

Cuban Revolutionary Leader Fidel Castro Dies at 90

HAVANA - Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro died late Friday at the age of 90, said his brother Raul, the current leader of Cuba. "With deep sorrow I report to the Cuban people that our beloved leader Fidel Castro passed away at 10:29 p.m. on Friday," said Raul Castro in a statement broadcast on Radio Reloj. "His body will be cremated according to his will. The organizing committee for his funeral will give more details of the mourning. Castro had led Cuba for nearly half a century be-



fore stepping down in 2006 for health reasons. He was succeeded by Raul Castro. Fidel Castro spent the last years of his life largely out of the public eye, writing editorials on world affairs for Cuba's official Granma daily, and receiving dignitaries at his home in Havana. The last such meeting was with Vietnamese President Tran Dai Quang on Nov. 15. Shocked by his death, Cubans go out to mourn the revolutionary leader with great sorrow on the ...*(More on P4)...(16)*

Warplanes Hit Islamic State Targets in Northern Syria: Turkish Army

ISTANBUL - Turkish warplanes destroyed 12 Islamic State targets while one Turkish soldier was killed in a clash with militants during an offensive in northern Syria, Turkey's military said on Saturday. Turkey and Syrian rebels are carrying out an operation to push the jihadists from the border after an air strike on Thursday killed three Turkish soldiers. The Turkish mili-

tary believes the strike was carried out by the Syrian air force. President Tayyip Erdogan discussed that attack with his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Friday. Russia is Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's main military backer, while Turkey backs the rebels fighting to oust him. The latest Turkish air strikes and clash ...*(More on P4)...(17)*

Greek Bailout Program Enters Successful Stage: EU Commissioner

ATHENS - Greece's bailout program is entering a successful stage and rewards are on the horizon, a European official said ahead of his two-day visit to Athens on Monday. "I am convinced we are entering the stage of success regarding the Greek bailout program ... I believe the rewards - meaning the restoration of trust in the economy, growth, creation of jobs and hopefully an agreement on debt relief - are on the horizon," Pierre Moscovici, European commissioner for economic

and financial affairs, told Greeks national broadcaster ERT. Regarding Greece's debt relief issue, he noted that "should Greek authorities fulfill their obligations, we should also assume ours." Moscovici is due in the Greek capital Monday for talks with Greek leaders on the progress achieved and the next steps as Greece and its lenders are trying to conclude the second review of the third Greek bailout before launching discussions on debt relief. Despite pending issues,



for debt relief to ensure the Greek economy's sustainable development. Moscovici shared the view, saying talks on the conclusion of the second review were "carried out in a positive direction." (Xinhua)

Hundreds of Thousands Gather in South Korea for Fifth Week of Protests Against Park

SEOUL - Hundreds of thousands rallied in central Seoul on Saturday for a fifth week of protests against President Park Geun-hye, in the largest ongoing series of demonstrations in the country since the 1987 movement to democratize South Korea. Park's presidency has been rocked by allegations that a close friend used her ties to the leader to meddle in state affairs and wield improper influence. Prosecutors investigating the case have indicted her friend, Choi Soon-sil, and are seeking to question the president about her role in the scandal. Organizers said 800,000

people had gathered early on Saturday evening and expected a total of 1.5 million people to join by the end of the night. Police declined to give an estimate of the crowd size but said 25,000 personnel had been dispatched to police the protest. The protests, now in their fifth week, have remained peaceful and marked by huge candle-lit rallies where activists and rock bands have entertained a diverse crowd of students, office workers, and young families. "I was watching the news and thought this cannot go on - people really want her ...*(More on P4)...(18)*

