

Lebanon PM demands Turkish help to beat garbage crisis

Hurriyet Daily News, 28.08.2015



Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoğlu has offered to help his Lebanese counterpart Tammam Salam in overcoming the huge garbage crisis in the country, which has shaken Salam's national unity government amid angry street protests.

The two leaders spoke on the phone, Turkey's state-run Anadolu Agency reported, quoting prime ministry sources, who said the Lebanese leader requested Turkey's previous experience on the issue. Davutoğlu responded by promising to send a technical team to Lebanon as soon as possible, the agency reported.

He also ordered the Environment and Urbanization Ministry to set up a team for the task. Meanwhile, Lebanese security forces have orders to show restraint at a planned mass protest against the country's government this weekend, but will not tolerate attempts by "thugs" to make trouble, Interior Minister Nohad Machnouk said. Two rallies in the capital of Beirut last weekend drew 20,000 people, and dozens were hurt in clashes between protesters and security forces at the time.

The protests have been driven by anger over garbage piling up streets of Beirut, following the closure of a main landfill. The government's failure to resolve the trash crisis has evolved into wider protests against a political class that has dominated Lebanon since the end of the country's civil war in 1990 and is widely seen as dysfunctional. Interior Minister Machnouk said non-violent protests would be permitted. "We are committed to protecting any citizen who expresses himself through peaceful means," he said.

At the same time, there is concern about "attempts by thugs to exploit the rally in order to vent political frustrations and spite," Machnouk warned. He said troops would be deployed to prevent any attempts to break into government buildings. He also vowed that troops suspected of using excessive force last weekend will be held accountable. "There were mistakes that happened when I was out of the country," he said, blaming lack of coordination between the various security agencies.

Organizers have rallied support under the slogan, "You Stink," in reference to both the garbage crisis and the political establishment. The campaigners say they are trying to end a patronage system that divvies up power to each of Lebanon's multiple communities - Shiites, Sunnis, Christians, Druze and more. That system has been the center of Lebanese politics for decades and helped fuel the 15-year civil war. Critics say politicians spend more time cultivating their sectarian fiefdoms than actually governing.

Turkish, French presidents discuss growing refugee crisis

Hurriyet Daily News, 04.09.2015



President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan had a phone conversation with his French counterpart, François Hollande, to discuss the ongoing refugee crisis in the Mediterranean Sea amid the latter's strong criticisms against European leaders for not doing enough to handle the problem.

The two leaders President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan and François Hollande have emphasized that the international community, particularly the European Union, should do more in dealing with the refugee crisis, as they both referred to how the picture of a three-year old Syrian boy's lifeless body that washed ashore shocked the world.

Hollande praised Turkey's open door policy towards Syrians and Iraqis, and expressed his country will provide more aid to Turkey, while also asking for more cooperation between Turkey and the EU on this matter. The French president also said the failure in finding a political solution to the Syrian question will deepen the refugee crisis. Erdoğan repeated that Turkey hosts around 2 million Syrians and Iraqis and expressed his expectation from international community to share the burden. Turkish president also talked about Turkey's ongoing fight against terror, including the PKK and the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL).

US ambassador: US to stay in Incirlik as long as required

Hürriyet Daily News, 03.09.2015



American aircraft will remain at Turkey's Incirlik airbase as long as required in the struggle against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the top U.S. diplomat in Ankara has said.

“What the actual composition [of the U.S. force] is will depend obviously on how the military campaign evolves and what the specific requirements are to be able to be most effective against DAESH [the Arabic acronym of ISIL]. In terms of duration, we expect that we will be here as long as is required to achieve the objective that we share, which is to degrade and ultimately defeat DAESH.



So, we are thinking of this very much in terms of a set of objectives as opposed to a period of time,” U.S. Ambassador to Turkey John Bass said in an interview on CNNTürk aired on. With respect to the coalition effort against DAESH, the inclusion of Turkey in the full spectrum of operations against DAESH is a really important development and an important additional contribution to our effort to degrade overtime and ultimately defeat this terrible terrorist organization,” the ambassador said.

“We are already benefiting not only from Turkey’s active participation, but also from the ability to base U.S. and potentially other coalition aircraft and assets in Turkey, which greatly reduces the time for those assets to reach targets in Syria, and therefore increases the capability of the coalition to pursue this military campaign,” he added. The overall coordination of the air operations is being conducted from a U.S. Central Command facility in the Middle East, the ambassador said, noting that other participating nations from across the coalition had personnel contributing to the center and that all aircraft participating in combat operations were in contact with each other. Asked if the Bashar al-Assad regime, had been informed by the U.S. or the coalition prior to military operations, Bass said the U.S. and other members of the coalition had taken measures to ensure the Syrian government understood that they were operating in Syrian airspace to address a terrorist problem and that they were going to be operating in their airspace to conduct this fight.

“And we expect the regime to stay away from our aircraft lest we have to engage in appropriate measures to protect coalition aircraft, which we absolutely will do if we need to,” he stated. Elaborating on an ISIL-free zone that Turkey wants to establish on the Syrian side of its border, Bass said the success over time to degrade and defeat ISIL depended on the coalition’s ability to clear the space and eliminate the group’s ability to take advantage of its presence on the border to smuggle people and equipment and technology from Turkey.

