

Trump, Merkel to Meet ahead of Tricky G20 Talks: Berlin

BERLIN - US President Donald Trump and German Chancellor Angela Merkel plan to meet Thursday for what are expected to be tricky talks on the eve of a Group of 20 summit.

Merkel's spokesman Stefan Seibert said that "a meeting with the US president is planned before the G20 summit, most probably in the early evening of Thursday".

Transatlantic differences on climate change, trade, defence spending, refugees and other issues are expected to cloud the July 7-8 meeting of world leaders from major industrialised and emerging econo-



mies in the northern port city. Last week Merkel met with key European leaders and vowed to make a stand for climate protection and open markets at the meeting with Trump, who has said he will take the US out of the Paris climate deal and pursue a protectionist "America First" policy. Merkel said last Thursday that "the differences are obvious and it would be dishonest to try to cover that up. That I won't do." She also said the US exit from the 2015 Paris climate pact had made Europe "more determined than ever" to make the accord a success. (AFP)

Macron Says Europe has 'Lost its Way'

VERSAILLES, France - French President Emmanuel Macron on Monday said the European Union has "lost its way", calling for a "new generation of leaders" to revive the bloc.

"The building of Europe has been weakened by the spread of bureaucracy and by the growing scepticism that comes from that," Macron said in an address to both houses of parliament.

"The last 10 years have been cruel for Europe. We have managed crises but we have lost our way."

Macron, 39, put European revival at the centre of his presidential campaign, in stark contrast to his anti-immigration, anti-EU rival Marine Le Pen. "I believe firmly in Europe," he said Monday. "But I don't find the scepticism unjustified."

The president said the "tyranny of agendas and timelines and technical twists and turns" should be overturned.

He said Britain's vote last year to leave the European Union was a "symptom" of a "failure... that we must have the courage to face head-on."



German Chancellor Angela Merkel has closed ranks with Macron in a bid to revive the traditional Franco-German "motor" of the EU following Britain's Brexit decision. Macron said France and Germany would launch "democratic conventions" across Europe by the end of 2017. (AFP)

Saudi Arabia, Allies Give Qatar two more Days to Accept Demands

DUBAI/DOHA - Four Arab states which accuse Qatar of supporting terrorism agreed to extend until late on Tuesday a deadline for Doha to comply with a list of demands, as U.S. President Donald Trump voiced concern to both sides about the dispute.

Qatar has called the accusations baseless and says the demands - which include closing Qatar-based al Jazeera TV and ejecting Turkish troops based there - are so severe that they seem de-

signed to be rejected. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) have raised the possibility of further sanctions against Qatar if it does not comply with the 13 demands presented to Doha through Kuwait, which is acting as a mediator.

According to a joint statement on Saudi state news agency SPA, the four countries agreed to a request by Kuwait to extend by 48 hours Sunday's deadline for compliance. (Reuters)

German Detained for Serious Crime Plot against G20 Summit

BERLIN - A 30-year-old German living in Rostock is believed to have been plotting to commit serious crimes in connection with the upcoming G20 summit in Hamburg, Hamburg police authorities said on Sunday on its Twitter account.

A search of the suspect's apartment by Rostock police and officers of the Hamburg State criminal police office led to the discovery of an "extensive" weapons arsenal thought to be stored for the purpose of committing violent acts.

The weapons are, among other things, knives, a baseball bat, batons, legal as well as forbidden pyrotechnics, bottles and cans filled with presumably flammable liquid, gas masks and numerous containers with unknown powder or chemicals.

An analysis of the chemicals and their possible applications is currently underway. Criminal proceedings have been initiated against the suspect for violating the law on weapons and explosives. (Xinhua)

Egypt to Host Saudi, UAE, Bahraini FMs over Crisis with Qatar

CAIRO - Foreign ministers of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Bahrain will meet in Cairo Wednesday to discuss the Qatari crisis, an Egyptian Foreign Ministry spokesman said Monday.

