

First China-U.S. Comprehensive Economic Dialogue Sees some Positive Outcomes

WASHINGTON - The first China-U.S. Comprehensive Economic Dialogue (CED) saw the world's two largest economies resolve a number of issues in their trade relationship while agreeing to work together to solve outstanding problems. China and the United States discussed a one-year action plan for economic cooperation during the dialogue, which concluded on Wednesday, and agreed to cooperate in areas such as finance, trade, investment and global economic governance. The two sides also agreed to address the trade imbalance between the two countries, highlighting the willingness to expand trade cooperation



in services, in civilian high-tech sectors and in agriculture. Given the difference in size between China and the United States in the services industry, it remains possible for both sides to exploit their own comparative advantages and complement each other, a Chinese delegate said Thursday in a statement, noting that "expanding bilateral trade in services can also promote balanced trading relations between the two sides." "Despite a huge deficit in services trade with the United States, China nevertheless believed that trade in services between China and the United States is mutually beneficial," the statement said. (Xinhua)

Macron, Seeking Stronger EU, Meets Brexit Negotiator Barnier

PARIS - French President Emmanuel Macron is meeting with the European Union's chief Brexit negotiator with both men looking for more clarity from Britain over its departure from the bloc. Michel Barnier arrived Friday for talks at the Elysee Palace a day after wrapping up the first full Brexit negotiating round in Brussels. While Britain's Brexit minister, David Davis, sounded upbeat about the discussions, Barnier urged Britain to flesh out its posi-



tions on several issues that need settling before the two sides can negotiate post-Brexit trading arrangements. France wants Britain to

clarify how much it will pay as part of the divorce settlement. Macron made strengthening the EU a key part of his successful campaign.

Cameras were barred from Barnier's arrival and Macron's other events Friday, including talks with European trade unions. (AP)

A No-Deal Brexit would be Disastrous for Britain, Say Academics

LONDON - A no-deal Brexit would be disastrous for Britain, say academics in a report published on Thursday. The British government is currently in talks in Brussels with the European Union (EU) over the terms of the Brexit divorce deal which will see the country leave the union by March 2019. The report by Britain in a Changing Europe, an independent academic think-tank based at King's College, London, and drawing on academics from across Britain

and elsewhere, said that if the country failed to reach a deal with the EU then the cost would be "widespread, damaging and pervasive". According to the report, called "The Cost of a No Deal", in the event of what the report calls a "chaotic Brexit" with no deal struck, Britain's nuclear plants may not be able to operate, British airlines might be unable to fly, and both British citizens in the EU and EU citizens in Britain would find themselves in a legal limbo. (Xinhua)

WASHINGTON - U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Friday the United States was satisfied with Qatar's efforts to implement an agreement aimed at combating terrorism financing, and urged Arab states to lift a "land blockade" on the tiny Gulf nation. Tillerson shuttled between Gulf countries last week to convince them to help ease the worst regional dispute in years but left the region without any firm signs the feud would be resolved soon.

Last month, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt imposed sanctions on Qatar, accusing it of financing extremist groups and allying with the Gulf Arab states' arch-foe Iran. Qatar denies the allegations. The countries made 13 demands of Qatar - including that it shut down a Turkish military base and the Al Jazeera pan-Arab television network - which Doha has rejected. While in the Gulf, Tillerson signed an accord with Qatar on terrorism financing in a bid to ease

UN Security Council Sanctions Individuals, Entities Linked to IS, Al-Qaida

UNITED NATIONS - The UN Security Council on Thursday unanimously adopted a resolution to impose sanction measures on two armed groups, two entities and four individuals linked to the Islamic State (IS) and al-Qaida. Two armed groups are the al-Qaida-linked Jund al Aqsa and the IS-linked Jaysh Khalid ibn al-Waleed, both fighting in Syria. Two money exchange businesses based in Syria - Hanifa Money Exchange Office and Selselat al Thabab - are

believed to have financial relations with the terrorist groups and were put on the sanction list. Muhammad Bahrum Naim Anggih Tamomo, Ornaa Rochman, Murad Irakfievich Margoshvili and Malik Ruslanovich Barkhanov were added to the list because of their participation in terrorist attacks associated with IS and al-Qaida. "Terrorism is the enemy of all mankind," said Liu Jieyi, China's ambassador to the UN and Security Council president for July. (Xinhua)