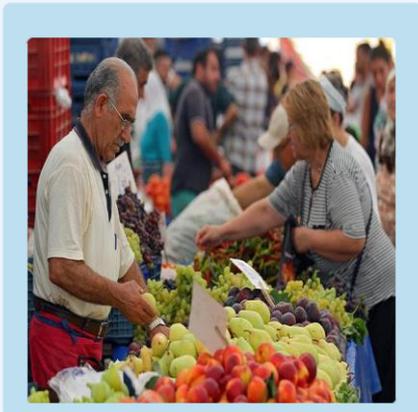
“What is the most important thing here is the result we are seeking – not necessarily what we call it,” Bass said. The U.S. does not have an intention to create a Kurdish corridor that will belong to the Democratic Union Party (PYD) in northern Syria, Bass also said. The U.S. supports the territorial integrity of Syria, just as it supports the territorial integrity of Turkey and Iraq, he said. “We do not support parties using and capitalizing on the current conflict in Syria to dismember the country or to create more than one political entity out of that country,” Bass said. The ambassador also said they were “concerned” over renewed clashes between the Turkish military and the outlawed PKK.

“It troubles us that we see a resumption of conflict in Turkey that has been prompted by attacks by the PKK inside Turkey,” Bass said. “The last thing Turkey needs and the last thing this region needs is another conflict with additional death and suffering and instability generated by it. So we believe it is really important to see the [peace] process resume, and obviously the first step in getting to that is a cessation of the current conflict and fighting. And that starts with the PKK stopping its attacks,” he said. He also refuted remarks by the PKK’s Cemil Bayık that they had been exchanging messages with the Americans. “The United States government is not in dialogue with the PKK,” he said.

Elaborating on police raids conducted against the İpek Group, which is known to be close to the Gülen Community, the ambassador said whenever there was government action against a company that owns and operates media outlets, that raises important additional requirements and responsibilities for governments in democratic societies to make sure that any such actions are conducted in accordance with the law and that they scrupulously adhere to and support fundamental universal rights in democratic societies of due process, freedom of expression and freedom of the press. "I think particularly in countries like Turkey, where you have very polarized politics and a very polarized media environment, it is important for government to provide to all of the citizens of this country confidence that the law is being applied fairly and equally to all citizens and all companies," Bass said.

Turkey's annual inflation rate rises to 7.14 pct in August

Hurriyet Daily News, 03.09.2015



Inflation in Turkey increased in August after falling for two consecutive months, largely due to the rise in unprocessed food prices, official statistics revealed. The annualized inflation rate rose to 7.14 percent in August from 6.81 percent in the previous month, according to TÜİK figures.

The Consumer Price Index saw a 0.4 percentage point increase in August from July, during which the index saw a sharp decrease. The food and non-alcoholic beverage prices, which constitute around 30 percent of the consumption basket, rose by 1.31 percent on a monthly basis and 9.71 percent on a yearly basis in August.

"When new data was examined, we saw that both monthly data at 0.4 percent and annual data at 7.14 percent were over the forecast at 0.1 percent and 6.8 percent respectively," economist Eren Can Umut from Meksa Securities said, quoted by Anadolu Agency. "Since the recent sharp depreciation in the Turkish Lira increases the cost of production, it is normal to see a surge in prices," Umut said. The lira lost around 21 percent in value this year, becoming one of the world's worst performing currencies. Garanti Investment Chief Economist Gizem Öztok Altınbaş said the bank had revised up its year-end inflation expectations from 7 percent to 7.7 percent, and for 2016 from 6.6 percent to 7 percent, as reported by Reuters. In August, the highest monthly increase was 2.05 percent in hotels, cafes and restaurants, while the largest monthly decline was 4.32 percent in clothing and footwear, according to the report. The highest annual increase was 14.26 percent for hotels, cafes and restaurants, added the report.

Türk Telekom's investments to reach 20 billion liras by year-end

Hurriyet Daily News, 03.09.2015



Türk Telekom Group has allocated two thirds of its investments, which by the end of this year will be approximately 20 billion Turkish Liras (\$6.7 billion) since 2005, to infrastructure and fiber, CEO Rami Aslan said.

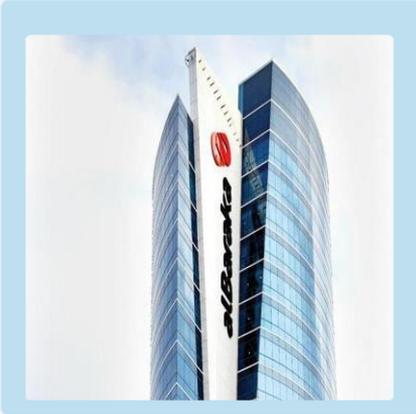
“This infrastructure will create the digital backbone of 4.5G technology and all sorts of next-generation mobile technologies in Turkey,” Aslan told reporters during a press meeting with Consumer Business Unit CEO Erkan Akdemir and Corporate Business Unit CEO Mehmet Ali Akarca. The trio had evaluated the results of the spectrum tender held last week in Ankara.

Aslan emphasized that they would pay the tender price in cash, bond or credit, saying they had enough cash to be ready for the next round. “We do have a very strong balance sheet, we have enough cash for the next round,” he said, adding that the group has the capability to minimize the effect of ongoing exchange rate fluctuations. Turkey’s three existing mobile operators, Turkcell, Vodafone and Avea, won the rights to the country’s advanced 4G network, dubbed “4.5G,” at the tender held by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (BTK). The network is due to be established for a sum of more than 3.9 billion euros. CEO Aslan emphasized that the frequency allocation normalizes the industry and creates a competitive environment where all operators can compete equally.

For his part, Akdemir said Türk Telekom has the power to shape the competition after purchasing 30 percent of the spectrum. “We have the highest rate of frequency per subscriber in terms of coverage and capacity. The tender has removed the inequality in the market, especially after the distribution of the 900 Mhz band,” he said. Meanwhile, Akdemir dismissed criticism that Turkey will become a “cellphone dump” after the introduction of 4.5G technology. “Even 2G and 3G technologies will still be being used, so Turkey won’t be a dump,” he said. Corporate Business Unit CEO Akarca said things would “never be the same again” after the introduction of the 4.5G technology. “New job opportunities will arise with 4.5G in all industries, from energy and retail to automation and health,” he said.

