

Merkel Emphasizes German Prosperity, Security at Rally

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel opened the final phase of her election campaign Saturday with a focus on her record, emphasizing the economic growth and prosperity achieved during her dozen years at the helm as she seeks a fourth term. Merkel told a rally organized by her Christian Democratic Union party in the western city of Dortmund that unemployment has dropped to a post-reunification low since she first was elected chancellor in 2005. She told the crowd she hoped to achieve full employment — a rate below 3 percent — by 2025. The rate



hit as high as 12.6 percent in early 2005 and was most recently at 5.6 percent in July. "Those are really excellent figures," Merkel said, going on to note that government and industry must not be complacent because technology is changing the way the economy functions. "On one hand, Germany stacks up well, but on the other hand we live in a time of change, a time of uncertainty," she said. Singling out the damage done to the "Made in Germany" label with Volkswagen's diesel cheating scandal, Merkel said honesty in business was a prerequisite going forward. (AP)

Australian PM Discusses National Security, Drug Prevention at Party Convention

CANBERRA - Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull has discussed national security and drug prevention at a Liberal Party forum in Adelaide on Saturday, declaring that keeping Australians safe was the government's No. 1 priority. Addressing the Liberal Party's Annual General Meeting at the Adelaide Convention Centre on Saturday, Turnbull said that Australia's intelligence agencies were constantly working to improve the safety of public areas in response to the growing

threat of global terrorism. "We have no place for 'set and forget' in national security. No place for complacency. No place for anyone to rest of the laurels of a success," Turnbull said on Saturday. The prime minister also touched on the nation's growing drug problem, declaring that methamphetamine, commonly known as "ice," was a "shocking, miserable menace" that his government was doing everything it could to keep it off the streets. (Xinhua)

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump said on Friday he would not rule out a "military option" in Venezuela, a claim seemingly contradictory to the view of his top national security adviser. "We have many options for Venezuela, including a possible military option, if necessary," Trump told reporters at his golf club retreat in New Jersey, northeast of the United States. Meanwhile, Trump did not directly answer a question about whether

the U.S. troops would lead the potential operation. "We don't talk about it," said Trump after his meeting at the golf club with State Secretary Rex Tillerson and Nikki Haley, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations. The Pentagon said after Trump's words that it had not received any order on Venezuela from the White House. A week ago, Trump's top national security adviser H. R. McMaster said in a TV show that he did not



see a military intervention from any outside source as likely. "It's important for us to place responsibility for this catastrophe on (Venezuelan President Nicolas) Maduro's shoulders," McMaster said in an interview with MSNBC, an American television network. (Xinhua)

"Military Option" Possible in Venezuela: Trump

Turkey Says Taking "Necessary Measures" Along Border with Syria



ANKARA - Turkey is taking necessary measures along its border with Syria's Idlib province, where

radical extremist groups has been in control, said Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim here on

Friday. "We are taking necessary measures along 150 km of Hatay's border with Syria

in light of recent developments in that region ... to avoid humanitarian tragedies and security threats to our country," Yildirim said. Turkey will not allow the existence of an "artificial state" at its southern border, and will defend its border against any threat, he stressed. Turkish Customs Minister Bulent Tufenkci said Thursday Turkey would limit cross-border movement at the Bab al-Hawa crossing with Syria because the Syria side is controlled by a "terrorist group." (Xinhua)

Trump Says Was Being 'Sarcastic' in Thanking Putin for Embassy Staff Cuts

BEDMINSTER, NJ - President Donald Trump said on Friday he was being sarcastic when he thanked Russian President Vladimir Putin for saving the United States money by ordering cuts in U.S. diplomatic staff in Russia. Asked whether he was being sarcastic, Trump told reporters: "In order to reduce our payroll, absolutely. I think you know that," Trump said without explicitly criticizing the move. Breaking nearly two weeks of silence on Putin's July 30 order cutting U.S.

embassy and consulate staff by nearly two thirds, Trump said on Thursday: "I'm very thankful that he let go of a large number of people because now we have a smaller payroll," adding "there's no real reason for them to go back." Trump's remarks rekindled criticism of his kid-glove handling of Putin, especially as he has not shied away from being highly critical of members of his own party, including Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell. (Reuters)

Merkel Rounds on German Auto Executives in Opening Election Rally

DORTMUND, Germany - Chancellor Angela Merkel kicked off her re-election campaign on Saturday with a stinging attack on German auto executives, pressing them to innovate to secure jobs, and win back trust lost by a diesel emissions scandal. Merkel is far ahead of her rivals in opinion polls but, wary of complacency setting in among her supporters, she plans 50 rallies in towns and cities across Germany in the run-up to the Sept. 24 election, when she will seek a fourth term in office. With her conservative Christian Democratic Union (CDU) campaigning on a platform of economic stability, Merkel ripped into auto industry executives for destroying trust in the sector - Germany's biggest exporter and provider of some 800,000 jobs.

