

French Foreign, Defense Ministers in Baghdad to Support Iraq in War Against IS

BAGHDAD - The French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian and Defense Minister Florence Parly on Saturday arrived in the Iraqi capital Baghdad to hold talks with Iraqi leaders and show support in fighting against the Islamic State (IS) militant group. "Iraq is moving from war to peace, although Daesh (IS group) is not finished yet, but Iraq is going into the stage of reconciliation, reconstruction and stability, then Iraq needs support from France and that explain why we are here today," Le Drian said at a joint press conference with Parly and the Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari.

Le Drian said that he and Parly will meet Iraqi President Fuad Masoum and Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi to "say that



France will always be with Iraq and we will talk about means to achieve this."

"France is strongly committed to supporting Iraq within the framework of the international coalition against Daesh by providing air and logistical support to the Iraqi forces. It also supports Iraq within the framework of bilateral cooperation between the two countries," said Parly.

For his part, Jaafari said that Iraq and France are both victims of terrorism, which killed dozens of people in the two countries. However, Jaafari warned that the victory over IS militants in Iraq "does not, in any way, mean the end of the threat of this terrorist organization." (Xinhua)

Row Escalates Between France, Poland over EU Labor Reforms

VARNA, Bulgaria - A bitter exchange of words erupted between France and Poland on Friday after French President Emmanuel Macron sharply criticized Poland's opposition to plans to change European Union rules on "posted workers" - the cheap labor from eastern countries sent to more prosperous EU nations.

On a trip Friday to Bulgaria, Macron said the Polish reluctance to reform the bloc's labor rules is "an illustration of the mistakes made by

this government." His comments came on the final leg of a three-day visit to Central and Eastern Europe that has included meetings with Austrian, Czech, Slovak and Romanian leaders but not with Polish officials.

"Poland has decided to isolate itself from Europe and its refusal to revise this directive doesn't change my confidence in (getting) a positive outcome" on the rules change, Macron said, adding Poles "deserved better." (AP)

N. Korea Tests Short-Range Missiles as South Korea, U.S. Conduct Drills

SEOUL/WASHINGTON - North Korea fired several short-range missiles into the sea off its east coast early on Saturday, South Korea and the U.S. military said, as the two allies conducted annual joint military drills that the North denounces as preparation for war. The U.S. military's Pacific Command said it had detected three short-range ballistic missiles, fired over a 20 minute period. One appeared to have blown up almost immediately while two flew about 250 km (155 miles)

in a northeasterly direction, Pacific Command said, revising an earlier assessment that two of the missiles had failed in flight. The test came just days after senior U.S. officials praised North Korea and leader Kim Jong Un for showing restraint in not firing any missiles since late July. The South Korean Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff said the projectiles were launched from the North's eastern Kangwon province into the sea. Later on Saturday, the South Korean Presi-



dential Blue House said the North may have fired an upgraded 300-mm caliber multiple rocket launcher but the military was still analyzing the precise details of the projectiles. Pacific Command

said the missiles did not pose a threat to the U.S. mainland or to the Pacific territory of Guam, which North Korea had threatened earlier this month to surround in a "sea of fire". (Reuters)

Turkey Strengthens Military Presence on Syrian Border



ANKARA - Turkey has reinforced its military presence along its southern border with Syria on Saturday, local media reported. According to local

media, 10 trucks loaded with tanks and howitzers were sent to the southern border province of Kilis to fight against threats from the Peoples' Democratic

Party (YPG) in war-torn northern Syria. The trucks carried six howitzers and four armored personnel carriers. Strict security measures

were taken during the route that the vehicles passed. Kilis lies across YPG-controlled Syrian region of Afrin. Tensions between Turkey and YPG have been escalating recently. Earlier this month, Turkish army sent a military convoy with five howitzers to the border with Syria, to reinforce artillery on border. Turkey has opposed to the presence of YPG in northern Syria, and accused YPG as a terror group linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). (Xinhua)

N. Korea Steps up Work on Parts for New Reactor: IAEA

VIENNA - North Korea has increased its efforts to produce parts for a new nuclear reactor it is building while continuing to operate the main existing one that provides fuel for its atom bombs, the UN nuclear watchdog has said in an annual report on Friday. North Korea has conducted two nuclear tests and dozens of missile tests since the beginning of last year, defying world powers and raising fears of a conflict breaking out on the heavily militarized Korean peninsula. A missile test last month

put the mainland United States in range. Pyongyang later said it had a plan to fire missiles at the US Pacific territory of Guam, while US President Donald Trump said any threats would be met with "fire and fury". US Ambassador Nikki Haley said on Friday, "It's a concern, it shows that North Korea hasn't backed down, they haven't stopped what they are doing and it is the reason why we continue to have our guard up when it comes to North Korea." (Reuters)

Trump's National Security Adviser out of White House

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump's adviser Sebastian Gorka is no longer employed at the White House, an official confirmed Friday.

"Sebastian Gorka did not resign, but I can confirm he no longer works at the White House," a White House official said in a statement.

Gorka was closely aligned with a nationalist faction led by ousted White House chief strategist Steve Bannon.

Gorka, 46, served as a deputy assistant to Trump after leaving his post as national security editor at Bannon's Breitbart News. The counter-terrorism expert was reportedly in a feud with national security adviser General H.R. McMaster and not happy about Trump's policy in Afghanistan. (Xinhua)

Turkey Opposition Chief Challenges Erdogan with 'Justice' Congress

CANAKKALE - Turkey's main opposition leader on Saturday warned President Recep Tayyip Erdogan that the whole country has a "thirst for justice", opening an unprecedented four-day meeting protesting alleged violations under his rule.

