

France's Macron Honors U.S. Forces in Bastille Day Celebration

PARIS - Emmanuel Macron, France's youngest president in modern history, on Friday celebrated his first-ever Bastille Day, or French National Day, with the usual pomp, military parade and flight show, commemorating the centenary of the United States entering World War I. Alongside his guest of honor U.S. President Donald Trump, Macron presided over the military parade down the Champs Elysees Avenue with some 3,720 soldiers, including 211 armored vehicles, 241 horses and 92 jets and helicopters flying over the sky. At around 10:30 local time

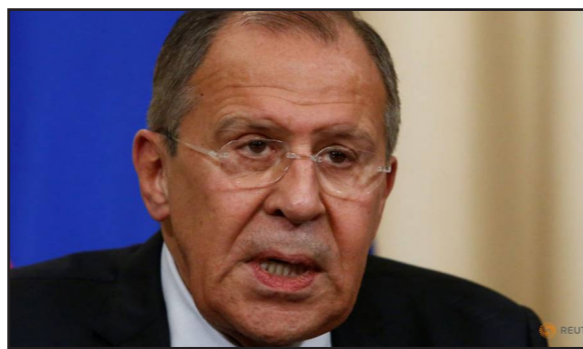


(0830 GMT), French fighter jets, Rafale and Mirage 2000 followed by U.S. F-16s opened the annual parade with an air show, symbolizing the two countries' military cooperation. After an infamous fierce handshake in their first meeting in May, Macron, a pro-business reformist and Trump, an advocate of nationalism, looked relaxed during the parade. "This is a wonderful national celebration. Our two nations are forever joined together by the spirit of revolution and the fight for freedom," Trump said at a press meeting on Thursday. (Xinhua)

Russia Ready to Expel U.S. Diplomats if no Deal Struck on Monday: Russian FM

MOSCOW - Russia is ready to expel a number of U.S. diplomats and seize two U.S. properties here in a tit-for-tat response if no deal is reached at a meeting of senior diplomats of the two sides in Washington on Monday, the Russian Foreign Ministry said Friday. "You know there was a very long pause and it dragged on. So it is obvious that if there is no other way to convince the American partners, we will have to act in this direction at some point,"

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said at a weekly briefing. She said that Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov and U.S. Under-Secretary of State Thomas Shannon are expected to discuss this issue at a meeting in Washington. On Dec. 29, the administration of former U.S. President Barack Obama ordered the expulsion of 35 Russian diplomats suspected of spying and closed two compounds belonging to the Russian Embassy in response to Russia's al-



leged interference in the U.S. presidential election and to "a pattern of harassment of our diplomats overseas." On the next day, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov proposed to Russian

President Vladimir Putin to expel 31 U.S. diplomats and seize a U.S. dacha in Moscow's luxury villa compound of Serebryany Bor and a U.S. warehouse in the south of the Russian capital. (Xinhua)

U.S. Says Russia Offers to Send Monitors for Syria Cease-Fire

WASHINGTON - Russia has offered to send its own monitors to prevent violations of a new cease-fire in southwest Syria by the Syrian government, a senior U.S. official said on Thursday. "The Russians have made clear they are very serious about this and willing to put some of their people on the ground to help monitor from the regime side," said Brett McGurk, U.S. special presidential envoy to the coalition against the Islamic State, here at a

press conference. Russia, the United States and Jordan reached a deal last week to support a cease-fire in southwest Syria, setting up a de-escalation zone to create environment for reaching a political solution to the crisis in Syria. At a press conference on Thursday in Paris, France, U.S. President Donald Trump said the United States was working with Russia to establish a second cease-fire in "a very rough part of Syria." (Xinhua)

Turkey's Erdogan Plans Gulf Visit to Discuss Qatar Dispute

ANKARA - Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan, Qatar's staunch regional ally in its dispute with Gulf Arab neighbors, hopes to visit the Gulf soon to discuss efforts to resolve the crisis, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Friday. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut ties with Qatar on June 5 over allegations it funds terrorist groups and is allying with their arch-foe Iran. Qatar denies the accusations. "All our efforts are focused on a solution that

suits the laws of brotherly relations," Cavusoglu told reporters after talks in Ankara with his Qatari counterpart Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman al-Thani. Erdogan has criticized a list of demands made by the four Arab states to end the sanctions, including a requirement for Turkey's military base in Qatar to be closed. Turkey has also sent 200 cargo planes with supplies to Qatar since its Gulf neighbors cut air and sea links. Qatar's only land border is with Saudi Arabia. (Reuters)

Upcoming UN Climate Change Summit in Bonn "Most Important" Since Paris Climate: Official