Türkiye Finans, Albaraka Türk apply for lira sukuk

Reuters, 31.08.2015



Turkish Islamic lenders Türkiye Finans and Albaraka Türk have applied separately to issue Islamic bonds, or sukuk, according to Turkey's Capital Markets Board (SPK).

Türkiye Finans, a sharia-compliant lender which has a focus on loans to corporate clients, has applied to raise up to 1.5 billion lira (\$513.2 million) through its wholly-owned unit, TF Varlık Kiralama. No tenor or details of underlying assets were given for the deal, which could be sold as a public offering or to qualified investors. Sources told Reuters that Türkiye Finans was planning a dollar-denominated sukuk to bolster its supplementary capital.

Albaraka Türk, a unit of Bahrain-based Al Baraka Banking Group, has also applied to raise up to 1 billion lira through its asset-leasing company, Bereket Varlık Kiralama. Albaraka Türk mandated banks for an Islamic syndicated loan with a total initial amount of \$400 million. The bulk of sukuk issuance in Turkey has come from the government and the country's Islamic banks, known as participation banks, although corporate issuance is also growing.

Int'l energy agency to become 'central bank' for renewable energy

Hurriyet Daily News, 04.09.2015



New International Energy Agency (IEA) Executive Director Dr. Fatih Birol has said he plans to focus on boosting renewable energy in addition to fossil fuels by turning the agency into "a kind of central bank" in renewable energy technologies, during his first interview since assuming the position.

Birol took office as the new executive director of the International Energy Agency (IEA) after years as a chief economist at the agency, ushering in a new era for the global energy authority. He was the first IEA chief who was elected by the support of all 29 member countries.

“The latest developments in the Middle East, especially in Iraq, Yemen and Syria, may be signaling tougher days ahead for the energy markets. As the IEA head, there are two things I want to achieve. We have 29 members from the United States to Japan, but some of the leading energy players are not a member, such as China, India and Mexico. My first aim is to attract such countries to our agency. In this vein, I’ll make my first official visit to Beijing, not to Brussels or Washington. I want to be able to make China, India and Mexico IAE members,” he said. Birol’s second aim was to enable the IEA to play a leading role in clean energy.

“Our agency worked seriously in the oil, natural gas and nuclear energy areas. I believe it is now time for the IEA to hold a leading position in renewable energy issues. I even want to turn the agency into a kind of central bank for renewable energy, energy efficiency and energy technologies,” he said. On the road to achieving this goal, the agency will search for ways to integrate new energy technologies into various markets, he said. “For instance, we have conducted some research about how to increase energy efficiency in cars across several countries... We have acquired some knowhow about which regulations are needed, which problems are faced, which practices are the best, etc. We want to transfer this to other countries... The more people use renewable energy, the lower the costs will be,” he said.

Senior manager at Akkuyu nuclear project resigns, says Turkey shouldn’t work with Russian company

Dogan News Agency, 04.09.2015



A senior manager at Turkey’s first nuclear power plant in the Mediterranean province of Mersin has resigned from his post, claiming that even though Turkey needs nuclear technology, it should not be done with contracted Russian Rosatom.

Faruk Uzel, worked as the Public Diplomacy and Government Relations Manager for the Akkuyu Nuclear Joint Stock Company for four years, resigned from the company, saying the project should not proceed with Rosatom, as they were unprofessional. “This project needs to be done but not with these people,” said Uzel at a press conference he organized at the Association of Journalists’ Mersin branch.

“They [the state] should give up this project which is amateur, novice and full of technical faults. They should conduct it with more professional partners,” Uzel added. Speaking at the conference, Uzel asked how a company, which could not isolate underground water from an information center built one-meter below ground level, could build a nuclear power plant 12-meters below ground level and near the sea.

Uzel asked if it was true that Rosatom did not think to consider the shore edge line while placing reactors and thus placed one below the shore line. He added that because of this fault, the company could not continue the project and is currently waiting for a change in law to proceed. Commenting on why the Russian company did not want to be transparent about radiation tracking and measurement, Uzel asked why they had rejected the requests of Mersin University and the representatives of the Mersin citizens about the issue. Uzel said he decided to resign because he voiced the great risks of the project built by the Russian company held. "I declare that, while supporting my country's efforts to construct a nuclear power plant and possess this technology, I have resigned from the Akkuyu Nuclear Power Plant Project as a result of mentioning the observation that the nuclear power plant, which the Russian company's activities and mentality will construct, is a great risk to my country and nation," read the message Uzel sent journalists.

Meanwhile, Uzel also responded to questions about recent allegations about him regarding embezzled money and sexually harassing women employees and women visitors to the facility. He said the allegations were sent to the press right after Uzel received a phone call from a company official following his message about his resignation to his close circle. "I had a telephone conversation with an official calling on behalf of the company, [saying] that I should refute the message I released and issue a correction or else they would lynch me," said Uzel, adding that it was after this phone call that he had decided to hold a press conference, guessing that he would be the subject of a smear campaign. Uzel said it was after his press conference that the e-mail with allegations against him was distributed. The Akkuyu Nuclear Joint Stock Company was established after Rosatom signed an agreement with the Turkish Energy Ministry to build and operate the nuclear power plant in 2011. Turkey's former energy minister, Taner Yıldız, said it was not possible for Turkey to cancel the construction of the Akkuyu nuclear power plant as the project has been made upon an intergovernmental agreement between Turkey and Russia, on June 4. The nuclear plant will require a \$22 billion investment and will have a life cycle of 60 years.

