

Xi and Trump Discuss Korean Peninsula, Syria over Phone

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday held a telephone conversation with his U.S. counterpart, Donald Trump, and discussed the situation on the Korean Peninsula and in Syria.

Xi said that China sticks to the target of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and that China is committed to peace and stability of the peninsula.

China holds that the issue should be solved through peaceful means, said Xi, adding that his country is ready to maintain communication and coordination with the United States on the issue.

On Syria, Xi said that any use of chemical weapons is unac-



ceptable and that the path of political settlement should be followed.

He expressed the hope that the UN Security Council would speak in one voice as it is important for the Security Council to remain united over the issue. Xi also asked teams of China and the United States to work together closely to make sure that Trump's visit to China later this year could achieve fruitful results.

He also urged the two sides to promote economic cooperation, expand exchanges in military, law enforcement, cyber and people-to-people areas, enhance communication and coordination in major... (More on P4)...(22)

Russia Says to Veto Western-Backed Draft U.N. Resolution on Syria

MOSCOW - Russia will veto a draft U.N. resolution being pushed by the United States, Britain and France which aims to bolster support for international inquiries into a deadly toxic gas attack in Syria, the Interfax news agency reported on Wednesday.

The U.N. Security Council could vote on the draft res-

olution later on Wednesday. It is similar to a text circulated to the 15-member council last week that condemns the April 4 attack and pushes Syria's government to cooperate with investigators. Interfax cited Russian deputy foreign minister Gennady Gatilov as saying Russia would veto it in its current form. (Reuters)

Brexit Referendum Led to Public Mistrust in Government: MPs

LONDON - Actions by the British government during the European Union referendum led to public mistrust, a committee of MPs said Wednesday in a parliamentary report. The House of Commons' Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee report said any future referendum in Britain should take note of the lessons learned from the way Brexit referendum was handled, including damage to the reputation of the civil service and the lack of preparation for either of the possible outcomes.

The report said that while the then prime minister David Cameron's government did not support a

leave vote, they had a constitutional and public obligation to prepare for both outcomes from the referendum. "Unfortunately, many of the government's actions in the run-up to the referendum, which were easily avoidable, appear to have increased public distrust. The use of the machinery of government during the referendum contributed to a perception that the civil service were, in some way, biased," the report said in its conclusions. The MPs also said the presentation of government reports, particularly those from the Treasury, and the decision to spend 9.3 million pounds (11.7... (More on P4)...(23)

Moscow Warns U.S.: Don't Strike Syrian Air Base Again

MOSCOW - Last week's U.S. missile strike on a Syrian air base in retaliation for an alleged chemical weapons attack must not be repeated, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on Wednesday, Russian state media reported.

President Trump ordered the strike, citing a chemical attack that killed at least 86 people that he blamed on the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad, who is a close Russian

ally and has depended on Russian military support in a six-year-old civil war. Tillerson met with Lavrov in Moscow to urge Russia to end its support for Assad. Tillerson is the first Trump administration official to visit Russia, and the meeting likely was tense. On Tuesday, top U.S. officials rebuked Russia for either being complicit in the April 4 chemical attack or incompetence for failing to ensure that Assad destroyed all of his chemical weapons in 2013, as Russia



promised it would guarantee. Defense Secretary James Mattis said military intelligence confirmed that the Syrians dropped a lethal nerve gas on a rebel-held town and rejected Russian claims that the chemical was released when Syrian aircraft bombed a rebel lab. (AP)

Turkish Referendum Polls Put 'Yes' Vote Slightly Ahead

ISTANBUL - Two Turkish opinion polls on Wednesday showed a narrow majority of Turks, between 51-52 percent, would vote "yes" in Sunday's referendum on changing the constitution to create an executive presidency. Voters in Turkey go to the polls on April 16 to decide whether to give Erdogan sweeping new powers. Voting for Turks living abroad finished on Sunday.

