for last 70 years. Shehbaz said that every project of the PML-N government was an ex-

ample of transparency, standard and speed. He said that some defeated elements were promoting politics of personal interest in the country, whereas Pakistan was unable to bear politics of anarchy. He said that disappointed elements did not want to see a developed or prosperous Pakistan. "Those politicians have been exposed who made records of lies and abusive language in politics," he added. The Chief Minister said that time was slipping from the hands of liars as the people had been tired of negative politics. "Fake slogans do not serve the masses, it needs work hard for day and night to serve the nation," he added. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran Dismisses U.S. Pressure to Renegotiate Nuclear Deal

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Ministry said Saturday that the Islamic republic will never succumb to pressure of the United States to renegotiate the 2015 nuclear deal. The U.S. President Donald Trump once again had to extend waivers that are mandatory under the deal reached between Iran and world powers, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), the Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The solidity of Iran and international support for the agreement have blocked attempts by Trump and Israel to terminate this agreement or make changes to it, said the statement. "The Islamic Republic of Iran stresses clearly that it will not take any meas-

ures beyond its commitment to the JCPOA, nor will it accept changes to this agreement now or any time in the future. It also will not allow the JCPOA to be linked to any other issue," it said. Trump said on Friday he will extend sanctions relief on Iran under the 2015 nuclear deal for the last time, threatening U.S. withdrawal from the landmark pact unless U.S. Congress and European allies can fix the alleged "disastrous flaws." Calling it "a last chance," Trump said in a White House statement that his country "will not again waive sanctions in order to stay in the Iran nuclear deal." Under the deal, the U.S. president must sign a waiver suspending the U.S. sanctions on Iran every 120 days. (Xinhua)

Co-Op with Pakistan One of Key Vectors of Turkmen Foreign Policy: President

ASHGABAT - Strengthening of cooperation with neighboring countries in the Asian region, including Pakistan, is one of the key vectors of neutral Turkmenistan's foreign policy, said the country's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov at a government meeting. The Turkmen Dowllet Habarlary state news agency reported that President Berdimuhamedov also spoke about the high level of interstate relations, dynamically developing on a multilateral basis and through authoritative in-

ternational and regional organizations. Reportedly, a delegation of the country's Foreign Ministry will pay a working visit to Islamabad on Jan. 15-16, where the Turkmen-Pakistani foreign policy consultations will be held. It is expected that special attention will be paid to the implementation of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project, as well as other important joint projects, particularly, in the power and communications, transport and communications sectors. (Trend)