Iran's Khamenei backs parliamentary vote on nuclear deal with powers

Reuters, 03.09.2015



Iran's Supreme Leader said that he backed a parliamentary vote on a historic nuclear deal reached with six major powers and said sanctions against his country should be lifted completely rather than suspended, state television reported. "The parliament should not be sidelined on the nuclear deal issue. I am not saying lawmakers should approve the deal or reject it. It is up to them to decide," Ayatollah Khamenei said.

"Sanctions imposed on Iran should be lifted and not only suspended. If not, then we will only suspend our nuclear activities. Our officials only discuss the nuclear deal. We will never support America's policies on Syria and Iraq."

The White House, meanwhile, welcomed the growing support in the U.S. Senate for the Iran nuclear agreement and will keep working with lawmakers to secure as much backing as possible. “We are encouraged by the latest tally,” said White House spokesman Josh Earnest. “When the stakes are this high, every vote is important.” President Barack Obama secured the 34th Senate vote needed to sustain a veto of any congressional resolution disapproving the nuclear deal with Iran, ensuring the accord will not fail in the U.S. Congress.

Israel’s top diplomat singing Turkey’s new FM’s praises

Aljazeera, 11.02.2014



Israel’s top diplomat has highly commended Turkey’s new Foreign Minister, Feridun Sinirlioğlu, as a chance for Turkey to have a high-skill diplomat as foreign minister, while seeming convinced of a positive change in the dynamics of Israel-Turkey relations, despite the fact of more visible differences in the last few years.

According to Dore Gold, the director-general of Israel’s Foreign Ministry, there are reasons for being hopeful when an increasing convergence of interests between the two countries offers a chance to the two once-close allies for turning the Middle East into a productive and peaceful area.

“I sent your new foreign minister a letter of congratulations,” Gold told a group of journalists from Turkey. “I have to say that many people in different capitals asked about the Rome meeting and ... I heard the highest praise whether I was in a European capital or speaking to American officials about his diplomatic skills,” Gold told the visiting group. Gold, a longtime adviser to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, held an unannounced meeting with his former Turkish counterpart, Sinirlioğlu, undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry who has recently taken over as minister, in Rome in the second half of June to explore ways of improving ties.

“Turkey is very lucky to have him as foreign minister. He is a first-class diplomat,” Gold said, declining to elaborate whether he and Sinirlioğlu have been planning to hold a meeting in a near future. Taking pains to not set a prospective calendar, Gold, nonetheless, was bold while explaining his optimistic view of the future and listing certain factors as reasons nourishing his optimism. “Israelis feel a great affinity to Turkey,” Israel’s top diplomat said, citing geostrategic, people-to-people and historical backgrounds for such strong affinity, with a special emphasis on the Ottoman Empire’s role as a haven for Jewish people in 1492 during the Spanish Inquisition. “I think the connection has always been very special,” he said, underlining that such bond is still in the “political consciousness” of Israeli people. According to Gold, what he sees as “a period of greater Iranian expansionism” is a key factor which requires rapprochement of the once close allies.



“Our two countries were strategic partners for so many years during the Cold War; we faced Soviet Union together. We had to provide security in the East Mediterranean together. Our security establishments were closely interwoven for many years. Now it is no secret that in the last few years, in the aftermath of the Mavi Marmara, the differences we had become more pronounced, public statements made in both countries by leaders. But I think today something is occurring. What we are seeing is an increasing convergence of our interests in the last number of years,” Gold elaborated.

“Today Turkey is at war with the Islamic State of Iraq and Levant [ISIL],” Gold, citing the jihadist group as a threat he said, noting that ISIL was not only for Turkey but also for Iraq, Syria and Israel. “ISIL now has a presence in Sinai peninsula. Very close to our border. One of the current features of presence of ISIL in northern Sinai is the cooperative relationship between ISIL and Hamas. Iran has to figure largely in the national security considerations of both of our countries. Iran is largely responsible for a good deal of the chaos in the Middle East today. Iran modus operandi includes use of religious methods for spreading its power and influence. There are perceptions on Iran becoming more moderate from being a radical threat. To the contrary, we believe that Iranian agreement with P5+1 could give Iranians a sense of empowerment. As Israel and Turkey, at different times, we have been targets for Iran. Discussion is needed for protecting our national interests,” Gold said, putting his frame on why he believed that the Iran issue is “another element in convergence of interests.” “We have not yet resolved the crisis we had over time in Mavi Marmara but I think we are moving in a positive direction and our leaderships will at some point be able to complete that process. But in the meantime we face a Middle East which is much more dangerous and we are among elements in the region who can think and work together about how to change things in the Middle East,” he said.

Turkey’s relations with Israel have deteriorated since nine Turks and one Turkish-American were killed, and several other pro-Palestinian activists were wounded when Israeli commandos stormed the Mavi Marmara on May 31, 2010, which was trying to break the blockade on Gaza. The relationship between the two countries has worsened since then, with both sides withdrawing their ambassadors and reducing their diplomatic representation in each other’s capitals. Numerous efforts to normalize ties between Turkey and Israel have failed, including one initiated by U.S. President Barack Obama in March 2013. At the time, Israel bowed to the longstanding demand by Ankara, once a close strategic partner, to apologize formally for the deaths aboard the Mavi Marmara. However, an agreement to normalize relations has not been achieved. In recent years, Turkish and Israeli officials have often engaged in wars of words, criticizing each other’s policies.

“Both countries have interest in developing relations but diplomacy takes time. There is no instant breakthrough in this business and we will find a way, a path and a time but I think the general direction we are moving is positive,” Gold said. Referring to one of Turkey’s preconditions for normalization of relations, which is lifting Gaza’s blockade, Gold said they wished Turkish authorities saw Israel’s efforts for the economic development of Gaza. “Israel is supportive of Gaza. We have to find a way for growing improvement without putting Israelis into danger,” Gold said, repeatedly refuting claims that Israeli officials have been holding negotiations with Hamas. “Hamas remains to be a part of the jihadist universe,” he said.