Kemal Kilicdaroglu, head of the secular Republican People's Party (CHP), is hoping the "justice congress" in the western Canakkale region will keep up the momentum of a month-long march highlighting judicial abuses in Turkey after the July 15 failed coup. "Eighty million have a thirst for justice," Kilicdaroglu said, referring to Turkey's population. "It is my duty to seek justice." (AFP)

Culture Ministers of China, Japan, ROK Discuss Practical Cooperation

KYOTO, Japan - Culture ministers of China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea (ROK) exchanged views on further enhancing practical cooperation in cultural areas at the ninth China-Japan-ROK Cultural Ministers' Meeting held here Saturday.

Chinese Minister of Culture Luo Shugang and his Japanese and South Korean counterparts Yoshimasa Hayashi and Do Jong-whan, attended the meeting.

At the meeting, the three sides went over the progress made since their eighth meeting held in



Jeju, ROK last year, and exchanged views on further enhancing practical cooperation.

A joint declaration was adopted at the meeting, which further clarified the key areas and projects of trilateral cultural

cooperation and made clear that the 10th China-Japan-ROK Cultural Ministers' Meeting will be held in China in 2018. Cultural ministers of the three countries also attended cultural events in Kyoto. (Xinhua)

Iraq Says 90 Percent of Tal Afar Retaken from IS

BAGHDAD - Iraq's military said Saturday it has driven Islamic State militants out of 90 percent of the northern town of Tal Afar and retaken the town center.

Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasool, a military spokesman, spoke hours after Iraq's foreign minister, Ibrahim al-Jaafari, said that 70 percent of the town west of Mosul had been retaken. Al-Jaafari spoke during a news conference with his French counterpart.

Iraqi officials often declare areas liberated before the fighting has completely ended, and the militants have been

known to carry out surprise counterattacks. Iraq launched the operation to retake Tal Afar on Sunday, a month after it declared the northern city of Mosul, its second largest, to be fully liberated. Tal Afar is about 150 kilometers (93 miles) from Syria's border and it's among the last IS-held towns in Iraq.

Iraqi and Syrian forces have advanced against the extremist group on a number of fronts in recent months with the help of a U.S.-led coalition. U.S.-backed and Kurdish-led forces are currently battling IS inside the group's self-declared capital, Raqqa, in northern Syria. (AP)

Neighbor News

Xi Calls for Right Direction in Mass Organization Reform

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping has called for "firm adherence to the right direction in the reform of mass organizations."

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in an instruction to a symposium on mass organization reform.

The work on mass organizations is an important component of the undertakings of the CPC, and mass organization reform is an important part of overall reform, Xi said. Xi asked the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee to enhance guidance on the reform work, with a reform office under CPC Central Committee overseeing the implementation of the reform plan.

Party committees at all levels should take responsibilities to push forward the reform of mass organizations, by steering the direction of the reform, studying the current situation and tackling difficulties to improve the work of mass organizations and their services, Xi said.

Liu Yunshan, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and the Secretariat of the CPC Central Committee, said at the symposium on Saturday that efforts must be made to follow Xi's instruction and push forward the reform. He said the reform must focus on the improvement of mass organizations' work to better serve, attract and influence the people, under the leadership of the CPC. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Wants Further Expansion of Ties with France: Abbasi

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi Saturday said Pakistan considered France an important friend and wished to enhance the bilateral relations as well as multilateral cooperation with it.

The prime minister was talking to ambassador of France Mrs. Martine Dorance who paid a farewell call on him at PM Office, said a press release here.

The prime minister noted with satisfaction that the two countries were cooperating in the fields of energy, investment and defence sectors.

He appreciated efforts of ambassador Dorance towards further promoting bilateral relations between the two countries

during her tenure. The prime minister said it was very encouraging that Pakistan-France Friendship Groups existed in the parliaments of the two countries to promote mutual interaction among the parliamentarians.

The French ambassador thanked the prime minister and appreciated the cooperation of the government of Pakistan during her tenure. She further said that she would continue to play her role in strengthening relations between the two countries.

The prime minister expressed his best wishes to the outgoing ambassador for her future assignments. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran Says U.S. Pressures on IAEA Violate Nuclear Deal

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said that any move of the United States to exert pressure on the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) over Iran's 2015 nuclear deal is a violation of the accord, local media reported on Saturday.

"We are sure that the IAEA is aware of regulations on its behavior as an international body and will not let its independence and status be undermined by the U.S. pressures," Zarif was quoted as saying.

On Friday, Nikki Haley, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, said that the IAEA has the support of the United States to use all the authorities to monitor Iran's nuclear program. The Vienna-based UN nuclear watchdog

has true experts and professionals and has a very strong verification program in Iran. However, the agency is not allowed to see the whole picture of Tehran's nuclear program, Haley told reporters at UN headquarters in New York.

Iran has publicly declared that they will not allow access to military sites. But the international agreement in 2015 makes no distinction between military and non-military sites, said Haley after she returned from a trip to the IAEA headquarters in Vienna. Iran's permanent mission to the IAEA also said in a statement that the objectives and the results of Haley's trip to Vienna "contradict" the nuclear deal and UNSC Resolution 2231. (Xinhua)

Uzbek FM, CIS Executive Secretary Discuss Upcoming Events

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan's Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov met with Executive Secretary of the Commonwealth of Independent States Sergey Lebedev who arrived in Uzbekistan to participate in international events in Samarkand on Saturday. He is expected to attend the conference "Central Asian Renaissance in the History of World Civilization" and the

"Shark Taronalari" music festival. During the meeting, topical issues of the agenda of the CIS as well as the preparations for the upcoming meetings of the Council of Heads of State (in Sochi), the Council of Heads of Government (in Tashkent) and the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Commonwealth countries were discussed. (Trend)