A survey by pollsters ANAR put the "yes" vote at 52 percent. Its poll was conducted face-to-face with more than 4,000 peo-

ple on April 5-10 in 26 provinces. The number of undecided voters has fallen to 8 percent, it said, adding that led to a two percentage point boost for "yes" since the start of March. Similarly, the Konsensus polling company put the "yes" vote at 51.2 percent after the distribution of undecided voters. It conducted its survey face-to-face with 2,000 people on April 2-8 in 41 provinces. Erdogan has spent much of his recent campaign attacking the head of the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP),



which is spear-heading the "no" camp. He has accused its leader, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, of lying, language Kilicdaroglu has said is not fitting of a president. On Tuesday, Erdogan ridiculed the opposition leader for losing the last seven elections. "The people don't like you, they don't embrace you. The truth is plain," he said during a televised meeting with university students. (Reuters)

Global Trade Forecast to Pick up but Uncertainties Linger

GENEVA - The World Trade Organization is predicting an uptick in global trade this year and next after a lackluster 2016, while cautioning that uncertainty about policies like protectionism and anti-globalization present risks to its forecast.

The Geneva-based trade body, which has faced rumblings that the Trump administration might move to withdraw the United States, is projecting trade growth of 2.4 percent this year, from 1.3 percent in 2016, which was the slowest pace since the



height of the financial crisis in 2008. Uncertainty over global trade is particularly high. For this year's forecast, WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo set a range of between 1.8 percent and 3.6 percent depending on factors including the interest rate environment, fiscal policy, the results of upcoming... (More on P4)...(24)

OPEC Forecasts Higher U.S. Tight Oil Output in 2017

VIENNA - U.S. tight oil production is expected to increase quickly in 2017, but the country is pumping more oil at a time when OPEC is trying to re-balance the market, OPEC's monthly report showed on Tuesday.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) said that U.S. total liquids production in 2017 is forecast to grow by 0.54 million barrels per day (bpd), higher than last month's forecast, due to the possible quick increase of tight oil output in the country.

"U.S. tight crude output is expected to rise quickly and increase 335,000 bpd for the overall of 2017," the report said, as the main component of U.S. oil output - tight oil - is forecast to grow by at least 0.34 million bpd in 2017. At the last meeting in Vienna in... (More on P4)...(25)

EU's Mogherini to Make First to Visit to Russia

BRUSSELS - EU foreign affairs chief Federica Mogherini will make her first official visit to Russia this month, with relations strained to breaking point by the Ukraine conflict and the war in Syria. She will also visit China and India next week, her office said in a statement on Wednesday.

Most attention is likely to focus on her trip to Moscow on April 24, with ties in deep freeze over its support for pro-Russian rebels fighting an insurgency in eastern Ukraine and its 2014 annexation of Crimea. Adding to tensions, the European Union is pushing for a political solution in Syria without President Bashar al-Assad, Moscow's long-time ally.

The announcement of the trip comes just as US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is in Moscow for talks with Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to confront Russia over its support for the Assad regime.

Mogherini will also meet Lavrov to "discuss the most pressing foreign policy issues, in particular the conflict in Syria", the statement from her office said. They will also discuss the situation in Libya, the Middle East peace process, Iran, Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as EU-Russia ties. Mogherini took office in 2014 with a reputation of being sympathetic to Russia when she was Italian foreign minister and said repeatedly she wanted to visit Moscow.

She tried to stabilise relations with Moscow, arguing that Russia was a huge neighbour that the EU had to learn to live with, but the deepening Ukraine crisis prevented any accommodation. (AFP)

US Senator Blasts Russia for Interference in Balkans

PODGORICA, Montenegro - U.S. Senator John McCain congratulated Montenegro on Wednesday for its upcoming NATO membership and blasted Russia for its alleged attempts to interfere in the Balkans and more widely in Europe. McCain, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, is on a tour of the western Balkans, the war-weary region where Russia has been vying for increased military, political and economic influence.

"The behavior on the part of Russians, throughout the region and the world, is not acceptable," McCain, one of the strongest supporters... (More on P4)...(26)

Nearly Half of Young German 'Voters Back Merkel: Poll

BERLIN - Almost half of Germany's first-time voters back Chancellor Angela Merkel, a poll by the Forsa Institute showed on Tuesday, providing a strong backbone of support as she prepares to bid for a fourth term in September.

Among all potential voters, conservative Merkel had 43 percent support, compared to 32 percent for Martin Schulz, the chancellor candidate for the center-left Social Democrats (SPD). But that lead extended to 47 percent against 29 percent among those aged 18 to 21, the poll showed.