Putin: Premature to talk about Russian military action against ISIL

AFP, 04.09.2015



Russian President Vladimir Putin said it was premature to talk about Russia taking part in military operations against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), as the US said it was checking reports of Russian troops in Syria.

Asked whether Russia could take part in operations against ISIL, Putin said: “We are looking at various options but so far what you are talking about is not on the agenda. “To say we’re ready to do this today -- so far it’s premature to talk about this. But we are already giving Syria quite serious help with equipment and training soldiers, with our weapons,” RIA Novosti state news agency quoted Putin as saying.

The White House said it was closely monitoring reports that Russia is carrying out military operations in Syria, warning such actions, if confirmed, would be “destabilising and counter-productive.” The comments come after images appeared on a social media account linked to Syrian fighters purporting to show Russian aircraft and drones near Idlib province. Putin, speaking at an international economic forum in the far eastern city of Vladivostok, criticised US air strikes on ISIL as ineffective. “So far the effectiveness of these air strikes is low,” he said. Putin said that military supplies to Syria were fulfilling contracts dating back five to seven years.

Greece ‘to miss 2015 privatization sales target’

Reuters, 03.09.2015



Greece will miss its revenue target from asset sales this year due to delays in a 1.2 billion euro airport deal, the head of its privatization agency said, in a setback to efforts to meet the terms of its new bailout. As part of its commitments under the 86 billion euro (\$97 billion) rescue loan from international creditors, Greece aims to raise 1.4 billion euros from privatizations this year.

It has a patchy record of meeting such targets, and Stergios Pitsiorlas said reaching the 2015 figure was also now “unfeasible”. “On the other hand, I think it is realistic that we achieve the 2016 targets,” he told Reuters in an interview.

Greece aims to cash in 3.7 billion euros from asset sales next year and 1.3 billion euros in 2017. At the end of last year it chose Germany's Fraport and its Greek partner, energy firm Copelouzos, as the preferred bidder to operate 14 regional airports in tourist destinations -one of the biggest privatizations since the start of the debt crisis in 2009. But the agreement, along with others including the sale of 67 percent in its biggest ports, Piraeus and Thessaloniki, was halted soon after the leftist Syriza-led government came to power in January. Although the sales are now back on track, Greece may not conclude the airport transaction on time to receive the 1.2 billion euros from the deal by December, Pitsiorlas said. "By the end of 2015, HRADF will implement a very important part of the first phase of this program but the 1.4 billion euro (revenue target) is unfeasible," Pitsiorlas said.

Cameron: Britain to take 'thousands more Syrian refugees'

AFP, 04.09.2015



Britain will take in thousands more Syrian refugees, Prime Minister David Cameron said amid growing pressure at home and abroad to address the crisis. "Given the scale of the crisis and the suffering of the people, today I can announce that we will do more, providing resettlement for thousands more Syrian refugees," he told reporters on a visit to Lisbon.

"We will continue with our approach of taking them from the refugee camps," he added, in a reference to UN camps on the Syrian border. "This provides them with a more direct and safe route to the UK, rather hazardous journey which has tragically cost so many lives," the prime minister said.

Cameron did not specify how many more refugees Britain would accept, saying only that more details would be announced next week and that the resettlement scheme would be kept "under review". "Britain will act with our head and our heart, providing refuge for those in need while working on a long term solution to the Syria crisis," Cameron said. Britain has faced mounting pressure to accept a greater share of Syrian refugees, especially after the publication this week of harrowing images of a three-year-old Syrian toddler found dead on a Turkish beach.

A petition to parliament urging Britain to accept more refugees has garnered nearly 360,000 signatures, while campaign group Avaaz said that 2,000 Britons had volunteered to host refugee families. Several editorials in Britain harked back to the times when Britain accepted huge numbers of refugees before and after World War II, and around the Balkan wars of the 1990s. Britain has accepted 216 Syrian refugees under a special government scheme over the past year and around 5,000 Syrians have been granted asylum since the conflict there broke out in 2011 -- far fewer than countries like France, Germany and Sweden. More than four million Syrians have fled the war, many of them taking refuge in neighbouring Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan.

Britain has also opted out of a quota system for relocating asylum seekers within the European Union despite growing calls in the EU for fairer distribution. On the streets of London, views on the issue varied. “I can’t believe that we haven’t done anything before now,” said 45-year-old Victoria Buurman as she walked with her shopping in central London. “I think it’s disgusting that we have to get to a point where children are dying before we even recognise that we’re not acting morally. It’s horrific,” she said, breaking into tears. But Souvik Ghosh, a 26-year-old research student from India, said Britain should not take any more migrants. “There should be some limitations, OK? Because otherwise this country’s economic system will be overflowed,” he said. Contenders for the leadership of the main opposition Labour Party have all urged Cameron to do more.

One of them, Yvette Cooper, has urged Britain to immediately accept 10,000 more Syrian refugees, while bookmakers’ favourite Jeremy Corbyn added there was no “electric fence and military solution” to the crisis. “It’s a humanitarian crisis and it must be solved by human beings acting in a humanitarian way,” he said. Several MPs from Cameron’s own Conservatives also urged the prime minister to do more. “Our common humanity demands action at home and abroad,” said Tom Tugendhat, who represents part of the Kent region where many undocumented migrants arrive on ferries or through the Channel Tunnel.

