

Putin, Macron to Meet for French-Russian Talks Before G-7

PARIS — French President Emmanuel Macron and Russian President Vladimir Putin are meeting in southern France to discuss the world's major crises, including Ukraine, Iran and Syria, and try to improve Moscow's relations with the European Union.

Macron has invited Putin on Monday afternoon to his summer residence, the Fort de Bregancon on the French Riviera, for a meeting followed by dinner, just a few days before opening a meeting of the Group of Seven nations in the French city of Biarritz with U.S. President Donald Trump and other leaders.

France holds the 2019 presidency of the G-7, which also



includes Britain, Canada, Germany, Italy and Japan. Russia was excluded from the group after it annexed Crimea in 2014.

Macron intends to share the outcomes from his meeting with Putin with other world leaders in

Biarritz Aug. 24-26.

A top diplomatic official at the French presidency said on customary condition of anonymity that the meeting aims to find "common ground" that would allow world powers to "converge on

the essential."

France seeks to play the role of mediator in Russia's conflict with Ukraine, and Macron has stressed the importance of keeping dialogue open with Moscow. French companies have also been pushing to lift EU sanctions resulting from Russia's actions in Ukraine.

The election of Ukraine's new president, Volodymyr Zelenskiy, provides opportunity to relaunch negotiations, the French diplomat said.

Zelenskiy has pushed for a quick four-way meeting involving himself, Putin, Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel to discuss ways to settle the conflict... (More on P4)...(12)

Neighbor News

Iran's Zarif Rules Out Talks with U.S. Over A New Nuclear Deal

HELSINKI - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif on Monday said Iran is not interested in talks with Washington, but any mediation should focus on bringing the United States back to the 2015

nuclear deal which it left last year. Zarif was speaking in Finland after meeting Foreign Affairs Minister Pekka Haavisto, who said Europe was doing its best to salvage the deal. (Reuters)

Pakistan Army Chief Gets Three-Year Extension

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's army chief, General Qamar Javed Bajwa, was handed a three-year extension on Monday as tension with neighboring India flared this month over the disputed territory of Kashmir, the prime minister's office said.

The two nuclear-armed countries have exchanged fire along the disputed line of control (LoC) that separates Pakistani and Indian controlled Kashmir following India's decision to revoke special status for its portion of Kashmir.

Since Saturday there has been a series of protests against the decision by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist government to revoke the autonomy of India's only Muslim-majority region.

Officials said security forces had been pelted with stones on 47 occasions on Saturday night in the Kashmir Valley, and more than 20 on Sunday. One said the protests were growing more intense. (Reuters)

Indian paramilitary police in Indian-controlled Kashmir and led to an aerial dogfight between Pakistani and Indian jets. Pakistan observed a 'Black Day' on Thursday to coincide with India's Independence Day celebrations. Newspaper issues had black borders and politicians, including Prime Minister Imran Khan, replaced their social media pictures with black squares. Flags on government buildings flew at half-mast.

Relations between Pakistan and India had already been strained after a suicide car bombing in February that killed at least 40

Iran Tanker Heads to Greece after Release, Iran Warns U.S Against Seizure Attempt

DUBAI - An Iranian tanker sailed through the Mediterranean toward Greece on Monday after it was released from detention off Gibraltar, and Tehran said that any at U.S. move to seize the vessel again would have "heavy consequences".

The Grace 1, renamed the Adrian Darya 1, left anchorage off Gibraltar about 11 p.m. (2100 GMT) on Sunday. Refinitiv ship tracking data showed on Monday that the vessel was heading to Kalamata in Greece

and was scheduled to arrive next Sunday at 0000 GMT.

The seizure of the tanker by British Royal Marines near Gibraltar in July 4 on suspicion of carrying oil to Syria in violation of European Union sanctions led to a weeks-long stand-off between Tehran and the West. It also heightened tensions on international oil shipping routes through the Gulf. Gibraltar, a British overseas territory, lifted the detention order on... (More on P4)...(15)

Sudan's Ousted Bashir Told Investigators He Got Millions from Saudi Arabia: Court Witness

KHARTOUM - Sudan's deposed leader Omar Hassan al-Bashir told investigators he had received millions of dollars from Saudi Arabia, a detective said in court on Monday.