BERLIN - The German government is placing high hopes in the UN global climate conference to be held in Bonn later this year, describing the event as the "most important climate conference since Paris" on Friday. Jochen Flasbarth, German secretary of state for the environment, said that the United States' decision to abandon the Paris climate accord gave the meeting in Bonn between Nov. 6 and 17 added significance. "Bonn will be at the center of world events in November," Flasbarth said. The key

question was whether the momentum of Paris could be saved despite Washington's abandonment of the climate deal. U.S. President Donald Trump was isolated with his position on climate change at the recent G20 summit in Hamburg. All other heads of state in attendance, including German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin vowed to join forces in reducing CO2 emissions caused by human activity. Flasbarth did not expect the outcome of upcoming



German federal elections in September to influence Germany's negotiation position as there was a broad consensus on combating climate change within the domestic party landscape. Although Germany will

technically host the UN conference, it will officially be held under the leadership of the government of Fiji, a Pacific island nation which is particularly vulnerable to rising sea levels caused by climate change. (Xinhua)

UAE Official Says Qatar Crisis Won't End Soon

DUBAI - The United Arab Emirates (UAE) State Minister for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash tweeted on Friday that the Qatar crisis, which pits the Arab quartet and Qatar, would not end soon. Gargash, who regularly comments on the Qatar crisis to his 437,000 followers on twitter, said the Arab bloc, including the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Bahrain, and Qatar were "heading into the long estrangement." Because the quartet was "a long way from political solution linked to Qatar to change its orientation," he said it would mean that "we have to find a different pattern of relationship." The Arab bloc cut ties with Qatar on June 5, accusing it of supporting "extremism and terrorism," an allegation which Qatar denied. (Xinhua)

IMF Chief Praises Egypt's Measures on Economic Reforms

CAIRO - The head of the International Monetary Fund has praised Egypt's reform measures, saying they will set the country on "a path of stability." Christine Lagarde said in a statement late Thursday that Egypt's government and central bank have "taken the right measures to rein in inflation, reduce the budget deficit, and set the Egyptian economy on a path to stability and growth." Lagarde added she was "very pleased" with the government's "measures to protect the poor and vulnerable groups, including through increasing social spending." Egypt is implementing painful austerity measures demanded by the IMF for a \$12 billion bailout loan. Last week, electricity prices were raised by more than 40 percent. (AP)

More than 800,000 People Still Displaced from Mosul: UN

GENEVA - More than a million people were displaced from Mosul by the battle in the Iraqi city against the Islamic State group, but nearly 200,000 have returned home, the UN said Friday. Out of nearly 1.05 million people who fled the fighting after the offensive against IS began last October, 825,000 remain displaced, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said in a statement. The city on the Tigris river in northern Iraq had an estimated population of two million in 2014. Iraqi



Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Monday declared Mosul fully retaken from the jihadist group after a Western-backed operation. But it is still near-impossible to access the Old

City, where sweeping and demining operations continue. IOM's chief of mission in Iraq, Thomas Lohar Weiss, said the new displacement figures underscored "the enormous crisis" in the area. (AFP)

UNICEF Concerned Over Wellbeing of Children in Iraq's Mosul

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) said Thursday that it is concerned over the wellbeing of some 650,000 children in Mosul, Iraq, who have lived through violence and some of whom continue to suffer. "Some 650,000 boys and girls, who have lived through the nightmare of violence in Mosul, have paid a terrible price and endured many horrors over the past three years," Hamida Ramadhani, UNICEF's Deputy Representative in Iraq said in a statement. On Monday, Iraq formally announced that Mosul has been freed from the Islamic State (IS) after nine months of fierce fighting

to dislodge the extremist militants from their last major stronghold in Iraq. Ramadhani said that in the past three days, her agency and its partners have seen an increase in the number of extremely vulnerable unaccompanied children arriving at medical and reception centers. Some babies have also been found alone in the debris. "The needs and the future of children must remain a top priority in the weeks and months to come," she said in the statement, adding that UNICEF reiterates its call on all parties to the conflict in Iraq to treat all children as children, wherever they are born, whoever they belong to. (Xinhua)

France's Macron Says Changing "Doctrine" to Bring Concrete Solution to Syrian Crisis

PARIS - France is opting for new "doctrine" to handle Syrian crisis, in which departure of president Bashar al-Assad is no longer a pre-condition to launch post-war talks, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Thursday. "We have indeed changed the French doctrine towards Syria in order to have results and work very closely with our partners, in particular the United States of America," Macron said during a joint press conference with U.S. head of state Donald Trump. The French head of state saw fruitless to ask al-Assad to leave, saying he is working with his American counterpart to forge concrete alternative able to prepare post war period.