The meeting comes within the context of coordinating stances on future steps taken to deal with Qatar, as well as exchanging viewpoints and evaluating international and regional contacts, said Ahmed Abu Zeid.

Egypt has recently joined the Gulf countries of Saudi

Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain in imposing a blockade on Qatar, accusing the latter of sheltering members of terrorist organizations and interfering in other countries' domestic affairs.

Egypt's administration, led by President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi, is at odds with Qatar for Qatar has allegedly supported and hosted fleeing members of the Muslim Brotherhood group, an organization currently blacklisted by the Egyptian government.

The Brotherhood supports former Islamist President



Mohamed Morsi, who was toppled in July 2013 in response to mass protests. Among the six Gulf Cooperation Council states, Kuwait and Oman did

not join the anti-Qatar blockade and the Kuwaiti leadership has been communicating with all parties of the crisis to reach a solution. (Xinhua)

EU Rules out more Time for France to Meet Deficit Target

PARIS - Offering extra time to France to respect its financial commitment to the European Union (EU) is not on the agenda, said Pierre Moscovici, European Commissioner for economic and financial affairs on Monday. Asked by France 2 TV if the EU would accept a possible request from Paris to delay its plan to cut its budget gap, Moscovici said "It is out of the question, no delay, only a serious budget policy needs to be on the table."

The former economy minister added that he expected the new French government to "present a 2018 budget draft that will allow to pass below 3.0 percent and allow France to get out...from the excessive deficit procedures." (Xinhua)

Merkel's Conservatives Promise Full Employment by 2025

BERLIN - Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives promised Germany more police, more homes and full employment within eight years when they presented their program on Monday for an election in which she will seek a fourth term in office.

With Europe's biggest economy growing robustly, Merkel's Christian Democrats (CDU) and their Bavarian sister party, the Christian Social Union (CSU), are able to offer voters tax relief and more investment after the Sept. 24 ballot. The allies hold a clear opinion poll lead over the center-left Social Democrats (SPD), but would still need to team up with another party to govern.

On Monday they added the goal of full employment - which they define as a jobless rate of less than 3 percent - by 2025 to their list of campaign pledges. (Reuters)

Syria Warns U.S. to Calculate Reactions in Case of New Aggression: Official

DAMASCUS - Syria's Deputy Foreign Minister Faisal Mekdad said Monday that his government would not be surprised if the U.S. carried out a new attack on Syria, as "the crazy can do anything."

Mekdad's remarks came against the backdrop of a new escalation in the Syrian chemical file, with Washington alleging that the Syrian government is preparing for a new chemical attack. On Monday, the White House said the United States had identified the Syrian government's potential preparations for another chemical



weapons attack, warning of "a heavy price" if such attacks were conducted.

"The activities are similar to preparations the regime made before its April 4, 2017 chemical weapons attack," the White House said, referring to the April

alleged chemical attack on the city of Khan Sheikhun in northern Idlib province.

Activists and the United States accused the Syrian army of carrying out the attack, while the Syrian government denied such allegation. (Xinhua)

Italy, France, Germany Draw up Plan of Action to Curb Migrant Arrivals

ROME - Italy, France and Germany have hammered out a plan of action to curb migrant arrivals, the Italian interior ministry said in a statement Monday.

Italian Interior Minister Marco Minniti came up with the plan along with his counterparts France's Gerard Collomb, Germany's Thomas de Maiziere, and European Commissioner for Migration Dimitris Avramopoulos at a meeting on Sunday in Paris, according to the statement.

Italy faces continuous arrivals of migrants fleeing war and famine in North Africa and the Middle East via unseaworthy boats run by human traffickers.

Most of the vessels leave from Libya, with Italy as the nearest European landfall on the so-called Central Mediterranean route.