Tillerson Urges Arab States to Lift Qatar 'Land Blockade'



the crisis, but Qatar's opponents said it fell short of addressing their concerns. "They have been very aggressive in implementing that agreement, so I think we're satisfied with the effort they're putting forth," Tillerson told reporters just before meeting with Omani Foreign Minister Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah at the State Department. (Reuters)

Syrian Army, Lebanese Hezbollah Launch Attack in Border Area

DAMASCUS - A double battle started Friday on both sides of the Syrian-Lebanese borders against the al-Qaida-linked Nusra Front, a military source told Xinhua. The battle started against the Nusra Front militants in the Qalamoun barren area in Syria, and the adjacent Juroud Arsal barrens on the Lebanese side of the borders, said the source, on condition of anonymity. In Lebanon, Hezbollah advanced in Juroud Arsal toward the Nusra positions in Qanzah, and Wadi al-Qariyah southeast of Juroud Arsal amid battles with the Nusra Front. The Syrian air force is playing an important role in covering the advance of the ground troops on either side of the borders, carrying out at least 14 air raids since early Friday. (Xinhua)

Turkish PM Calls for Cool Heads as Germany Tightens Stance

ANKARA, Turkey - Turkey's prime minister sought Friday to downplay worries of growing tensions between Turkey and Germany following the jailing of six human rights activists, including one German. Turkey continues to regard Germany as a "strategic partner in Europe," Prime Minister Binali Yildirim said a day after Berlin toughened its stance against Ankara following the jailing of a Peter Steudtner and five other activists, who were accused of links to terror groups. "From time to time, there may be ten-



sions in the relations due to considerations caused by domestic politics," Yildirim said. "My call from here is to act with cool-headedness. There is no benefit to Germany or to Turkey if relations are damaged." On Thursday, the German

government told citizens traveling to Turkey to exercise caution and threatened to withhold backing for investments. German-Turkish relations have been souring for over a year, particularly since last July's coup attempt in Turkey. (AP)

UAE Welcomes Qatari Decision to Amend Anti-Terrorism Laws

DUBAI - The United Arab Emirates on Friday welcomed Qatar's decision to amend its anti-terrorism laws, in one of the first positive signs from the UAE and three other Arab countries since they imposed sanctions on Doha last month. In a move to counter their accusations of supporting terrorism, which it denies, Qatar has set rules for defining terrorism, freezing funding and terrorism financing and established national terrorism lists. "The Qatari decree to amend the anti-terrorism law is a positive step to deal seriously with the 59 terrorists," UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said on Twitter. Saudi Arabia, UAE, Egypt and Bahrain designated dozens of people with alleged links to Qatar as terrorists, including Muslim Brotherhood spiritual leader Yousef al-Qaradawi, and 12 entities, among them Qatari-funded charities. "The pressure of the crisis has started to bear fruits, and the wiser course would be changing the whole orientation," Gargash added. Gargash also said the countries' concerns about Qatar's relationship with Iran had eased since Kuwait ordered the expulsion of the Iranian ambassador and 14 other diplomats for alleged links to a "spy and terror" cell on Thursday. The four countries led a diplomatic and economic campaign to pressure and isolate the small Gulf state, which is a critical global supplier of gas and hosts the biggest U.S. military base in the Middle East. (Reuters)

Austrian President Urges EU to Act Quickly to Quell Potential Refugee Crisis in Italy

