

Trump to Meet with Putin at G-20 Summit next Week

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump will meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin next week at the Group of 20 summit in Hamburg, Germany, the White House said Thursday. U.S. National Security Adviser H.R. McMaster made the announcement at a White House briefing, adding that "there is no specific agenda. It's really going to be whatever the president wants to talk about." The first face-to-face encounter between the two leaders will come amid tensions between the U.S. and Russia as the two countries hold differences on a slew of issues, including the Syrian conflict, the Ukrainian crisis and the expansion of the North Atlantic Treaty Or-



ganization (NATO). In April, Trump said the U.S. was "not getting along with Russia at all" and the relations between the two countries "may be at an all-time low." Meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov in Washington in mid-May, Trump expressed his desire to build a better relationship between the two countries.

Earlier this month, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the U.S. is working to stabilize its relationship with Russia, which is "at an all-time low." "Our relationship is at an all-time low, and it's been deteriorating further. Our objective is to stabilize that," Tillerson told lawmakers at a Senate hearing. (Xinhua)

UN Chief Arrives in Swiss Town to Push Forward Peace Talks on Cyprus

CRANS-MONTANA, Switzerland - United Nations (UN) Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived here Friday in a bid to push forward the ongoing peace talks on the reunification of Cyprus. The UN chief is supposed to meet in the Swiss Alpine town with participants of the conference from all sides and then chair a session for discussions on related issues. The new round of the Conference on Cyprus under the auspices of the United Nations started here

Wednesday morning, and the UN official described this as "a constructive and good start." UN Special Adviser on Cyprus Espen Barth Eide on Wednesday said that the conference provided the "best chance" for a solution to the Cyprus problem, and after the first session he felt even better about this chance.

Jeffrey Feltman, UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs and Representative of the UN Secretary-General for the Conference on Cyprus, told



reporters that the ongoing Conference is a "historic opportunity" to solve a decades-old problem. Participants of the conference include Turkish Cypriot leader Mustafa Akinci,

Greek Cypriot leader Nicos Anastasiades, as well as foreign ministers and senior representatives from Turkey, Greece, Britain and the European Union (EU). (Xinhua)

Syrian Army Lay Full Siege on IS in Southern Aleppo Countryside

DAMASCUS - The Syrian army succeeded on Friday to lay a full siege on the Islamic State (IS)-held towns and villages in the southern countryside of Aleppo province in northern Syria, a military source told Xinhua.

The Syrian army and allied forces have secured the road between the city of Rasafeh, in the southern countryside of Raqqa in northern Syria, and the town of Athria, in the eastern countryside of the central Hama province, which enabled it to

lay a siege on the villages and towns in the southern countryside of Aleppo, the source said on condition of anonymity.

The source, meanwhile, added that the Syrian army forces are bracing to enter the isolated villages in southern Aleppo, adding that the IS militants there are expected to have fled ahead of the imposition of a full siege on those areas. With this progress, the road between Hama and Aleppo has become secure, after being a target for frequent IS attacks. (Xinhua)

Moscow Says 'Questionable Data' In Report on Syria Chemical Attack

MOSCOW - Russia on Friday dismissed a report by the UN's chemical weapons watchdog that sarin was used as a chemical weapon in the April 4 attack in the Syrian town of Khan Sheikhun. The United States and its allies have accused the Moscow-backed Syrian regime of being behind the attack, a claim Russia rejects. "We must state that (the report's) findings are still based on rather questionable data," the foreign ministry in Moscow said in a statement. "It is not surprising that the

contents of the report by the special mission of the OPCW are in many ways biased, which suggests that political motivation is present in the actions of this organization." The Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) said Thursday in a confidential report from a fact-finding mission that "sarin or a sarin-like substance" hit people in Khan Sheikhun. The report, parts of which were seen by AFP, did not assign blame for the attack that killed at least 87 people including many children. (AFP)

Merkel Stresses Commitment to Paris Climate Accord in Thinly Veiled Swipe at Trump

BERLIN - Without calling him by name, German Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) offered a scathing criticism of U.S. president Trump's policies in a speech before the Federal Parliament (Bundestag) on Thursday. Speaking a week before the official commencement of the G20 summit in Hamburg, Merkel emphasized Germany's commitment to multilateral cooperation to confront transnational challenges such as climate change. "Whoever thinks that the problems of this world can be solved with isolation-

ism and protectionism is making an enormous mistake" Merkel said. "Only together can we find the right answers to the central questions of our times." This circumstance applied to the G20 as much as it did to the European Union, according to the chancellor. Merkel's speech contained several thinly-veiled swipes at Trump. Addressing the issue of climate change, she warned that "we cannot and will not wait until the last person on Earth is convinced of the scientific evidence of climate change. In other



words: the [Paris] climate accord is irreversible and non-negotiable." Since the United States abandoned the Paris accord, Germany was "more committed than ever to making it a success", she said.

