

Xi, Trump Set Constructive Tone for China-U.S. Relationship: FM

PALM BEACH, United States - Chinese President Xi Jinping held meetings with his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump at Mar-a-Lago resort in the U.S. state of Florida on Thursday and Friday, setting a constructive tone for the development of China-U.S. relations, said Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

The meeting was the first face-to-face communication between the Chinese and U.S. heads of state since the new U.S. administration took office, said Wang, noting that the two presidents spent over seven hours in deep discussion on China-U.S. ties and major international, regional issues of mutual concern, reaching important consen-



...s. The two sides agreed that the meeting is positive and fruitful. It has set a constructive tone for the development of China-U.S. relations, pointing out the direction for collective endeavor.

The two heads of state also introduced to each other their state governance thoughts, and domestic and foreign policy agendas. The meeting increased mutual understanding, built good working relations and personal friendship, of which the two sides spoke highly.

The two sides discussed the China-U.S. relationship on the whole. President Xi stressed that a sound China-U.S. relationship benefits not only the ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

White House Declines to Say whether to Take further Action on Syria

PALM BEACH, United States - The White House declined to say whether the United States would take further military action against Syrian President Bashar al-Assad after Thursday's U.S. strike.

White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer told a briefing in Palm Beach, Florida, on Friday that the missile attack, the first U.S. direct assault against the Syrian government since the Syria crisis began six years ago, was "decisive,

justified and proportional."

"I think it sends a very strong signal not just to Syria but throughout the world," said Spicer, adding that the Syrian government must abide by a 2013 agreement to destroy its chemical weapons stockpile, Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem on Thursday denied that the chemical attack was carried out by the government, saying the incident ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

Turkey, EU Reiterates Political Solution to Syrian Conflict

BRUSSELS - Turkish foreign minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Saturday that political solution is an ideal solution to restore order in Syria, according to state-run Anadolu Agency.

"The ideal solution is a political solution, and we need to implement a transitional government in Syria as soon as possible," Cavusoglu said in a speech in the Mediterranean city of Antalya.

If the effort stays with just one air base, and if Assad government will not be removed from Syria, the U.S. missile strike could amount to nothing but a merely "cosmetic" intervention, he added.

Cavusoglu also called for establishing safe zones in Syria. He has discussed this issue with his U.S. counterpart Rex Tillerson last week in Ankara.

"Hopefully stability and peace will come back to Syria, and Turkey will play a major role in that," Turkey's top diplomat said.

"The world, in these recent events, began to understand what we meant by calling for safe zones."

Cavusoglu's remarks came after the U.S. early Friday fired 59 Tomahawk missiles at a Syrian military air base, which American officials believe has carried out the ...*(More on P4)...(30)*

U.S. Congress Divided over Syria Strike

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Congress is divided over Thursday's missile strike at Syria ordered by President Donald Trump, with some lawmakers voicing strong support while others questioning its constitutionality.

The U.S. military fired 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at a Syrian military base after a chemical attack in Syria's northwestern province of Idlib, which killed at least 70 people, mostly civilians. The Trump administration held the Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad responsible for Tuesday's

gas attack.

Most Congress members were not notified of the military action as they were preparing to leave Washington D.C. for a two-week recess.

Reaction to the strike mostly followed a partisan line as most Republican lawmakers endorsed Trump's action, while most Democrats were opposed on the grounds that he needed authorization of Congress for acts of war.

Republican congressional leaders largely supported Trump's move as an appropriate response to the chemical attack in Syria.



House Speaker Paul Ryan, who voiced opposition in 2013 when former President Barack Obama sought Congress' authorization for military action in Syria, took a U-turn in his stance to praise Trump's action as "appropriate and just."

"These tactical strikes make clear that the Assad regime can no longer count on Americans inaction as it carries out atrocities against the Syrian people," ...*(More on P4)...(29)*

Moscow to Strengthen Syrian Air Defense System: Russian Defense Ministry

MOSCOW - The Russian Defense Ministry said Friday it will reinforce the effectiveness of the air defense system in Syria, following a U.S. missile strike on a Syrian military airfield late Thursday.

"In order to cover the most sensitive objects of the Syrian infrastructure, a set of measures will be taken in the near future to strengthen and improve the effectiveness of the air defense system of the Syrian armed forces," the ministry said in a statement.

According to the ministry, only 23 out of the 59 cruise missiles launched by the

United States late Thursday (early Friday in Syria) reached the targeted Syrian military airfield in the central province of Homs, with the whereabouts of the other missiles remaining unknown.

