

Finland Raises Estimate of Number of Asylum Seekers to 50,000

HELSINKI - Finnish Interior Ministry has raised its estimate of the number of asylum seekers arriving in Finland this year from 30,000, made nearly a month ago, to 50,000. The recent estimate is made based on the fact that about 11,000 asylum seekers have arrived in Finland until September, said the ministry in a press release on Friday. The open of the rail connection, which is from southern Sweden to Luea in the north on Saturday will increase the number of asylum seekers travelling to Finland in a short time, according to the



ministry. The latest figure is almost 10 times the histori-

cal record in 2009, when Finland accepted 5,988 asylum seekers. If the

forecast is materialized, it will be definitely a new record set in the Finnish

history. To curb the increasing number of asylum seek-

ers, great domestic and EU-level efforts have been made. Finland on Wednesday announced to suspend processing of Iraqi and Somali asylum applications, and the decision can hopefully influence the escalation of the trend, noted the ministry. In order to accommodate asylum seekers, the Finnish Immigration Service has worked together with local authorities and the Finnish Red Cross to constantly open more reception centers in Finland. (Xinhua)

Hollande, Merkel Urge Putin to Target "Only" IS Positions in Syria

PARIS - Russia warplanes have to strike "only" Islamic States (IS) targets in Syria amid "confusion" over Moscow air forces attacks on rebel groups, French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel told Russian leader Vladimir Putin at a Paris meeting on Friday. "I reminded President Putin that the strikes must concern only Daech (IS) and we do not make other targets," Hollande said Friday in joint press conference with Merkel. "On that basis, we have to hold everyone to their responsibilities," he added. After Normandy quar-

ter talks on Ukrainian crisis with top leaders of Ukraine and Russia, Merkel said very clearly that "Daech was the enemy and must be fought," recalling the necessity to promote a political solution to end the civil war in Syria. Ahead of the meeting on Ukraine's future, Hollande had private talks with Russian president over Syrian conflict in attempt to narrow differences over the role of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad in the potential political transition in Damascus. A source close to the Elysee cited "extensive discussions" between ...*(More on P4)...(16)*

Russian Airstrikes Destroy IS Command Center in Syria

MOSCOW - Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed Saturday that its latest airstrikes in Syria destroyed a command center of the extremist group Islamic State (IS). "Russian warplanes have carried out more than 20 flights to attack nine IS sites in Syria over the past 24 hours," the ministry said in an online press release. "Surgical strikes carried out by Su-34 fighter bombers near the town of Raqqa (an IS stronghold in northern Syria) destroyed a command post of the IS gangs," according to the press release. An underground bunker with a warehouse of explosives and ammunition was



also destroyed during the strikes, it said.

The airstrikes, which included six sorties, were launched late Friday and early Saturday, targeting three IS terrorist infrastructure sites. The ministry added that sorties made by Su-24M bomb-

ers destroyed military equipment and weapon depots, as well as logistics facilities, of IS militants in Idlib Province. Meanwhile, terrorist fortifications, ammunition depots, fuel and lubricant materials as well as seven pieces of military hardware were struck by Russian aircraft. Along with the statement were two video footage released by the ministry, which were taken by camera drones monitoring the results of airstrike missions in the Raqqa and Jisr al-Shughour cities of Idlib Province. (Xinhua)

Egypt on Track to Sound Political and Economic Transition

CAIRO - A recent decision of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) to grant Egypt the status of "country of operations" is a recognition that the North African country has achieved good steps towards political and economic transition, according to economic experts. The EBRD board of directors has decided unanimously to turn Egypt into

a country of operations with the abstention of only one country's vote, Turkey, on Wednesday. "The bank decision is a certification of successful Egypt's economic and political transition," said Ambassador Gamal Bayoumy, Secretary General of the Egyptian European Association Agreement at the Ministry of International Cooperation. The decision mirrors im-

provement in Egypt's reputation and image especially regarding anti-corruption laws, economic reforms and the political situation as the country will witness soon the first parliamentary elections since the June 30 uprising, which toppled Islamist rule, Bayoumy told Xinhua. The presidency in a statement said the EBRD approval of turning Egypt into a

country of operations is an international recognition of Egypt's sound political and economic transition, given that the founding agreement of the EBRD emphasizes that countries, where the EBRD operates, must commit to the principles of democracy, political pluralism and a market-led economy. The presidency looks forward to ...*(More on P4)...(17)*