"Young people know Chancellor Merkel, with whom they grew up," said Manfred Guellner, who heads the Forsa institute.

He said the poll showed that "especially young people are looking for stability and continuity in these uncertain times."

The elder stateswoman of western European politics, Merkel has come under fire at home for initially opening Germany's doors to more than one million refugees. Ahead of what is likely to be a close-fought ballot, she has toughened her stance on immigration in recent months.

She faced criticism on Tuesday from the SPD, the junior partner in her coalition government, after giving her chief of staff, Peter Altmaier, a leading role in drafting the election program for her Christian Democrats (CDU). (AP)

Nieghbor News

China's Belt and Road Initiative can Contribute to Global Development Agenda: UN Official

UNITED NATIONS - China's Belt and Road Initiative can contribute to the implementation of a United Nations (UN) facilitated sustainable development agenda, which aims to end poverty and promote prosperity, said UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs Wu Hongbo on Tuesday.

The Belt and Road Initiative, proposed by China in 2013, aims to build a trade and infrastructure network connecting Asia along the ancient Silk Road trade routes and promote common development among all countries involved.

The initiative offers "great potential" for advancing the agen-

da through economic growth, trade opportunities, job and income generation, infrastructure building and capacity building, said Wu at a high-level discussion held here.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by UN member states in 2015 and officially came into force in 2016, outlines 17 goals relating to poverty, energy, industrialization, infrastructure and global partnership. At the discussion, Jeffrey Sachs, an American economist and professor at Columbia University, said the sustainable development means smart economies with technology deployment, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. (Xinhua)

Gen. Bajwa Meets Sharif to Discuss National Security

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Chief of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa met Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday and briefed the premier on the current security situation in the country, said a statement by the Prime Minister House.

General Bajwa also discussed matters pertaining to the professional preparedness of Army and border situation, added the statement. Nawaz was also apprised by the army chief regarding the ongoing security operation in the country, operation Raadul Fasaad.

The premier expressed satisfaction over the gains made in the security operation and "appre-

ciated the role of armed forces for their matchless sacrifices towards the national goal of achieving peace in the country".

The meeting between the army chief and the prime minister comes following the recent sentencing of Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav, who was condemned to death by a Field General Court Martial (FGCM) on April 10. Jadhav's arrest and trial Jadhav was arrested on March 3, 2016, through a counter-intelligence operation in Balochistan's Mashkel area for his involvement in espionage and sabotage activities against Pakistan, the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said in a statement on Monday. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran Ex-President Registers for Upcoming Elections

TEHRAN - Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, Iran's former two-time president, has registered to contest the 12th round of presidential elections in the country.

Ahmadinejad, who filled the role of the country's chief executive for two consecutive mandates starting in 2005, signed up for the competition at the Election Office, which is based within the Interior Ministry's premises in the capital Tehran on Wednesday.

He has already thrown his weight behind Hamid Baghaei, a former aide.

Ahmadinejad was accompanying Baghaei, who also went through the registration process. (Presstv)

Accompanying the two was Esfandiar Rahim-Mashaie, another former Ahmadinejad aide. The three were seen holding up their chained hands, shouting, "Viva spring, Viva Iran."

Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei has advised Ahmadinejad not to run for president in the May elections, saying his potential candidacy would "polarize" the general atmosphere governing the country.

Ahmadinejad had also said he would submit to the advice and had "no plans to partake in the polls." The registration process began on Tuesday. (Presstv)

Russia to Increase Military Equipment Supplies to Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - Russia will increase supplies of military equipment to Uzbekistan. The relevant agreement has been ratified by the Federation Council of Russia, reports Parlametskaya Gazeta.

The document was signed in 2016 in Moscow to facilitate effective implementation of the supply of military and technical products between Russia and Uzbekistan.

The document determines the legal foundation of implementation of

military-technical cooperation between the two countries on mutual supplies of military equipment, military assistance and conducting research and consultative works.

"Implementation of the agreement will allow to create favorable regime of cooperation of Russia and Uzbekistan in the field of production, development, technical service, repair," said Deputy director of the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation Vladimir Drojov. (AKI)