There was also criticism from elsewhere in Europe, with the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights, Nils Muiznieks, saying he was “seriously concerned” by Cameron’s position. “While it is true that long-term peace should be brought to Syria and other war-torn countries, it is also true that the UK has a legal and moral obligation to offer shelter to those who flee war and persecution,” he said. “The truth is that at the moment the UK is doing much less than other European countries”. Peter Sutherland, the UN special representative on international migration, told the BBC that while some countries were “massively bearing the burden” of the migrant crisis, Britain was among those that “can do more”.

EU under pressure to agree binding refugee quotas as ministers meet

AFP, 04.09.2015



EU countries were set to try to bridge differences on Europe’s escalating migrant crisis at a foreign ministers’ meeting, with the shocking image of a dead Syrian toddler washed up on a beach driving calls for binding refugee quotas.

The heartbreaking images of three-year-old Aylan Kurdi lying dead in the surf -- and his father’s emotional account -- have ramped up pressure on political leaders to address Europe’s worst refugee crisis since World War II. Under-fire British Prime Minister David Cameron, whose country has been accused of failing to help shoulder the burden, is expected to announce a plan to take in more Syrian refugees.



German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Francois Hollande urged EU members to accept “binding” refugee quotas. In Hungary, meanwhile, a tense standoff continued between police and hundreds of refugees blocked by police from carrying on their journey west towards Germany. The police allowed the refugees board a train in Budapest bound for the Austrian border. But their journey ended just west of the capital in Bicske, where police tried to disembark them and take them to a refugee processing camp. An estimated 200 to 300 people, angry at what they saw as Hungary’s trickery, refused to get off the train, where they spent the night. EU foreign ministers were to meet later in Luxembourg to discuss the crisis, which has split the bloc between countries like Germany advocating greater solidarity with the refugees and nations such as Hungary that have taken a hardline approach. In a statement, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres said the EU faced “a defining moment”. Referring to the pictures of little Aylan which have dominated newspaper front pages this week, he said: “Europe cannot go on responding to this crisis with a piecemeal or incremental approach. “No country can do it alone, and no country can refuse to do its part,” he added, calling for a “mass relocation programme, with the mandatory participation of all EU member states” that would take up to 200,000 refugees.

Europe is facing a huge influx on all sides, with more than 350,000 people crossing the Mediterranean in flimsy boats this year alone, according to the International Organisation for Migration. In London, British media reported that Cameron was drawing up a plan to accept “thousands” of refugees, with the option of directly accepting refugees from UN camps on the Syrian border under consideration. Cameron earlier promised the country would fulfil its “moral responsibilities”, after having only accepted 216 Syrian refugees over the past year. He said the numbers allowed would be kept “under review”. Merkel and Hollande said they had agreed the EU members should take in a minimum number of migrants. “We agree that... we need binding quotas within the European Union to share the burden. That is the principle of solidarity,” Merkel told reporters during a visit to the Swiss capital. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker will unveil a plan for the relocation of at least 120,000 more refugees to ease the burden on frontline EU nations Greece, Italy and Hungary, a European source told AFP.

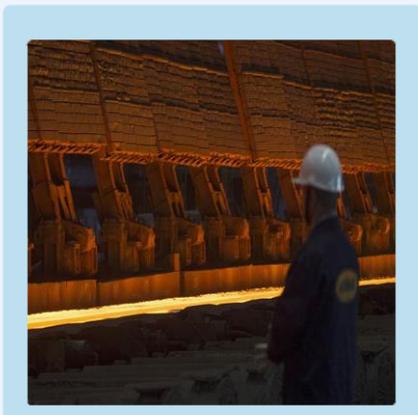
EU president Donald Tusk called on member states to resettle at least 100,000 refugees -- far above the current agreement for 32,000. The human cost of the migrant crisis has been brought into sharp focus by Aylan’s drowning. His father Abdullah Kurdi, who also lost his wife in tragedy, has told of the horrific moments when the family of four was tipped into the Mediterranean off Turkey’s coast. “I was holding my wife’s hand. But my children slipped through my hands,” he told Turkey’s Doğan News Agency.

Reports said the child -- one of at least 12 Syrians who died when their boats sank trying to reach Greece -- and his family were trying to get to Canada from the Syrian flashpoint of Kobane after fleeing to Turkey last year to escape Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) extremists. Canada denied it had received an asylum request from the boy’s family. The picture of the child’s lifeless body sent shock waves across social media and prompted a furious reaction from, among others, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan.

“European countries, which turned the Mediterranean Sea -- the cradle of ancient civilisations -- into a migrant cemetery are party to the crime that takes place when each refugee loses their life,” he said in a speech. Turkey is host to 1.8 million refugees from the conflict in neighbouring Syria. On a visit to Greece, which has seen the largest number of migrant arrivals in the EU, European Commission Vice-President Frans Timmermans said Europe was facing an “unprecedented humanitarian and political crisis”. EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini said the EU’s new naval mission could step up action against people smugglers in the Mediterranean within weeks, seizing and destroying smugglers’ boats.

US opens anti-dumping probe on \$2 bln in steel imports

AFP, 02.09.2015



The U.S. Commerce Department launched a probe into alleged dumping by several foreign steel producers accused of undercutting America’s domestic industry. U.S. officials said seven nations were involved in underpricing some \$2 billion worth of steel: Australia, Brazil, South Korea, the Netherlands, Britain, Japan and Turkey.

Japanese producers were selling hot-rolled steel flat products into the US at 16 percent under the market prices while producers from Turkey discounted their steel by one-third. South Korea is the largest supplier of cold-rolled flat steel to the United States, exporting \$678.8 million worth.

The probe was brought on behalf of major US steel producers who have been hit with competition from cheaper imports as the global steel industry endures a supply glut, mainly due to China’s downturn. The Commerce Department said it would reach a preliminary determination on the probe by September 25, and could set anti-dumping and anti-subsidy duties beginning as early as November.