Kerry Holds Iran Talks with Iran FM

UNITED NATIONS - US Secretary of State John Kerry held an impromptu meeting with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif in New York on Friday to discuss steps to implement the Iran nuclear deal. The meeting was scheduled at the last minute after a week of intense diplomacy on the Syria crisis. US officials did not provide details, saying only that the talks focused on implementing



the historic deal reached in July to curb Iran's nuclear program. The United States has sought to enlist Iran in trying to find a way forward on the Syria crisis after Russia launched its air war. (AFP)

Greece's New Parliament Sworn in after Snap Elections



ATHENS - Greece's new parliament convened Saturday, the first time after the Sept. 20 snap general elections, for its swearing-in ceremony. Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras' left-wing radical SYRIZA party and the right-wing Independent Greeks (ANEL) party, junior partner of the ruling coalition, now jointly control 155 seats. In the 300-member assembly, 61 parliament members are newly elected and 59 legislators are women. The far-right Golden Dawn party remains the third largest party controlling 18 seats among eight parties represented in the new parliament. Lawmakers will vote on a new round of tough austerity and reform measures within months in exchange of further aid by international creditors under the third bailout program approved this summer. The first SYRIZA-ANEL government formed after January's polls had been teetering on the brink of collapse after the SYRIZA party split over the agreement on the new bailout in August, when Tsipras called the Sept. 20 elections. Confidence vote on the new government will be held on Wednesday, the first crucial test for the new cabinet headed by the 41-year-old leftist leader. Meanwhile, the parliament's speaker and vice speakers will be elected on Sunday, and Tsipras is expected to make his government policy statement on Monday. (Xinhua)

Sudan Has Been "an Active Partner" in Int'l Anti-Terror Efforts: FM

UNITED NATIONS - Sudanese Foreign Minister Ibrahim Ahmed Ghandour said Friday that his country has been "an active partner" in international efforts in combating terrorism. The minister made the remarks while taking the floor at the annual high-level debate of the UN General Assembly, which opened Monday. "At the national level as well, we have come a long way in ensuring that our laws and legislations

are in full cooperation with the international law and the international instruments related to combating terrorism," he said. Sudan has become a party more than a decade ago to the relevant international law and instrument regarding the fight against terrorism, he said. "In this regard, we firmly reiterate, on this podium, our categorical rejection of all attempts to politicise and circumvent the provisions of international law," he said.



"Our world will not be rectified in the absence of a fair, equitable and universally acceptable international order," the minister said. "The current international system, which we had

contracted and mutually accepted several decades ago and is governing world relations today, can no longer cope with the developments and major transformations occurring worldwide." (Xinhua)

Russia Make Situation in Syria Worse: Cameron



LONDON - British Prime Minister David Cameron says Russia's continuing military intervention in Syria is making the situation worse. He said Saturday that Russia's actions are supporting the "butcher" president of Syria, Bashar Assad.

Cameron said Russian President Vladimir Putin's military forces are not discriminating between Islamic State extremists inside Syria and more moderate opposition forces battling Assad. Cameron called for a ...*(More on P4)...(18)*

Australian PM Says Sydney Shooting "Act of Terrorism"

SYDNEY - The shooting of a civilian police employee in western Sydney by a 15-year-old gunman was an "act of terrorism," Australian authorities said on Saturday. "This appears to have been an act of politically motivated violence so at this stage it appears to have been an act of terrorism," Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull told reporters in Melbourne. "It is a shocking crime. It is a cold-blooded murder." The teenager of Iraqi-Kurdish decent, born in

Iran, shot and killed Curtis Cheng, a 17-year veteran in the New South Wales Police's financial department, on Friday afternoon. "We're a long way from establishing a full picture of this man, and his exact motivations still remain a mystery to us," New South Wales police commissioner Andrew Scipione said. Initial investigations by Australian counter-terrorism authorities indicated the teenage gunman was a "clean skin" - not on ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