"Large sections of the auto industry have gambled away unbelievable amounts of trust," she told a rally in Dortmund, in the heart of the Ruhr area that was at the center of Germany's post-war 'economic miracle' but which is now a rust-belt. "This is trust that only the auto industry can restore. And when I say 'the industry' that is the company leaders," she added, to loud applause, pressing executives to behave honestly. By turning on auto industry executives, Merkel is trying to both push the sector to innovate and to head off a drive for more social justice in Germany from her main challenger, Martin Schulz of the left-leaning Social Democratic Party (SPD). Germany has enjoyed solid growth since Merkel took office in November 2005, and unemployment has fallen to record lows. (Reuters)

N. Korea Says Nearly 3.5 Million Volunteer for People's Army as Tensions Rise

SEOUL - North Korea said on Saturday that nearly 3.5 million workers, party members and soldiers volunteered to join or rejoin its army to resist new U.N. sanctions and to fight against the United States in the current geopolitical tension between Pyongyang and Washington. Rodong Sinmun, North Korea's official newspaper, said the volunteers had offered to join or rejoin the People's Army after the Korea Central News Agency (KCNA) issued a statement on



Monday condemning new sanctions imposed by the United Nations in retaliation for North Korean missile tests. Earlier this week, nuclear-armed North Korea threatened to strike the United States and its Pa-

cific territory of Guam. KCNA said on Wednesday a mass rally was held in Pyongyang to support the government. North Korea has previously mobilized large crowds to show its resolve when tensions escalate. (Reuters)

French Leader Urges Calm in North Korea Crisis

WASHINGTON - French President Emmanuel Macron has called on all sides in the North Korean nuclear crisis to act responsibly "to prevent any escalation of tensions" after a days-long war of words between Washington and Pyongyang. In a statement Saturday, Macron said the situation "undermines the preservation of international peace" and the North Korean regime "poses a serious threat to the security of its neighbors." Calling it "the responsibility of all," Macron called on the international community to "act in a concerted, firm and effective manner, as it has just done in the

(U.N.) Security Council, to bring North Korea back to the path of dialogue." France is a member of the Security Council, which approved fresh sanctions on North Korea this month for its recent intercontinental ballistic missile testing. President Donald Trump is seeking continued help from China's president in addressing the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear developments. The White House says that Trump — in a phone call Friday to President Xi Jinping (shee jhn-peeng) — saluted Xi for China's U.N. vote to impose tougher sanctions on North Korea. (AP)

Syria to facilitate chemical weapons team mission: Official

DAMASCUS, Syria — An international chemical weapons delegation will visit Syria in the coming days and Damascus will facilitate its mission to uncover who used chemical weapons in the country earlier this year, a Syrian official said Saturday.

Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said the delegation of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and U.N. Joint Investigative Mechanism is scheduled to arrive in Syria within 10 days. Mekdad reiterated in an interview with The Associated Press his government's denial of being behind the April 4 attack in the northwestern town of Khan Sheikhoun that killed nearly 100 people. The United States blamed the Syrian military for the attack and launched a punitive strike days later on the Shayrat air base from where it said the attack was launched. "We will offer it all facilities needed for the investigation and to help it arrive to the place where the alleged chemical attack took place," Mekdad said, adding that a delegation that came to Syria earlier this year did not visit Khan Sheikhoun citing security concerns. He added that the delegation also did not visit the Shayrat air base either. It is not likely that the delegation will be able to visit Khan Sheikhoun in Idlib province that has witnessed clashes recently between al-Qaida-linked fighters and rival insurgent groups. "We will ask them to go to Shayrat air base and by that Syria would have given proof that it has no relations to the use of poison gas," Mekdad said in the interview at his office in Damascus. (AP)