Four Syrian servicemen were killed, two others were missing and six received burns while fighting the fire, the statement said.

Citing an unnamed source, Russia's Sputnik reported that the U.S. strike killed 10 people. No Russian citizens have been reportedly injured so far.

U.S. President Donald Trump said earlier that



he had ordered the strike and the action was in the nation's "vital interest."

According to a Pentagon statement, the assault was in response to the alleged Syrian govern-

ment's chemical weapons attack on Tuesday in the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun. The attack killed over 70 people and wounded scores of others. (Xinhua)

EU Must Provide Answers to People's Problems: German President

ATHENS - The European Union (EU) is facing a crisis which goes beyond Brexit and will not blow over in a few months or years. As such, it should start offering people solid answers to their problems to overcome a climate of political indifference, German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier said here Friday.

The German leader began a two-day visit on Friday to the Greek capital to discuss bilateral ties and regional issues, and to inaugurate



the Greek-German international contemporary art exhibition Documenta 14 in Athens. "It is important to provide real answers today on questions that have

not been answered yet, such as migration, growth, and employment," Steinmeier said during a joint press conference with ...*(More on P4)...(31)*

French PM Says U.S. Strike on Syria Proves France "Visionary"

TUNIS - On an official visit here on Friday, the French Prime Minister Bernard Cazeneuve declared that the U.S. strike on Syria proved that France's reaction since the sanctions in 2013 on Damascus for use of chemical weapons was "visionary."

"The American strike proves that our line in 2013 was the right one," assured Cazeneuve. "Since 2013, we have called for firm sanctions against the use of chemical weapons by the government of Bashar al-Assad," said Cazeneuve, just after his meeting with the Tunisian Head of Government Youssef Chahed.

Earlier on Friday, the U.S. targeted a Syrian air base in Homs Province with nearly 60 Tomahawk missiles, killing six Syrian soldiers and nine civilians, including four children, and destroying nine Syrian warplanes. The U.S. ...*(More on P4)...(32)*

Over 200,000 Children in E. Ukraine Need Urgent Support to Overcome Trauma of Conflict: UNICEF

UNITED NATIONS - More than 200,000 children, or one in four, in the two regions most severely affected by ongoing conflict in eastern Ukraine require urgent and sustained psychosocial support to address the trauma of living through more than three years of violence, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) said on Friday.

Those 200,000 children live in Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts, within 15 km of each side of the "contact-line" that divides government and non-government-controlled areas and where fighting is most intense, the UNICEF said in a press release.

"The world has forgotten about this invisible crisis in eastern Ukraine, but hundreds of thousands of children are paying a heavy price, one that could last a lifetime without adequate support," said UNICEF Ukraine Representative Giovanna Barberis. "We urgently need funds to reach these traumatized children." Children nearest the "contact-line" have been living in chronic fear and uncertainty due to sporadic shelling, unpredictable fighting and dangers from landmines and other unexploded ordnance. Many risk their safety to get an education. Seven schools were damaged during the most recent escalation of violence in February and March 2017, and more than 740 schools -- one in five in eastern Ukraine -- have been damaged or destroyed since the conflict began in 2014. Parents, teachers, school directors ...*(More on P4)...(35)*

North Korea Calls U.S. Strikes on Syria 'Unforgivable'

SEOUL - North Korea said on Saturday U.S. missile strikes against a Syrian airfield on Friday were "an unforgivable act of aggression" that showed its decision to develop nuclear weapons was "the right choice a million times over".

The response by North Korea's foreign ministry, carried by the official KCNA news agency, was the first since U.S. warships in the Mediterranean Sea launched dozens of missiles at a Syrian air base which the Pentagon says was involved in a chemical weapons attack earlier in the week. "The U.S. missile attack against Syria is a clear and ...*(More on P4)...(33)*

Iraqi PM, US VP Discuss Syria, Anti-IS War in Phone Call

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi and U.S. Vice President Mike Pence discussed the situation in Syria and the war on the extremist Islamic State (IS) group in a phone call, the Iraqi government said on Saturday.

A statement by Abadi's office said that the prime minister received a phone call from Pence, and the two sides discussed the battles in Mosul and the international support to Iraq in its fighting against terrorism, as well as the situations in the region.

Abadi expressed Iraq's attitude toward the situation in Syria, saying "Iraq considers the use of chemical weapons in Syria a condemned and denounced crime," ac-

ording to the statement.