Bashir, who was ousted and detained in April, is facing charges of illicit possession of foreign currency and accepting gifts in an unofficial manner. The detective told the court Bashir had made the statement about the money as he was questioned by investigators after his detention.



Bashir - who was in a cage in the courtroom, dressed in traditional white robes

and a turban - listened to the testimony but did not comment.

The next session of the trial is scheduled for Saturday. (Reuters)

EU Says Ready for No-Deal Brexit, 'British Would Be the Biggest Losers'



BRUSSELS - The European Commission said on Monday that the EU was ready for a no-deal Brexit and that Britain would

suffer most under such a scenario. Speaking at a regular daily briefing, Commission spokeswoman Natasha

Bertaud said a no-deal UK exit would never be the EU's preferred scenario, adding that the Brussels-based executive saw no need for additional contingency preparations at this stage.

"This will obviously cause significant disruption both for citizens and for businesses and this will have a serious negative economic impact," Bertaud said of any abrupt split.

"That would be proportionally much greater in the United Kingdom than it would be in the EU 27 states."

She cited Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker as having said that if it came to a no-deal Brexit "it is the British who will unfortunately be the biggest losers".

In London on Monday, the opposition Labour Party demanded that the U.K. parliament be recalled from its summer break to discuss steps to mitigate Brexit disruptions after leaked government documents forecast possible food, fuel and medicine shortages should Britain crash out from the bloc. (Reuters)

Beijing Warns US of 'Consequences' If It Sells F-16 Fighter Jets to Taiwan

BEIJING - China has demanded that US cancel all military sales to Taiwan, otherwise it won't hesitate to retaliate. The warning came amid the ongoing trade war and the row over the massive Hong Kong protests.

The White House had greenlighted the sale of 66 F-16 fighter jets to Taiwan over the weekend. This will be the second major arms deal with Taipei approved by Washington since July, when the US authorized the sale of

more than 100 M1A2 Abrams tanks, as well as surface-to-air missiles.

Beijing, which considers Taiwan its territory, blasted the move and warned that it will retaliate against what it says violates the decades-old 'One-China policy.'

"The US has to bear all the consequences triggered by the sales," Foreign Ministry spokesperson, Geng Shuang, told reporters on Monday. ... (More on P4)...(16)

'Prevent Anything Going in': Report Claims Trump Repeatedly Considered Venezuela Blockade

CARACAS - US President Donald Trump has repeatedly suggested deploying warships along Venezuela's coast to enforce a naval blockade, a report claims, citing officials. Trump earlier signaled he was eyeing the move, but was short on details.

Trump first broached the idea of cutting off the crisis-hit Latin American nation from the outside world at least a year and half ago, Axios reported, citing current and former officials who were privy to the internal discussions.

While the proposal has reportedly failed to win much support from the top brass, who see the... (More on P4)...(17)

Awkward: Netanyahu Greeted in Kiev with Slogan of Jew-Slaughtering Nazi Collaborators

KIEV - Grandfathering a slogan of past-era nationalists who took part in ethnic massacres makes for awkward moments when you have to use the slogan to greet a foreign leader of said ethnicity during an official visit.

Take Benjamin Netanyahu's ongoing visit to Ukraine. The Israeli prime minister was greeted by President Volodymyr Zelenskiy with a lot of decorum. There were red carpets, flags, ceremonious signing of important documents, and a small military parade to treat the former Israeli commando.

And of course Zelenskiy used the official greeting, which Ukraine adopted last year, "Glory to Ukraine," to which his loyal... (More on P4)...(18)

Turkey Ousts Three Kurdish Mayors for Suspected Militant Links, Launches Security Operation

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey - Turkey on Monday replaced Kurdish mayors with state officials in three cities and detained more than 400 people for suspected militant links, the Interior Ministry said, a move likely to fuel tensions in the mainly Kurdish southeast.

The ministry also said it had launched an operation with some 2,300 commandos against militant fighters of the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) in southeastern provinces. The mayors of three major southeastern cities - Diyarbakir, Mardin



and Van - are accused of various crimes including membership of a terrorist organization and spreading terrorist group propaganda, the ministry said in a statement. Riot police fired water cannon on small groups

of people protesting against the mayors' dismissal in central Diyarbakir, where police sealed off the municipality headquarters with metal barriers, Reuters TV video showed. President Tayyip... (More on P4)...(13)

UK's Johnson Tells Germany and France: Do A Brexit Deal

TRURO, England/LONDON - Prime Minister Boris Johnson called on France and Germany on Monday to change their position on Brexit and negotiate a new exit deal for Britain, reiterating his stance that he is ready to leave the European Union without a deal if they do not.