The speech highlighted a growing discrepancy between Berlin and Washington's positions on a several international issues since Trump took office in January, ranging from climate change to trade. (Xinhua)

Struggling British PM Wins Confidence Vote

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May won backing for her policy programme with a slender parliamentary majority on Thursday in the first test of her authority after an election setback and growing pressure on her Brexit and austerity agenda. May cut short a visit to Berlin and her defence minister, Michael Fallon, left Brussels to dash back to Britain for the vote, underlining her precarious position after she lost her Conservative Party's parliamentary majority in an election on June 8 that she did not need to call. On Wednesday, she saw off an attempt by the opposition Labour Party to defeat her in a vote on public sector pay, thanks partly to the support of a small Northern Irish party which she secured under a deal to help her pass legislation. (Reuters)

Indian PM to Visit Israel, Germany Next Week

NEW DELHI - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will embark on a two-nation tour to Israel and Germany next week. Modi's first stop will be Israel, while his Germany trip will be to attend the G20 Summit in Hamburg, the Indian External Affairs Ministry has said. "The prime minister will be in Israel from July 4 to 6 on the occasion of the establishment of 25th year of India-Israel diplomatic relations," Indian External Affairs Ministry's Joint Secretary (West Asia and North Africa) B. Bala Bhaskar said. During his stay in Israel, Modi will have detailed discussions with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu on all matters of mutual interest and will also call on President Reuven Rivlin, the official said. Stating that Israel has taken great interest in India's flagship programs, Bhaskar said Modi will address captains of the industry during his stay in that country. (Xinhua)

NATO Defense Ministers Take Forward Decisions on Burden Sharing, Counterterrorism

BRUSSELS - NATO defense ministers on Thursday took forward decisions on fair burden-sharing and counterterrorism which were made at NATO summit in May, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said after a ministerial meeting. Stoltenberg told media that NATO allies made major progress towards fairer burden-sharing, and it will be the third consecutive year of accelerating defense investment across European allies and Can-



ada. According to him, NATO European allies and Canada spent 46 billion U.S. dollars more on defense since 2015. The money will

be spent on "many different things", including investing in new equipment and military exercises, but also soldiers' salaries and pensions. (Xinhua)

Climate Change "Damages U.S. Economy, Increases Inequality": Study

WASHINGTON - For every one degree Celsius increase in global temperatures, the U.S. economy will experience a 1.2 percent loss in its gross domestic product on average, a new study said Thursday. Importantly, risk is distributed unequally across locations in the country, according to the study published in the U.S. journal Science. States in the country's South and lower Midwest, which tend to be poor and hot already, will lose the most, with economic opportunity traveling northward and westward, it said. Colder and richer counties along the northern border and in the Rockies could

benefit the most as health, agriculture and energy costs are projected to improve. By the late 21st century, the poorest third of counties could sustain economic damages costing as much as 20 percent of their income if warming proceeds unabated. "Unmitigated climate change will be very expensive for huge regions of the United States," lead author Solomon Hsiang, associate professor at the University of California, Berkeley, said in a statement. "If we continue on the current path, our analysis indicates it may result in the largest transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich in the country's history." (Xinhua)

Turkish, Qatari Ministers Meet Amid Crisis with Arab States

ANKARA, Turkey - Qatar's defense minister held talks with his Turkish counterpart on Friday as the Gulf nation's feud with four other major Arab states deepens amid a sweeping list of demands to Doha, including the closure of a Turkish military base there. Defense Ministry officials said Qatar's Khalid bin Mohammed al-Attiyah met with Turkey's Fikri Isik in Ankara. Turkey is adamant to keep its base in the small Gulf Arab state and has sided with Qatar in the dispute, which saw Arab countries cut ties to Doha earlier this month, accusing it of supporting terror groups. Qatar denies the accusation. In a sign of support, Turkey shipped supplies to Doha to help ease its isolation and swiftly ratified military agreements with Qatar, allowing the deployment of soldiers to its base. A contingent of 23 troops departed for Doha last week, joining some 90 soldiers already there. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has rejected the four Arab nations' demand for an end to Turkish troop presence in Doha, calling it "disrespectful" and saying that Turkey would not seek permission from others over its defense cooperation agreements. Turkey insists its troop deployment to Qatar aims to enhance regional security and is not aimed against any specific country. Other demands presented to Qatar by the four nations - Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain - include shuttering the Al-Jazeera news network and curbing diplomatic ties to Iran. (AP)