"We are with the Syrian people who were the victims, just like the Iraqi people who were also victims of being hit with chemical weapons by the former (Saddam) regime," the statement quoted Abadi as saying.

Abadi called for an urgent international investigation into the use of chemical weapons in Syria and to condemn whoever used such weapons, the statement added.

Abadi asserted on the importance of focusing on the defeat of the extremist IS group "as we are close to the final victory," it said. For his part, Pence stressed in his call that his country's ...*(More on P4)...(34)*

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CPEC to Allow Pakistan to become Hub of Socioeconomic Activity: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal Friday said China-Pak Economic Corridor (CPEC) would allow Pakistan to become a hub of socioeconomic activity between Asia, Central Asia and South Asia.

He was addressing the 1st All Pakistan Chambers and Associations Seminar on CPEC held at Gawadar, Baluchistan, said a press release issued here.

The seminar was attended by all the business and commerce chambers of Pakistan, government officials, local community and other major stakeholders.

The minister noted that CPEC was a fusion of China's vision of "One Belt and One Road" and Pakistan's Vision 2025.

The minister remarked that CPEC would not only benefit Pakistan and China but would also benefit the entire region and beyond.

He apprised the audience that inter and intra region connectivity provided by CPEC makes it a fate changer for everyone because connectivity ensures greater trade, socioeconomic activity and general welfare.

Ahsan informed that

CPEC project would result in breaking the two bottlenecks faced by Pakistan's economy, lack of infrastructure and energy shortage.

He termed infrastructure and energy as the two essential pre-requisites of development and questioned the knowledge of critics who object to infrastructure investments in CPEC.

He further explained CPEC by breaking it down into four components as infrastructure projects, energy projects, Gawadar Port and industrial and economic zones.

The minister stated that historical investments were made in infrastructure which had led to upcountry connectivity of Gawadar for the first time. He praised the sacrifice of 44 FWO soldiers who gave their lives but did not allow the negative forces to sabotage the infrastructure projects in Balochistan.

Energy mix adopted under CPEC was diverse and would produce economical and affordable energy, he noted. Neglected coal reserves, renewable energy, hydel and other sources of energy were explored under CPEC. (APP)

Rouhani Says Trump Abetting Syria 'Terrorists'

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Saturday that "terrorists" were applauding his US counterpart Donald Trump for launching a missile strike on an airbase of his Syrian government ally.

But he backed calls for an independent inquiry into a suspected chemical weapons attack on a rebel-held town in northwestern Syria on Tuesday that Trump blamed on the Damascus regime.

"This man who is now in office in America claimed that he wanted to fight terrorism but today all terrorists in Syria are celebrating the US attack," Rouhani said in a speech aired by state television.

"Why have you attacked the Syrian army which is at war with terrorists?"

Under what law or authority did you launch your missiles at this independent country?"

Iran and Russia are the closest allies of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

They have provided him with military support not only against jihadists like the Islamic State group and former Al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front that are targeted by a US-led coalition but also against other rebels they deem "terrorists" too.

Both governments have defended their Damascus ally against Western allegations that it carried out a chemical weapons attack on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun on Tuesday, killing dozens of civilians. (AFP)

Turkmenistan, Russia Sign Inter-Parliamentary Cooperation Deal

ASHGABAT - Members of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan and the State Duma of the Russian Federation signed a Memorandum of Mutual Understanding on development of inter-parliamentary cooperation in Avaza.

The ceremony of signing the document took place on April 7 in the framework of the visit of the delegation of the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia led by Vladimir

Zhirinovskiy, who arrived in Turkmenistan on the invitation of the Chairperson of the Mejlis of Turkmenistan.

Vladimir Zhirinovskiy delivered a speech during the sports congress "2017 Asian Games: international cooperation in the name of peace and development" and was received by President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, the state news agency of Turkmenistan said. (AKI)

Armenia and Uzbekistan FMs Discuss Collaboration

TASHKENT - Foreign Minister of Armenia Edward Nalbandian, who is on a working visit to Tashkent, met with his Uzbekistan counterpart Abdulaziz Kamilov on Friday.

The ministers discussed steps aimed at the development of bilateral collaboration, stressing that all the precondi-

tions and great potential existing for this can be realized by joint efforts.

Apart from this, Nalbandian and Kamilov instructed the relevant subdivisions of their respective MFAs to draw up proposals aimed at fostering the cooperation in different spheres. (Monitoring Desk)