With Britain is set to leave the bloc on Oct. 31, it has less than 74 days to resolve a three-year crisis that is pitting the country against the EU, and parliament against the executive. "We will be ready to come out on Oct.

31 - deal or no deal," Johnson told reporters in Truro, southwest England. "Our friends and partners on the other side of the Channel are showing a little bit of reluctance to change their position - that's fine - I am confident that they will," he said.

Asked specifically about meetings scheduled this week with German Chancellor Angela Merkel and French President Emmanuel Macron, he said: "I hope they will see fit to compromise." Johnson... (More on P4)...(14)

Merkel and Orban Stress Unity on Iron Curtain Anniversary

SOPRON (Hungary) - German Chancellor Angela Merkel struck a conciliatory tone Monday alongside her Hungarian counterpart Viktor Orban as they commemorated the 30th anniversary of a pivotal moment in the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989.

Merkel admitted there were still "differences" between the pair over migration but she also emphasized that they agreed on many aspects of the issue, including doing more to tackle the causes of refugee movements.

The two leaders were speaking after marking the anniversary of the "Pan-European Picnic" held at the Austro-Hungarian border in 1989, which saw at least 600 East Germans cross the border and escape to freedom in the West. The first mass exodus of East Germans since the construction of the Berlin Wall in 1961, it was seen as a key factor in the fall of the wall itself three months later.

The commemoration was a rare encounter between two of the great survivors of European politics, with Merkel in office since 2005 and Orban since 2010.

Their last major meeting was in July 2018 when Orban made his first visit to Berlin for three years.

It was an awkward affair, during which their divisions were on full display and Merkel accused Orban of failing to respect "humanity" with his harsh anti-immigration policies.

Orban has been a sharp critic of Merkel's 2015 decision to open German borders to those fleeing Middle Eastern conflict zones. (AFP)

Kazakh Tenge Slightly Weakens against US Dollar

NUR-SULTAN - Weighted average dollar rate during the session of Kazakhstan Stock Exchange on August 19, 2019, amounted to 386.83 tenge compared to 386.82 tenge per dollar on August 16, 2019, Trend reports with reference to the stock data.

The minimum rate was at the level of 386.35 tenge per dollar, the maximum - 387.5 tenge, and the closing rate was 386.9 tenge per dollar. The volume of trading in US dollar amounted to over \$125.460 million, and 287 currency transactions were made.

In the exchange offices of Nur-Sultan and Almaty, the maximum selling rate of the American currency was 388 tenge and 389.5 tenge respectively. As at August 19, 2019, the official exchange rate set by National Bank of Kazakhstan stood at 386.82 tenge per one US dollar. On July 26, 2019 the dollar rate during stock session equaled 384.92 tenge, having exceeded its maximal historical record. As of August 8, 2019, one dollar cost 387.73 tenge. Weighted average dollar rate during the session of Kazakhstan Stock Exchange on August 9, 2019 amounted to 387.44 tenge, having strengthened for the first time since the recent breaking of the historical record. (Trend)

Turkmenistan Considers Japan a Reliable Strategic Partner

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan considers Japan a reliable strategic partner, Trend reports referring to the Neytralni Turkmenistan newspaper, which published information provided by Turkmen Ministry of Finance and Economy.

Several major projects have already been implemented with the participation of Japanese companies. Among them are the ammonia and carbamide production complex in Mary Region, the carbamide plant and the polymer complex in Balkan Region, and an enterprise producing gasoline from natural gas in Ahal Region, the article reads.

President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov plans to visit Japan in order to participate in the celebrations on the occasion of the accession to the throne of Emperor Naruhito, at the invitation of the Japanese side. According to preliminary information, the ceremony will be held in fall. The impulse to business relations with Japan was given by the official visit of Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe to Turkmenistan in October 2015, when agreements on a number of investment projects worth \$18 billion were concluded. Turkmenistan, occupying one of the key positions in the region for the supply of natural gas, has been actively diversifying the economy in recent years. Japan is showing interest in participating in projects to develop the industrial infrastructure of Turkmenistan's largest gas field, Galkynysh. (Trend)