

# EU Must Target Anonymous Money Transfers to Tackle Militants: France

BRUSSELS - The European Union must better monitor anonymous money transfers to crack down on the financing of terrorism and this idea will be part of proposals to be presented to the bloc's leaders next month, France's finance minister said on Tuesday. EU leaders will meet in Brussels on Feb. 12-13 to discuss the bloc's strategy, just over a month after Islamist gunmen killed 17 people in three attacks in Paris, including on satirical weekly

Charlie Hebdo and on a Jewish store. Also this month, Belgian police killed two men during one of several raids targeting an Islamist group suspected of plotting attacks in Belgium. "The terrorist attacks that hit Paris and the ones that were thwarted in Brussels show this is how those terrorist groups finance themselves, with small-scale mechanisms, small money transfers concealed by anonymity," France's Michel Sapin said after talks with fel-

low EU finance ministers. The EU's foreign ministers last week discussed setting up a new network of European security agents abroad as they sought a united response. They will also work on improving the exchange of information between national anti-money laundering agencies and also the monitoring of money transfers between EU countries and "danger zones", Sapin said. As far as money transfers are concerned, Sapin said European countries



"must change regulations ... to better monitor small transfers that are covered by anonymity." This

concerns not only payment transfer companies but also other ways of making anonymous

payments, Sapin said. Officials also mentioned virtual payment systems. (Reuters)

## Nieghbor News

### Iran Urges EU to Play "More Active Role" in Nuclear Talks

TEHRAN - The European Union (EU) can play more active role in the negotiations between Iran and the world powers over Iran's nuclear issue, Press TV reported on Tuesday quoting Iran's foreign minister as saying. In a meeting with his Portuguese counterpart Rui Machete in Tehran on Monday, Mohammad-Javad Zarif hailed what he termed as "positive" the European countries' current approach to oppose the imposition of any new sanctions against Tehran and trying out diplomacy. Iran and Portugal enjoy capacities for strengthening cooperation in various fields, particularly in the

sectors of economy and tourism, Zarif said. The Portuguese foreign minister stressed Iran's right to peaceful nuclear energy and hoped the negotiations between Iran and the P5+1 countries, including Britain, China, France, Russia, the United States plus Germany, would yield results as soon as possible. Iran plays an important role in the Middle East and can help maintain peace and stability in the region, Machete said. Iran and the six powers agreed in November 2014 to extend, for the third time, the deadline for another seven months aimed to reach a political agreement within the next five months. (Xinhua)

## EU Agrees 1.8 Billion Euros for Ukraine, to Consider More

BRUSSELS - EU finance ministers agreed on Tuesday to loan Ukraine 1.8 billion euros (\$2.0 billion) to help save it from bankruptcy, leaving open the option of increasing aid at a later stage.

Diplomats at the meeting in Brussels said several European governments including Britain pushed for as much as 2.6 billion euros in medium-term loans for this year and 2016.

"The European Commission put 1.8 billion on the table. Some wanted us to do more," French Finance Minister Michel Sapin told reporters. "What is urgent today is to start implementing this package ... because Ukraine needs it so the government will not be faced with an unbearable situation."

Ukraine, fighting a costly war against pro-Russian separatists, is relying on a lifeline from the International Monetary Fund program to avoid default but some economists say it is facing a \$15 billion shortfall in funding.



The International Monetary Fund's existing package for Ukraine is worth \$17 billion and Ukrainian authorities hope the new round of talks under way will unlock fresh loans.

IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde said in Davos she supported a bigger, longer-term funding plan for Ukraine in return for agreed structural economic and fiscal reforms.

France's Sapin said he wanted to see what was agreed with the IMF before committing to more EU aid, which comes on top of the 1.4 billion euros that Brussels handed over last year. Ukraine faces about \$10

billion in debt servicing this year, including corporate and sovereign loans and bonds, according to the Institute of International Finance, a financial group based in Washington.

"We (France) said it also depends on the IMF, everybody must make their contribution," he said.

Another constraining factor is that the European Union uses some of its budget as a guarantee against the money it raises on capital markets for the loans to Ukraine. Increasing EU aid to Kiev means less money for other EU priorities, for instance in development in Africa, a priority for France. (Reuters)

## China, Indonesia Pledge for Further Economic Cooperation



BEIJING - China and Indonesia on Tuesday pledged further economic cooperation in areas including trade, investment and infrastructure. Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and Indonesian Coordinating Minister for the Economy Sofyan Djalil met in Beijing for the first High-level Economic Dialogue bilateral meeting.

Cooperation will be conducive to development in both countries and peace and stability in East Asia. China and Indonesia, both emerging economies with large populations, committed to maintain strategic mutual trust, increase high-level dialogue and strengthen reciprocal cooperation, Li said.

He said China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road initiative and Indonesia's development strategy fitted together. China is ready to help

Indonesia build factories and production lines, which will promote bilateral infrastructure cooperation and Indonesia's industrialization process, the premier said.