Syria Army Recaptures Key Rebel-Held Area in Aleppo

DAMASCUS - The Syrian army and allied fighters fully recaptured a key rebel-held neighborhood in the northern city of Aleppo on Saturday, following intense battles with the rebel groups, a military source told Xinhua. The military forces retook the Masaken Hanano area, following battles with the rebels' Jaish al-Fateh, or the Army of Conquest, during which assorted kinds of weapons were used amid artillery shelling that targeted the rebels' supply lines in the area, the source said



on condition of anonymity. Masaken Hanano is the largest rebel-held district in eastern Aleppo, and was also the first area stormed by rebels in mid-2012. Observers say capturing the Hanano area

will expose the Sakhour neighborhood to the Syrian army, enabling it to isolate the northern part of the rebel-held areas in eastern Aleppo from the southern one. ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

Greek Coast Guard Searches for Refugee Boat Off Peloponnese

ATHENS - A rescue operation for 150 people aboard a refugee boat off the Peloponnese was underway on Saturday, the Greek Coast Guard said. Greek authorities were alerted that the boat was at risk of sinking when one of the passengers made a telephone call to the European emergency number 112. Greek Coast Guard speedboats and eight vessels that were sailing in the area southwest of Pylos city in the south Peloponnese participated in the efforts to locate the boat. Winds of up to Grade Five on the Beaufort Scale are blowing in the area. Although the number of people crossing the Aegean has fallen dramatically this year compared to 2015, thousands of refugees and migrants are still taking the perilous journey. ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

South Sudan Accepts Deployment of Regional Troops

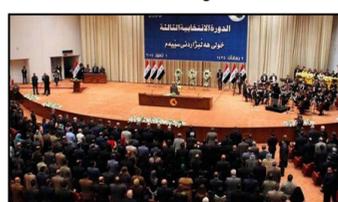
JUBA - South Sudanese government has agreed to the deployment of 4,000 extra regional protection force (RPF) pursuant to UN Security Council resolution 2304 in August. The Council of Ministers during their meeting on Friday said the extra forces are meant to join an existing 13,000 blue helmets serving under the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) tasked with protection of civilians and UN installations in the war-torn country. Deputy government Spokesperson Paul Akol Kordit told reporters in Juba that the transitional unity government has resolved all pending issues with the United Nations and have agreed "immediate" deployment of the RPF. "The cabinet has resolved unanimously to allow the deployment of the regional protection force anytime from now," Kordit said. However, the official did not divulge more details about when and where in the capital the force would be deployed. Juba had earlier rejected the Security Council proposal, calling it "intervention" but later softened its stance and called for dialogue with the UN. Dr. Martin Elia Lomuro, Minister for Cabinet Affairs, also echoed the acceptance message to the Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (JMEC), the body tasked with monitoring the country's peace deal. "All outstanding issues related to the deployment had been resolved with the United Nations and that deployment of the RPF could commence with immediate effect," Lomuro said. JMEC said in a statement on Saturday that the decision to move forward with immediate ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

Denmark Urged to Clean up US Military Waste in Greenland

COPENHAGEN, Denmark - Greenland is calling on Denmark to clean up an abandoned under-ice missile project and other U.S. military installations left to rust in the pristine landscape after the Cold War. The 1951 deal under which NATO member Denmark allowed the U.S. to build 33 bases and radar stations in the former Danish province doesn't specify who's responsible for any cleanup. Tired of waiting, Greenland's local leaders are now urging Denmark to remove the junk that the Americans left behind, including Camp Century, a never-completed launch site for ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

Iraq Passes Controversial Draft Legalizing Shiite Paramilitary Units

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi parliament passed Saturday a draft law legalizing the predominantly Shiite paramilitary units of Hashd Shaabi, despite protests of most Sunni lawmakers, a parliament official said. The National Alliance, an umbrella Shiite parliamentary bloc, backed by some Kurdish and independent lawmakers, managed to collect the majority votes needed to pass the controversial law, despite the Sunni Arab lawmakers' wish to postpone the vote, because they believe that the draft still needs amendment to be accepted by all, the official told Xinhua on condition of anonymity.