Nieghbor News

Xi's Visits to Russia, Germany to Boost Global Economic Cooperation

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping's upcoming tour to Russia and Germany is expected to inject positive energy into China-Europe relations and the global economy. Xi will pay state visits to Russia and Germany from July 3 to 6, and attend the 12th G20 summit in Hamburg on July 7 and 8. Political analysts believe the visits will bring more assurances in tackling global economic uncertainty.

ENRICHED CHINA-RUSSIA STRATEGIC COORDINATION

The visit will be Xi's sixth tour to Russia since taking office and the 21st time to hold talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin. It will also mark the third time the two heads of states have met this year. "The close working relations between the two heads of states and their

personal friendship has become a 'locomotive' in the development of bilateral relations between China and Russia," said Chen Yurong, a senior researcher in Eurasian studies at the China Institute of International Studies. "They can exchange views on almost everything, which reflects the high levels of political trust between the two countries," Chen said.

In recent years, the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination has enjoyed continuous and robust development. Such a partnership is a more elevated relationship China holds with some countries. During the visit, the two leaders will map out the direction and goals for developing bilateral ties and further deepen political mutual trust. (Xinhua)

Nawaz Gets an Update on Foreign Affairs, Regional Situation

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif Friday while reiterating his priority for a peaceful neighborhood and resolution of disputes through dialogue, directed that trade, investment and scientific collaboration, be the strategic pillars of Pakistan's foreign Policy. He was speaking here at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where he was given a comprehensive review of Pakistan's Foreign Policy priorities in the wake of recent developments in and around Pakistan and the emerging global and regional scenario. Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, recounted the

important achievements made in the Foreign Policy realm under the Prime Minister's stewardship. A statement released by the PM's Media Office said the Prime Minister expressed satisfaction over the status of strategic partnership with China and the launch of CPEC, reviving the strategic dialogue with the US, strong relations with Russia, major improvement in relations with Central Asia culminating in Pakistan's membership of SCO. The Prime Minister said these achievements were facilitated by significant gains made in fighting terrorism and in achieving the economic turnaround. (APP)

Iran President Hails Liberation of Iraq's Mosul from Daesh Control

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has hailed the liberation of the Iraqi city of Mosul from the occupation of Daesh terrorist group after three years. In a message to Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Friday, the Iranian president extended his congratulations to him and the Iraqi nation over the "liberation of the biggest Daesh-controlled city in Iraq" and the breaking free from the "yoke of crime and violence" that had been unprecedented in recent centuries. He added that this great victory was achieved thanks to cooperation, coordination, dedication and struggle by the Iraqi people, army soldiers

and Popular Mobilization Units (PMU), commonly known as Hashd al-Sha'abi, backed by neighboring countries. Rouhani added that the major victory "shows the significance of a genuine fight against those criminals who cruelly displayed violence and murder in the name of Islam." He expressed the Islamic Republic's readiness to continue with the all-out fight against these criminals across the Middle East. In a statement on Thursday, the Iraqi premier announced an end to Daesh's "state of falsehood" following the recapture of the historical Grand al-Nuri Mosque at the heart of Mosul. (Presstv)

Turkmenistan President Offers Uzbekistan to Participate in TAPI Project

ASHGABAT - President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov invited businessmen from Uzbekistan to participate in the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Project, the state news agency of Turkmenistan on June 29. The proposal was made during the meeting of Berdimuhamedov with Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Abdulla Aripov in Ashgabat. The head of state suggested to start develop-

ment of the oil and gas field on the Caspian shelf as well. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan stand for diversification of energy flows, the report said. The total length of the TAPI gas pipeline is 1,814 km, including 214 km on the territory of Turkmenistan, 774 km - in Afghanistan, 826 km - from Pakistan to border with India. Construction of the Turkmen section of the project started in December 2015. (AKI)