Sofyan said Indonesia's new government attached high importance to relations with China, and welcomed Chinese investment.

Indonesia was confident that China's equipment and technology would help Indonesia's development, the minister said.

The first meeting of China-Indonesia High-level Economic Dialogue was held in Beijing on Monday. Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi and Sofyan co-chaired the meeting.

After the meeting, the two sides signed the minutes of the meeting and a letter of intent for cooperation on a power plant. (Xinhua)

## Britain Braces for Election That Could Herald EU Exit

LONDON - Britain on Tuesday marked 100 days until one of the most unpredictable elections in memory, as Prime Minister David Cameron fights to retain power and call a referendum on European Union membership.

A fragmented vote in which no party wins an overall majority is seen as the most likely result, meaning smaller parties will probably have to prop up either Cameron's Conservatives or the main opposition Labour party. If the Conservatives win outright on May 7, Cameron has said he will seek to renegotiate Britain's relationship with the EU before calling an in-or-out referendum on a "Brexit" by the end of 2017.

But experts predict that neither the Conservatives nor Labour will secure a majority in the 650-seat House of Commons.

"Like everyone else, I have no idea," Professor Tim Bale, chair in politics at Queen Mary, University of London, told AFP. "The only prediction is that it's incredibly unlikely that any of the main parties will end up with an overall majority." (AFP)

## Russia Adopts One-Year Anti-Crisis Plan

MOSCOW - The Russian government has approved an anti-crisis plan which stipulates no extra budget spending, Financial Minister Anton Siluanov said Tuesday.

The one-year plan will be completely financed from the existing budget, with 170 billion rubles (about 2.5 billion U.S. dollars) having been allocated for the package, the minister said.

The plan envisages that the budget will return to balance by 2017 if oil prices would grow to 70 dollars per barrel. Oil

prices oscillate currently around 45-48 dollars.

Standard & Poor's downgraded late Monday Russia's credit rating from BBB- to BB+, citing "Russia's less flexible monetary policy and possible further deterioration of the country's economy." The S&P decision will not affect the Russian capital market as the agency was unaware the austerity measures had been approved by the government, Siluanov said.

On Monday, President Vladimir Putin said the government's top prior-

ity is to secure internal social stability and the anti-crisis plan should ensure acceptable pace of inflation, controllable level of foreign debt and conservation of existing reserves.

That could be achieved only if the acceptable economic parameters are preserved, the president said. Only micro-economic stability could attract private investors, he said, adding the federal budget will have to be optimized by drawing on the experience of 2008 financial crisis. (Xinhua)

## Economic Models Must Lead to the People's Welfare: Irish President

STRASBOURG - "I have no doubt about the need for the plurality of economic models; I think the test has to be the welfare of the people," President of Ireland Michael Higgins said in responding to a question about Ireland's economic success from Xinhua during a press conference at the Council of Europe on Tuesday. The Irish president spoke following a bilateral meeting on Tuesday morning with the president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), Anne Brasseur. Despite recent strong economic gains, Ireland still holds a substantial debt, with Ireland's National Treasury Management Agency (NTMA) figure for outstanding government debt at 209.70 billion euros (about 236.79 billion U.S. dollars) by the end of June 2014. This means recent speculations about re-negotiations on national debt by the newly-elected Greek Prime Minister Alex Tsipras, are of particular interest for Ireland and its creditors. Ireland's position is, of course, affected by the conditions in the eurozone, in the wider European Union, and the global economy," President Higgins said, while remaining committed to international cooperation. (Xinhua)

## Kurds Expand Offensive After Driving IS Out of Syrian Town

BEIRUT - Kurdish fighters expanded their offensive Tuesday after driving Islamic State militants from the Syrian border town of Kobani the previous day, to retake dozens of surrounding villages still held by the militants, activists and officials said. Pushing IS out of Kobani after a bloody, four-month campaign was a significant boost for both the Kurds and the U.S.-led coalition, though the U.S. Central Command tempered Monday's victory by saying it estimated that 90 percent of Kobani was now controlled by Kurdish forces. From Kobani, Kurdish

troops took the fight Tuesday to the village of Shiran, southeast of the town, said Mustafa Bali, a Kobani-based activist. Earlier in the day, they captured the nearby village of Qarah Hlanj. The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights confirmed the capture of Qarah Hlanj and said the fighting near Shiran has intensified. The victory in Kobani came at a high cost. "The city has been fully liberated," said senior Kurdish official Idriss Nassan, speaking by telephone from inside the town. He said Kobani is "nearly destroyed." (AP)