NATO opens military center in Lithuania amid Ukraine crisis

AP, 03.09.2015



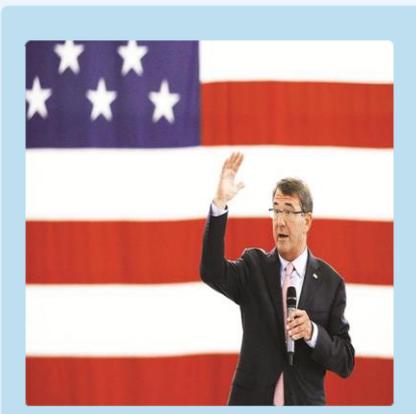
With fighter jets roaring overhead, NATO has inaugurated a military center in the Lithuanian capital amid growing regional concerns over Russia's military presence, sparked by the fighting in Ukraine. Lithuania, like its neighbors, was occupied for nearly five decades by the SU, has published a manual on what to do if war breaks out and volunteers are signing up for the Home Guard in record numbers.

NATO Secretary General Stoltenberg joined Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė to open the alliances' force integration unit, one of six in an eastern expansion of partnership.

The alliance says that Moscow has increased its military air activity near the Baltic countries' borders with a growing number of intercepts conducted by NATO fighter jets.

Pentagon teams up with Apple, Boeing to develop wearable tech

Anadolu Agency, 28.08.2015



The Pentagon is teaming up with Apple, Boeing, Harvard and others to develop high-tech sensory gear flexible enough to be worn by people or molded onto the outside of a jet. The rapid development of new technologies is forcing the Pentagon to seek partnerships with the private sector rather than developing its technology itself, defense officials say.

"I've been pushing the Pentagon to think outside our five-sided box and invest in innovation here in Silicon Valley and in tech communities across the country," Defense Secretary Ash Carter said in prepared remarks. "Now we're taking another step forward."

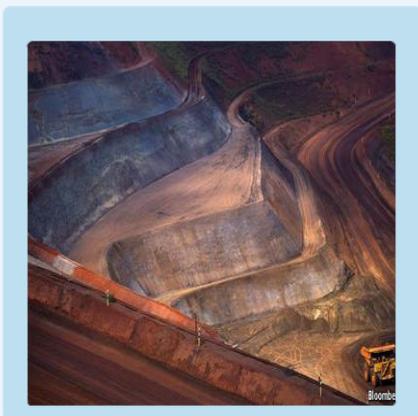
The new technology aims to use high-end printing technologies to create stretchable electronics that could be embedded with sensors and worn by soldiers, a defense official said, and could ultimately be used on ships or warplanes for real-time monitoring of their structural integrity.

The U.S. government is contributing \$75 million over five years, he said, and companies, managed by the U.S. Air Force Research Laboratory, will add \$90 million, with local governments chipping in more to take the total to \$171 million. Carter said the FlexTech Alliance comprised 162 companies, universities and other groups, from Boeing, Apple and Harvard, to Advantest Akron Polymer Systems and Kalamazoo Valley Community College. He was due to announce the award formally in a speech at Moffett Federal Airfield, which is operated by NASA's Ames Research Center near Mountain View, in Silicon Valley. Carter visited California four months ago to create an outreach office to forge ties with the tech community.

The defense chief also plans to meet the Defense Science Board for a briefing on a study it is doing on the level of autonomy that military drones and robots should have in future. The Flexible Hybrid Electronics Manufacturing Innovation Hub, which will be based in San Jose, is the seventh of nine such institutes planned by the Obama administration in an effort to revitalize several U.S. manufacturing sectors, several of them defense-related. The Pentagon's initial experience with the institutes was in 2012 when it established one to help develop 3-D printing.

The sell-off in commodities goodbye to all that

The Economist, 22.08.2015



It was only a decade or so ago that Scotland was hit by the “Great Drain Robbery”, the disappearance of 50 manhole covers in Fife. It gave an inkling of the emergence of a new era in commodity markets, spurred by insatiable demand from China. Scrap-metal prices soared. Africa was over-run by Chinese engineers; Australia elected a Mandarin-speaking prime minister; and emerging markets from Argentina to Zambia relished the rising values of their farmland and mines.

The boom was fanned by a weak American dollar, the currency in which most stuff that comes out of the ground is priced.

The gears have now gone into reverse. A resurgent dollar has hammered commodity prices: many have recently fallen below their levels of a decade ago. That is a fate not shared by other tradeable assets: not since the late 1990s have commodity prices been so weak compared with shares (see chart 1). The American economy is strengthening, but by no means enough to encourage thieves to filch bronze bells from Chinese temples to send as scrap to the United States. The impact of its recovery is dwarfed by slowing demand in China, which still consumes about half the world's metals such as iron, aluminium, and zinc. The real curse for producers is over-supply in almost all raw materials. Yet they continue to act as if they are blithely unaware of it. Capital is still pouring into holes in the ground, creating a hangover that may last at least a decade. Jeff Currie of Goldman Sachs, a bank, says past cycles suggest it can take up to 15 years to work through the over-investment. “The world has just flip-flopped,” he says.



Analysts point out that not all commodities act the same way. Coal prices started falling in 2011; crude oil hung on until mid-2014; agricultural prices hinge on the weather. But a generalised whiff of fear about China's economic prospects has re-emerged in recent weeks, partly caused by sliding stockmarkets and by the unexpected devaluation of the yuan this month. So far this year, almost all major commodities—energy, industrial metals and agriculture—have fallen in a 10-20% range, a fairly homogenous performance. What's more, the supply glut is being fed by three common factors. Cost-cutting has led producers to think they can bear the pain of falling prices for longer. Heavy hitters, whether OPEC princes or global miners, still yearn to increase market share. And funding is still available.