The Sunni lawmakers walked out of the session in protest for the vote on the Hashd Shaabi law, saying that the vote lacks consensus among the political blocs, as the blocs are accustomed to haggling before voting on controversial laws. Before the session, ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

Nieghbor News

China's Religious Affairs Chief Urges Muslims to Oppose Extremism

BEIJING - Chinese Muslims should resolutely oppose religious extremism, said Wang Zuo'an, chief of the State Administration for Religious Affairs. Wang made the remarks while attending the 10th National Congress of Chinese Muslims, which opened on Saturday. Wang said the development of Islam in China should stick to socialism

with Chinese characteristics. While respecting Muslims' beliefs and customs, religious interference in the fields of politics, justice and education is intolerable, Wang said. It is strongly advocated that new mosques should demonstrate Chinese characteristics and national features, instead of ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

Iran in Talks with Russia to Purchase Su-30 Fighter Jets

TEHRAN - Iran's Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehghan said Saturday that Iran is in negotiations with Russia to purchase Su-30 fighter jets, Tasnim news agency reported. However, any purchase of the military planes from Russia should include receiving the technology as well, Dehghan said. Moscow has accepted Tehran's terms in the negotiations on "joint investment and supplying technology" besides selling Su-30

fighter jets, he pointed out. On Wednesday, the second-in-command of the Iranian Army said that Iran plans to purchase more fighter jets to boost the country's air defense capabilities. Talks are underway on the purchase of new aircraft, Brigadier General Ahmad Reza Pourdastan, said but he did not provide details as to what type of aircraft or from which country the fighter jets would be purchased. In the meantime, the ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Pakistan Joins Ashgabat Agreement, Lapis Lazuli Corridor

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Saturday announced Pakistan's decision to join the Ashgabat Agreement and the Lapis Lazuli Corridor while addressing a two-day Global Sustainable Transport Conference in the Turkmen capital. The Ashgabat agreement is a transport agreement between Oman, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan and seeks to create an international transport and transit corridor. The objective of the agreement is to facilitate the transport of goods between Central Asia and the Persian Gulf. The Lapis Lazuli Corridor seeks to foster transit and trade cooperation between Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbai-

jan, Georgia and Turkey by reducing barriers facing transit trade. It intends to develop a Custom Procedure Integration in the region. "I would like to take this historic opportunity to announce our agreement in principle to join the Ashgabat Agreement as well as the Lapis Lazuli Corridor." "I am positive [the Ashgabat Agreement] will be beneficial not only to Pakistan but also to the entire Central Asian and South Asian region and beyond." The premier said "peaceful neighbourhood is a key pillar of [Pakistan's] policy", adding that without regional peace and stability "we will not be able to reap the benefits of regional connectivity and integration". (Monitoring Desk)

Uzbekistan Signs Protocol on Ratification of Several Treaties with UAE

TASHKENT - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uzbekistan hosted on the eve a meeting with the Ambassador of the United Arab Emirates, Mohammed Hareb Almehairbi. During the meeting, the sides signed a protocol on exchange of instruments of ratification of intergovernmental treaties between Uzbekistan and

the UAE. The protocol includes the Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters, the Treaty on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons and the Treaty on Extradition. The said treaties will enter into force on Dec. 21: 30 days after the exchange of the instruments of ratification. (AKIpress)

Earthquake Hits Northeastern Tajikistan

DUSHANBEH - An earthquake with a magnitude of 6.5 has struck northeastern Tajikistan on the border with China, with no immediate reports of casualties or damage. The U.S. Geological Survey said the earthquake struck on November 25 on the Tajik border with China's western Xinjiang Uyghur Au-

tonomous Region. The U.S. Geological Survey said the earthquake was shallow, at a depth of 12 kilometers. Shallow earthquakes are more likely to cause damage in populated urban areas. Northeastern Tajikistan and western China are sparsely populated, largely rural areas prone to earthquakes. (Reuters)