Neighbour News

Pakistan Airlines Cancels Dozens of Flights Due to Pilots' Strike

ISLAMABAD - The Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) has canceled dozens of flights due to pilots' strike, affecting thousands of passengers, officials said Saturday. The pilots union, the Pakistan Airline Pilots Association (PALPA), began its strike on Friday, after the authorities canceled license of a pilot who refused to fly beyond the "stipulated flight duty time limitation." The strike has forced cancellations of nearly 50 flights on both domestic and international routes, aviation officials said. Talks between the PALPA and the PIA authorities in Karachi failed to end

the deadlock, the PALPA President Captain Amir Hashmi told the media. PIA spokesman Daniyal Gilani said the Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Aviation Captain Shujaat Azeem has invited PALPA for talks in Islamabad on Saturday. However, the PALPA president said the association has not received any invitation for the talks. The strike has raised concern over the flight schedule of thousands of Pakistani pilgrims in Saudi Arabia. Several morning flights were canceled on Saturday because of the deadlock in negotiations, officials said. (Xinhua)

Iran Holds Ceremony to Pay Tribute to Dead Iranians in Saudi Hajj Disaster

TEHRAN - Iran's President Hassan Rouhani on Saturday urged for an investigation into the latest Hajj stampede in Saudi Arabia which left 465 Iranian pilgrims dead. A fact-finding committee, made of the representatives of all the Islamic countries, should probe into the causes of the incident in Mina, near Saudi religious city of Mecca, Rouhani said in a ceremony to pay tribute to the dead bodies of 104 Iranian pilgrims transferred to Tehran Mehrabad airport early on Saturday. "It should be clarified who were responsible for the incident," Rouhani said, adding that Iran will never abstain from the damages inflicted on its nationals in Mina if it is proved that some Saudi authorities caused the

disaster. All Muslim nations should know the causes of the Hajj disaster and they should be assured that such events will never happen in next years in Hajj rituals. Tehran said about 64,000 Iranians travelled to Saudi Arabia to perform the Hajj rituals this year. It has also urged immediate transfer of the dead bodies to Iran, blaming Saudi Arabia's "inefficiency and mismanagement" in handling the largest gathering of Muslims. The Saudi authorities have earlier put the total number of pilgrims killed in the accident at 769. The Saudi Interior Ministry said the stampede appeared to have been caused by two waves of pilgrims meeting at an intersection. (Xinhua)

At UN, Turkmenistan Proposes Establishing Climate Change Centre for Central Asia

ASHGABAT - In her address at the General Assembly, Aksoltan Ataeva, Permanent Representative of Turkmenistan to the United Nations, introduced a proposal to set up a climate change centre specifically for Central Asia. "The major ecological problems which exist in this region, I think, are well known. They directly or indirectly affect the overall atmosphere in the region as well as the standard of living and the quality of life of people living there and sometimes they have a negative effect on relations between States," she said during the annual General Debate. She

also suggested that a centre with a UN mandate could carry out monitoring and could provide an objective analysis of the environmental processes occurring in the region and on that basis would be able to issue relevant recommendations to the governments of Central Asian States. "The vision for the functions and the directions of all the activities of the centre already exist, and Turkmenistan is ready to provide for the centre all necessary infrastructure in Turkmenistan and to ensure the most favourable conditions for the work of the staff there," she explained. (Agencies)

Productive Xi-Obama Summit Generates Many Areas for Cooperation: Former Envoy

WASHINGTON - The recent summit between Chinese President Xi Jinping and his U.S. counterpart Barack Obama was "very productive" and has produced "lots of areas" for cooperation, former U.S. ambassador to China Stapleton Roy told Xinhua recently. "They actually had very productive meetings," said Roy, a distinguished scholar and founding director emeritus of the Kissinger Institute for Chinese-U.S. Studies at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, commenting on the meetings held at the White House on Sept. 25 between the two leaders during Xi's first state visit to the country. Roy,

who was born in Nanjing, China in 1935 and served as the U.S. ambassador to China from 1991 to 1995, said that the Xi-Obama summit addressed "a whole range of issues" from climate change to Afghanistan and ocean conservancy. "If you don't follow U.S.-China relations closely, you'd be blown away by the number of areas where we are cooperating with China," Roy said. Roy noted that the summit produced a "breakthrough" on the most contentious issue of the cyber theft of intellectual property, as the two leaders agreed that such a behavior is a crime and both governments will seek to curb it. (Xinhua)