As part of the plan of action, Italy tried to draw up a "code of conduct" for non-governmental organizations, such as Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and Save the Children, who rescue people off traffickers' boats in the Mediterranean. The NGOs bring all the people they save to Italy, eschewing other countries which also face the Mediterranean - a situation which is becoming unsustainable, the Italian government said last week. (Xinhua)

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Xi Arrives in Moscow for State Visit to Russia

MOSCOW - Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived here on Monday, embarking on his second state visit to Russia since taking office in 2013.

In a written speech released upon arrival, Xi noted that the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination is at its best in history. The Chinese top leader said the two countries, both staunch supporters of each other's core interests, have engaged in aligning the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative with the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union. Beijing and Moscow, faced with complicated international situation, have played their due role in promoting win-win cooperation in international relations, and securing regional and global peace and stability, he said.

"This is my sixth tour to Russia since assuming office," Xi said, adding that he looks forward to in-depth exchange of views with his Russian counterpart, Vladimir Putin, on bilateral cooperation and

major international and regional issues of common concern.

"One needs good partners to walk with, and good neighbors to live with," he noted.

Xi will hold talks with top Russian leaders during his stay, in a bid to deepen political trust and map out the future bilateral cooperation, Chinese Assistant Foreign Minister Li Huilai said at an earlier press conference.

China and Russia are each other's most trustworthy strategic partners, Xi told Russian media ahead of his visit, adding that the 4,300-km border line between the two countries has become a bond of friendship between the two peoples.

Xi and Putin, boasting close working relationship and intimate personal friendship, have met with each other for 22 times in five consecutive years. In an apparent gesture to support the Xi-proposed initiative, Putin came to Beijing in May to attend the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation. (Xinhua)

No one Can Threaten others and Stay Safe: Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has slammed certain states for using terror as a foreign policy tool, saying any country that thinks it can harm others' interests and stay on the safe side itself is wrong.

"Whatever country, which seeks to use its power to threaten another's existence, has [in effect] threatened its own existence," Rouhani told the 'International Conference on Combating Sand and Dust Storms (SDS): Challenges and Practical Solutions' in Tehran on Monday. "Whatever country or power, which thinks it can use terrorism to advance its goals in the region and the world, is completely wrong," he

added. "If [either] Saudi Arabia or the United States is harboring such thoughts, it is making a mistake. I don't name Israel here as its entire political existence is made of mistakes, errors, occupation and invasion," he added.

Rouhani said pursuing "win-win policies" is the sole way to "enable peaceful existence in West Asia and the Middle East," which have witnessed numerous crises over the past years.

In today's world, Rouhani added, the approach focused on gaining a stronger regional hand must be set aside, stressing that "the goal should be [creating] a powerful region." (Presstv)

Nawaz to Pay Two-Day Official Visit to Tajikistan on July 5-6

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, at the invitation of President Emomali Rahmon, will pay an official visit to Tajikistan from July 5 to 6.

The Prime Minister will be accompanied by a high-level delegation, a press release issued by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs here on Monday said.

Pakistan and Tajikistan enjoy close and cooperative relations, which are underpinned by commonalities of history, culture and faith.

These ties are characterized by mutual respect, shared perceptions and common desire to promote peace, stability and

development in the region.

The two countries also share common views on major regional and international issues and cooperate closely in the regional and multilateral forums.

Pakistan was among the first few countries that recognized the independence of Tajikistan, established diplomatic relations and opened a resident mission in Dushanbe. The visit to Tajikistan was reflective of the Prime Minister's vision to strengthen Pakistan's relations with neighboring and regional countries and further increasing regional connectivity. (APP)

Uzbekistan to Preserve Graves of Great Patriotic War Soldiers

TASHKENT - Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has adopted a resolution on the country's joining the agreement on perpetuating the memory of courage and heroism of peoples of the CIS member countries in the Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945, the press service of the Uzbek president reported.

"The purpose of the agreement signed September 3, 2011 is to en-

sure preservation of war graves on the territory of the CIS member countries," the report said.

The Uzbek Defense Ministry has been defined the authorized body responsible for the implementation of this agreement.

So far, the agreement has been ratified by Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Armenia and Moldova. (Trend)