"We have one main objective: the eradication of all terrorist groups... to have a political long-term and inclusive solution," he said. He said working to initiate a contact group including main five world powers, Arab states, representatives from opposition and the Syrian government in order "to build a long-term political stability." France joined U.S.-led international coalition to fight Islamic State (IS) fighters in Iraq in 2014. A year after it deployed its fighter jets to strike IS targets in Syria, the IS claimed responsibility for fatal attacks which left 130 victims in Paris. "On the Iraq-Syria situation, we have agreed to continue working together, in particular on the building of a roadmap for the post-war period," Macron said. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

Chinese, U.S. Enterprises Sign Agricultural Transaction Contracts

CHICAGO - Some 20-odd Chinese and U.S. enterprises on Thursday signed agricultural transaction contracts worth 5.012 billion U.S. dollars, under the framework of the U.S.-China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue (CED), this activity (contract signing) "can be taken as one of the concrete measures that materialize the presidential meeting between the two countries." As urbanization further progresses and the population of the middle class further expands in China, China's consumption market scale will keep enlarging. "There are still huge growth potentials for U.S. exports to China in the future," Xu added. (Xinhua)

ments have agreed in their first meeting in April this year to carry out the "the 100-Day Action Plan" under the framework of the U.S.-China Comprehensive Economic Dialogue (CED), this activity (contract signing) "can be taken as one of the concrete measures that materialize the presidential meeting between the two countries." As urbanization further progresses and the population of the middle class further expands in China, China's consumption market scale will keep enlarging. "There are still huge growth potentials for U.S. exports to China in the future," Xu added. (Xinhua)

JIT Report Controversial, a Pack of Blames Sans Evidence: PM

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif on Friday said the "controversial" report of Joint Investigation Team on Panama case was mere a pack of accusations by opponents and lacked any substantive evidence. "Not a single sentence [of JIT report] gives a clue that Nawaz Sharif is guilty of corruption," the Prime Minister said in his capacity as president of Pakistan Muslim League-N while chairing its parliamentary party meeting, here at PM's Office today. However, he expressed confidence that the Court would listen to his apprehensions regarding the JIT report. Nawaz Sharif categorically said that he had a clean conscience and would not resign on the demands of those who were rejected by the

masses not once, but several times. He thanked the nation and his party members for standing with him with full unity and devotion. Nawaz Sharif said the report only targeted his family's 62 years of business matters through allegations, accusations and source reports. "Mention, if you know even a minuscule corruption case against me during my five tenures of government or against Shehbaz's tenures," he stressed. He said none of the contracts and tenders relating his hundreds of projects were blemished with commissions, kickbacks or corruption. Sharif said an uncalled-for campaign was launched following his success in 2013 general election, including the dharnas (sit-in). (APP)

Iran, EU Start First Ever Joint Project on Nuclear Safety

TEHRAN - Iran and the European Union have launched their first joint project aimed at strengthening bilateral nuclear safety cooperation on the eve of the second anniversary of Tehran's nuclear deal with six world powers. At a Wednesday meeting in Tehran, the EU delegation, headed by Oliver Luyckx, the director of the EU nuclear safety unit, and the Iranian side led by Hojjatollah Salehi, the director of Iran's nuclear safety center, officially announced the start of the 2.5-million-euro project. The project was signed in April within the framework of the 2015 nuclear deal, called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). It is part of a five-million-euro package approved

in 2016 with regard to Iran-EU cooperation on nuclear safety. Under the agreement, Tehran-EU nuclear safety cooperation will last for a period of three and a half years. One of its key objectives is to enhance Iran's nuclear safety capabilities in different spheres including, the establishment of a nuclear safety center as foreseen in the JCPOA. Under the project, the EU will also support the Iranian Nuclear Regulatory Authority (INRA) in developing a nuclear regulatory framework, working toward the accession by Iran to several international nuclear conventions, and reviewing the results of the stress test to take place in the Bushehr nuclear power plant. (Presstv)

Tajikistan and Central Asia's Culture Wars

DUSHANBE - Most of the men in the audience donned dark suits and the few women mostly wore dresses, colorfully patterned in classic Tajik style. A few rows of religious elders - state imams, wearing uniform robes - sported beards and caps or turbans. On the stage, Tajik President Emomali Rahmon marked the 10th anniversary of the state's law on rituals and traditions. The 2007 law was billed as an austerity measure. By making elaborate

multi-day wedding celebrations with hundreds of guests a finable offense, Dushanbe ostensibly sought to encourage a degree of frugality in Tajik citizens. Birthdays, under the law, were to be immediate family affairs celebrated inside the home. In 2015, a Tajik man was fined about \$500 for posting a picture of his birthday cake from inside a public cafe. The law addressed both secular and religious holidays and celebrations. (Agencies)