## Obama Defends US Ties As He Pays Respects in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH - President Barack Obama defended the U.S. government's willingness to cooperate closely with Saudi Arabia on national security despite deep concerns over human rights abuses, as he led an array of current and former American statesmen in paying respects Tuesday following the death of King Abdullah. Saudi Arabia's status as one of Washington's most important Arab allies has at times appeared

to trump U.S. concerns about the terrorist funding that flows from the kingdom and about human rights abuses. But Obama said he has found it most effective to apply steady pressure over human rights "even as we are getting business done that needs to get done." "Sometimes we need to balance our need to speak to them about human rights issues with immediate concerns we have in terms of coun- (More on P4)...(20)

## Obama Wraps Up India Tour, Pitching for Religious Freedom

NEW DELHI - U.S. President Barack Obama wrapped up his three-day tour of India, making a strong pitch for religious freedom in this country. "India will succeed as long as it's not splintered along religious lines," President Obama said while addressing 2,000 people at the Town Hall in the capital.

"Your Article 25 (of the Indian Constitution) says that all people are equally entitled to freedom of conscience and the right freely to profess, practice and propagate religion," he added. The U.S. president also stressed the need for both the government and every citizen to uphold religious freedom,



considered to be one of the controversial topics in India. "In both our countries, in all countries, upholding this fundamental freedom is the responsibility of government, but it's also the responsibility of every person," he said. Obama's remarks came at a time when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has been accused by rival political parties of not checking

pro-Hindu activists. After the speech that drew huge applause, Obama and his wife Michelle went straight to the airport and boarded the Air Force One to fly to Saudi Arabia. The couple were supposed to visit to the iconic Taj Mahal, a symbol of love, just 250 km from New Delhi, but had to cut short their trip to go to Saudi Arabia to meet the new king. (Xinhua)

## AU, China to Cooperate on Infrastructure, Industrialization

ADDIS ABABA - The African Union (AU) and China have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to cooperate on major infrastructure networks and industrialization process in Africa. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Chairperson of the AU Commission, and Zhang Ming, Special Envoy and Vice Foreign Minister of China, have signed the MoU on continental transport, high speed railway, aviation, road highways as well as on industrialization. The signing ceremony took place on Tuesday at the AU Headquarters in

Ethiopia's capital Addis Ababa on the sidelines of the 24th AU summit which kicked off on Friday with the 29th session of the AU permanent representatives committee (PRC). The MoU is within the framework of AU's Agenda 2063 with a view to accelerating continental integration of Africa, according to the AU.

The two sides inked the deal based on and following the discussion between Dlamini-Zuma and Chinese Premier Li Keqiang during the Premier's visit to the AU Headquarters last year. "We ... (More on P4)...(21)

## Gen. Raheel Vows 'Not to Abandon Fata without Restoring Peace'

RAWALPINDI - Pakistan's Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif visited the Federally Administered Tribal Areas' (FATA) Mohmand Agency on Tuesday and vowed not to abandon the area without fully restoring it to normalcy. The army chief was given a detailed briefing on the progress of stabilisation operations, including the ongoing development projects by army engineers in the troubled region, an Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) statement said.

The development projects have come after Operation Zarb-I-Azab, launched by the Pakistan Army in June 2014, left large parts of North Waziristan's infrastructure destroyed. The military claims to have eliminated a large number of terrorists in North Waziristan, as well

as Khurram Agency in continuing operations. The death toll of militants and the extent of damage inside the agencies has largely not been independently verified by media, given that access to FATA is very limited.

The COAS appreciated the professionalism, dedication and sacrifices rendered by the soldiers in fighting terrorism and bringing stability in Mohmand Agency, the press release further stated.

General Raheel emphasised on the need to follow a comprehensive and uniform rehabilitation policy across Fata after clearing it of terrorists. He expressed hope that projects of providing education and economic opportunities to youth would help root out terrorism on long-term basis. (Monitoring Desk)

## Tajik Official Claims That Babak Zanjani Has Never Invested in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - The head of the State Committee on Investment and State-owned Property Management of Tajikistan (GosKomInvest), Qodir Qosim, claims that Iranian tycoon Babak Zanjani has never invested in Tajikistan. "Iranian businessman Bbak Zanjani has no property in Tajikistan," Qodir Qosim told reporters in Dushanbe on January 27. According to him, Babak Zanjani participated in an official opening of the Dushanbe renovated bus terminal on March 12, 2013 as a honorable guest but not as an investor. However, some sources say Babak Zanjani's Tajik empire includes a bank, an airline, a taxi service and a bus

terminal. In December 2012, the European Union sanctioned Zanjani for being "a key facilitator for Iranian oil deals and transferring oil-related money. Zanjani owns and operates the UAE-based Sorinet Group, and some of its companies are used by Zanjani to channel oil-related payments." In April 2013, the U.S. Treasury Department targeted Zanjani and a Malaysian bank under his control, along with "an international network of front companies" including Sorinet Commercial Trust. US officials believe the Zanjani-connected entities are "moving billions of dollars on behalf of the Iranian regime. (Asia-Plus)