Neighbor News

Xi Urges Restraint on Korean Nuclear Issue in Phone Talk with Trump

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping urged restraint regarding the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula in a phone conversation with his U.S. counterpart Donald Trump on Saturday. The concerned parties should avoid remarks and actions that could escalate tensions on the peninsula, Xi said, adding China is ready to work with the United States to appropriately resolve the issue. Xi stressed that China and the United States have common interests in achieving denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and maintaining peace and stability there. The concerned parties should strive to resolve the issue through dialogue and negotiation to reach a political solution, Xi said. China is willing to keep close contacts with

the United States, on the basis of mutual respect, to seek a sound settlement on the issue, he added. Xi said he had a productive meeting with President Trump on the sidelines of the Group of 20 Summit last month in Hamburg, Germany. Maintaining close contacts between the two leaders on issues of common concern is "very important for the development of the China-U.S. relations," Xi added. He urged the two sides to enhance dialogue and communication in accordance with the consensus previously reached, promote exchanges and cooperation in various fields, and appropriately deal with each other's concerns, so as to ensure healthy and stable advancement of bilateral ties. (Xinhua)

Enthusiasm of People to Bring about Revolution: Nawaz

ISLAMABAD - Former prime minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Saturday said that the passion of people would bring about a revolution in the country and the sanctity of vote would be restored. Addressing a large gathering of the PML-N workers here, he said that such a large gathering was a sign of defeat of those who ousted an elected prime minister and those who kept the country hostage for last seventy years. "Can a few people become the owner of Pakistan by rejecting the will of 200 million people," he asked. "Nawaz Sharif did not make any treason, he did not commit any corruption, did not take any kickbacks or commission and committed no embezzlement," he told the charged gathering.

"Do you accept the verdict of dismissal of your elected prime minister," he asked the people. He was of the view that a revolution is needed in the country as the votes of the people have been disgraced here. "No matter if I have been dismissed. But your enthusiasm shows that I am alive in your hearts. I honour your commitment and promise if you stand by me, I shall fulfil my commitment of national progress," he added. "I was serving the nation, situation of electricity was improving, roads and motorways were being constructed, Balochistan has been making progress, projects of CPEC have been undergoing and unemployed were getting jobs," he said listing his achievements. (APP)

Iran Foreign Ministry to Activate Economic Diplomacy: Zarif

TEHRAN - Mohammad Javad Zarif, who has been nominated to continue to serve as foreign minister in President Hassan Rouhani's second term, says economic diplomacy and the boosting of ties with neighboring countries will be the Foreign Ministry's top two priorities in the next four years. "In the foreign policy area, we stress economic diplomacy as we believe that the Foreign Ministry should serve economic progress and people's livelihoods," Zarif told Icana news agency on Saturday. "Secondly," he said, "relations with neighbors have to be upgraded." He cited "resistance economy" as an important priority for the Foreign Ministry, especially in terms of expanding

non-oil exports and attracting capital and technology into Iran. Zarif further noted that the Foreign Ministry would follow the path of peace, stability, and more cooperation in the region. Elsewhere in his remarks, the top Iranian diplomat condemned the recent beheading of Mohsen Hojaji, a member of the Iranian advisory support team in Syria, by the Takfiri Daesh terrorist group. Zarif said that the killing showed the outfit's atrocity and inhumane treatment of people. "We hope that the terrorists' move will sound the alarm for the world to finally realize the fact that terrorism and extremism pose a threat to all and should be countered collectively," he said. (Presstv)

Turkmenistan still has an option to direct its gas westward

ASHGABAT - Enormous quantities of natural gas are concentrated in one limited (Caspian) region. The nations that own it — Russia, Iran, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan — each has its market to sell the gas, but all of them would willingly diversify their gas export in order not to depend on one customer. On August 1, Iran inaugurated a 170-km Damghan-Sari pipeline with 40 million mcm/d

of carrying capacity, a source in Iran's Oil Ministry told Trend. The project is worth about \$250 million. The pipeline will enable to transport gas to six north-eastern regions: Semnan, Golestan, Mazandaran, North Khorasan, Khorasan Razavi, and South Khorasan. Iran's gas production capacity in northeast regions stands at about 14 bcm/y, about 12 bcm/y less than the demand. (Trend)