The cost cuts are part of a self-reinforcing downward spiral. Outside America, cheap currencies vis-à-vis the dollar have made domestic inputs, such as manpower, appear less pricey. Ironically, cheaper energy and steel help, too. In Australia, for example, Gina Rinehart, a mining tycoon, uses low costs to justify opening a \$13 billion mine in the outback that is expected to produce 55m tonnes of iron ore a year—as much as America's annual output. In the oil world, cost cuts have come from producers once thought likely to be wiped out by falling oil prices: shale producers. "Frackers" have slashed a third off their cost bases, and continue to pump enough black stuff to depress prices. Lower costs may give them a false sense of security about where prices will go: when crude prices temporarily ticked higher in America this spring, the number of drilling rigs rose for the first time since December. Shortly afterward prices fell again.

Among drilling titans, efforts to recoup market share from fracking upstarts can appear counterproductive. Led by Saudi Arabia, OPEC is pumping well above its 30m barrel-a-day quota, helping push crude prices to below \$47 a barrel, just about the lowest level since March 2009. But if it intended to strangle American shale producers, its plan has backfired, instead pushing frackers to become more efficient. Meanwhile global miners such as BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto have continued to increase iron-ore production, despite plunging prices. Analysts say they are trying to drive higher-cost competitors in China and elsewhere out of business.

Funding avenues have not closed down, however. Tomás Gutiérrez of Kallanish Commodities, an industry watcher, notes that in China steel output has only recently peaked. Yet rather than facing bankruptcy, many inefficient steel producers are limping along thanks to local-government support. Their surpluses are exported, adding to the pressure on global steel prices (see chart 2). In the oil industry Goldman's Mr Currie says that, unusually, high-cost output, such as Canada's tar sands, is owned by oil majors with strong balance-sheets. Though they have cut spending, it may take longer to shut down entire projects. Eventually stresses will manifest themselves more violently. Small shale producers may find themselves in a pickle unless prices stop falling. Deutsche Bank notes that energy companies account for about one in six of America's high-yield borrowers. It believes American crude prices below \$55 a barrel may push them into financial distress. OPEC has its own invalids, such as Venezuela, Nigeria and Libya.



But the latest leg down in crude prices may not yet have run its course. Saudi Arabia, the all-important swing producer of the cartel, is deaf to talk of a cutback. Earlier this month it raised \$5 billion to offset flagging oil income. America's summer driving season is ending. If an Iran nuclear deal is ratified by America's Congress next month, once-embargoed oil will start flowing. Glencore, an Anglo-Swiss miner and commodities trader, reported whopping losses. Its boss, Ivan Glasenberg, has railed against rivals unwilling to throttle back production and decried "prices that are still not making any sense". If these are daunting headwinds, they are not unusual. When prices fall far enough for long enough, output does eventually decline, as it started to do with nickel last year. In the meantime, big mining and oil firms will take over smaller ones and shut down their weakest assets. Then another decades-long cycle can start.



Announcements & Reports

► *Beyond the Iran Deal*

Source : CSIS
Weblink : <http://csis.org/publication/beyond-iran-deal>

► *The Future of Russia-Japan Relations*

Source : CSIS
Weblink : <http://csis.org/publication/pacnet-55-future-russia-japan-relations>

► *The Globalisation of Angel Investments*

Source : Bruegel
Weblink : <http://bruegel.org/2015/09/the-globalization-of-angel-investments/>

Upcoming Events

► *Productivity, Innovation and Digitalisation: Which Global Policy Challenges?*

Date : 07 September 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://bruegel.org/events/productivity-innovation-and-digitalisation-which-global-policy-challenges/>

► *Capital Requirements and Loss Absorbing Capacity for Large Banks*

Date : 07 September 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/538-capital-requirements-and-loss-absorbing-capacity-for-large-banks/>

► *The Meaning of Russia's Nuclear Threats*

Date : 10 September 2015
Place : Washington DC – The USA
Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/07/08-russia-nuclear-threat>



► *Financing The Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda: What Are The Issues and What Is The Role of The IMF?*

Date : 11 September 2015
Place : Washington DC – The USA
Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/07/08-financing-post-2015-sustainable-development-lagarde>

► *The Productivity Gap: Why is Innovation Not Increasing Growth?*

Date : 13 September 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/544-the-productivity-gap-why-is-innovation-not-increasing-growth/>

► *The Kuwait Crisis 25 Years Later*

Date : 20 September 2015
Place : Washington – The USA
Website : <http://www.brookings.edu/events/2015/07/15-kuwait-crisis-25-years-later>

► *Competitive Gains in the Economic and Monetary Union*

Date : 21 September 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/534-competitive-gains-in-the-economic-and-monetary-union/>

► *The Future of Capitalist Democracy: UK-Japan Perspectives*

Date : 21 September 2015
Place : London - UK
Website : <http://www.chathamhouse.org/event/future-capitalist-democracy-uk-japan-perspectives>

► *Emerging Markets and Europe: Time for Different Relationships?*

Date : 22 September 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/524-emerging-markets-and-europe-time-for-different-relationships/>

► *What future for Europe's Social Models?*

Date : 24 September 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/526-what-future-for-europes-social-models/>

► *Challenges for Growth in Europe*

Date : 28 September 2015
Place : Brussels - Belgium
Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/521-challenges-for-growth-in-europe/>



► *Global Governance of Public Goods: Asian and European Perspectives*

Date : 01 October 2015

Place : Paris - France

Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/529-global-governance-of-public-goods-asian-and-european-perspectives/>

► *The Future of the Welfare State*

Date : 17 November 2015

Place : Berlin - Germany

Website : <http://www.bruegel.org/nc/events/event-detail/event/541-the-future-of-the-welfare-state/>