

## Gov't to increase protection of immovable cultural relics

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The circular clarified procedures for the removal of immovable cultural relic status, and said that if such cultural relics were destroyed by natural disasters or construction activity, authorities should review and establish whether they still had heritage value.

Authorities should also publish such information and solicit public opinion.

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## The collapse of Labour and Conservative sister parties in the Euro area

It looks as if neither the Republicans (Conservative) nor Socialists (Labour) will have a candidate in the last two to be French President. It looks as if a third force party run by Mr Wilders will be the top performing party in the Netherlands election in March. Syriza came from nowhere to be the largest party and form the government in Greece. Pasok (Labour) have no seats in the present Greek Parliament. In Italy Grillo's 5 Star Movement is well ahead of the two old main parties in the polls. In Spain Podemos and Ciudadanos have made huge inroads into the traditional centre right and left main parties, making it impossible for either to form a stable government easily.

I find it extraordinary that these once great governing parties of the post war world in Europe have given up their pre-eminence so easily. It shows just how out of touch they have become. The main driver of their demise and of the popular discontent seems to be the bad impact of EU austerity economics and the Euro on their economies. When a country has half its young people out of work and around a fifth of its entire workforce laid off, it is no wonder voters seek a better way. The traditional parties are either deaf to the entreaties of those who want change, or impotent to change the things that matter because they have locked themselves into the EU and Euro schemes.

Whenever a country gets into a predictable governing crisis owing to its fractured party politics the EU proposes a technocrat led coalition government following the Brussels rules. When a country votes for decisive change, as Greece did when it elected Syriza to government, the EU works to ensure there can be no positive change and redoubles its efforts to enforce the very policies that have led to the political explosion in the first place. Economic failure can lead to a cry for strict controls on the movement of people, and a sharper nationalist rhetoric, as people hit out in search of a solution to a problem which their EU loving rulers scarce admit exists.

It is one thing for the traditional parties to decline, as they are. It is another for a single strong challenger party to emerge and take over government. That so far has only happened in Greece, though it could happen elsewhere this year. It is an even more difficult thing for that challenger party to break free from the shackles of conventional EU politics and improve the outlook. So far Syriza has been unable to do that, owing to voter ambiguity about the Euro project.

Marine Le Pen is made of sterner stuff than Syriza. Were she to win she would

take France out of the Euro and run an economic policy she thinks would change France for the better. The AFD in Germany want to take their country out of the single currency, and have recently defeated the two traditional parties in Lande elections. They remain well behind Mrs Merkel's party in polls for a national election. Sgnr Grillo is playing on the growing unpopularity of the Euro in Italy and may want to exit were he to win.

The ruling elite of the EU, with its single currency and panoply of Brussels controls, is on trial in this years elections in the Netherlands, France, Germany and probably Italy too. The triumph of Brexit and Trump show there could be an upset for the ruling EU group in one or more of these. Meanwhile the Euro elite fasten their seatbelts and proceed with the same approach.

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## [Afghanistan: UN mission expresses grave concern at high civilian casualties in Helmand](#)

12 February 2017 – The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) today expressed its grave concern at the recent escalation of violence in Helmand province, which reportedly claimed the lives of at least 25 civilians, mostly women and children, and injured many more.

On 9 and 10 February, international military forces conducted airstrikes in Helmand's Sangin District reportedly targeting anti-Government elements, according to a news release. UNAMA's initial enquiries suggest that the airstrikes killed at least 18 civilians, nearly all women and children. UNAMA notes that Resolute Support has initiated an investigation into the incident.

On 11 February, Taliban conducted a suicide attack targeting Afghan National Army soldiers outside of Kabul Bank in Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand. The attack killed at least seven civilians, and at least as many were injured, mainly child vendors outside the bank, the release added.

The people of Helmand have suffered greatly due to the armed conflict in Afghanistan, with 891 civilians killed or injured during 2016. This figure was the highest in the country in 2016 outside of Kabul.

UNAMA reiterated the need for all parties to the conflict to strictly adhere to their obligations under international humanitarian law to take all feasible measures to protect civilians from harm while expressing its sincere condolences to the families of victims and hopes for a speedy recovery to those injured.

Afghanistan has been in protracted conflict for some 35 years, which has seen an ever-growing number of civilians killed and poverty reduction and

development efforts seriously hampered.

UNAMA is mandated to support the Afghan Government and the people of Afghanistan as a political mission that provides 'good offices' among other measures. 'Good offices' are diplomatic steps UN takes publicly and in private, drawing on its independence, impartiality and integrity, to prevent international disputes from arising, escalating or spreading.

UNAMA also promotes coherent development support by the international community; assists the process of peace and reconciliation; monitors and promotes human rights and the protection of civilians in armed conflict; promotes good governance; and encourages regional cooperation.

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## [UN chief Guterres visits Saudi Arabia's relief aid centre, stresses its catalytic role in region](#)

12 February 2017 – United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today visited the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre in Saudi Arabia's capital, Riyadh, as part of his first major trip to some Arab countries.

"I was very encouraged today to see the centre developing its activities, with a strong commitment to humanitarian principles, not only in Syria and Yemen, but in so many countries around the world," Mr. Guterres said after being briefed on the activities of the center, which was established in May 2015, under the sponsorship of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz.

On the importance of partnership between the centre and the UN, Mr. Guterres said that the dramas and suffering in today's world are so big that no one can do anything alone. "Together we can do a lot. So, partnership is a key word," he said, noting that the centre can play an important role as a catalyst around the world and the region.

On Sunday, the Secretary-General was expected to meet with King Salman, Crown Prince and Deputy Crown Prince, as well as senior officials before travelling to Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in the late evening.

Mr. Guterres visited Turkey en route to Saudi Arabia. He is also scheduled to visit Oman, Qatar and Egypt and Germany.