VIENNA - Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen called on the European Union to act quickly to quell a potential crisis in Italy on the back of a growing refugee influx from Northern Africa. In an interview with the Vorarlberger Nachrichten in its Thursday edition, Van der Bellen said while the situation with Austria's southern neighbour is "not yet acutely alarming," the EU will not be able to continue simply looking on, and must take steps this year. He expressed confidence that Italy and other countries on the EU outer borders would not be left to fend for themselves. (Xinhua)

U.S. Attorney General to Stay on despite Trump's Criticism

WASHINGTON - U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions said Thursday that he would stay on his job despite President Donald Trump's public attacks on his refusal from the ongoing Russia probe. "I plan to continue to do so as long as that is appropriate," Sessions said at a press conference of the Department of Justice, "I'm totally confident that we can continue to run this office in an effective way." Sessions was responding to a series of questions about Trump's broad swipe at his administration's top law officers in a New York Times interview

Wednesday. Trump said he would not appoint Sessions to lead the Justice Department had he known Sessions would recuse himself from the Russia investigation. The president also lashed out at Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein and Acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe. White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders insisted later on Thursday that Trump's criticism did not indicate the president has lost confidence in the attorney general. Trump "clearly" has confidence in Sessions or "he would not be the attorney general," Sanders said. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

New US Sanctions on Iran 'Ridiculous': Russian Official

TEHRAN - A senior Russian official has denounced fresh US sanctions against Iran on "unfounded" grounds, saying they will only undermine the implementation of the 2015 nuclear agreement with Tehran. Mikhail Ulyanov, head of the Russian Foreign Ministry's department for non-proliferation and arms control, told RIA Novosti news agency that the nuclear accord calls on "Iran to refrain from launching ballistic missiles, but ... it is just an appeal, not an obligation," adding, "Sanctions for failing to comply with this call are ridiculous." Ulyanov also stressed that no one has been able to prove that Iran's missiles are designed to deliver weapons of mass destruction, so "the cause for any punishment is non-existent." Earlier this week, the administration of US President Donald Trump announced new sanctions on 18 Iranian individuals, groups and networks over their alleged support for the country's missile program. The sanctions freeze the assets of those targeted in the US and prevent Americans from doing business with them. This is while the measures are said to be a violation of the nuclear deal signed between Iran and the five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council - the United States, Britain, France, China and Russia - plus Germany on July 14, 2015. They started implementing the agreement on January 16, 2016. Under the JCPOA, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), limits were put on Iran's nuclear activities in exchange for the removal of all nuclear-related bans against the Islamic Republic. Elsewhere in his comments, the Russian official hailed Iran's compliance with the JCPOA, but complained of the US conduct, saying that even world powers must adhere to "certain rules of the game." (Presstv)

Opposition Parties Can't Compete Nawaz Sharif in 2018 Election: Dr. Tariq

ISLAMABAD - Minister of State for Capital Administration and Development Division (CADD), Dr Tariq Fazal Chaudhry Friday said opposition parties could not compete Nawaz Sharif in 2018 general election. Political parties were well aware that they could not face Nawaz Sharif in the next election, he said while talking to a private news channel. The opposition parties wanted the verdict against Nawaz Sharif to avoid defeat in the next elections, he said. The supreme court would not give the decision on the wishes of the political parties, he said, adding the court would announce verdict following the constitution and law of the country. (APP)

Human Rights Watch Delegation to Visit Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - A Human Rights Watch (HRW) delegation will visit Uzbekistan for the first time since its office was suspended in the Central Asian country in July 2011. HRW Central Asia researcher Steve Sverdlow told RFE/RL on July 19 that Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov stated on July 17 at a meeting of the EU-Uzbekistan council in Brussels that the HRW delegation will come to Tashkent in August. Kamilov also said that other international organizations are welcome to visit his country to establish cooperation. Sverdlow said it was a surprise for him and other HRW representatives to learn the news as HRW had not received an answer from Uzbek officials to its request to visit Uzbekistan. Sverdlow, who will lead the HRW delegation to Uzbekistan, said HRW supports Tashkent's move to widen its cooperation with international organizations, adding that HRW is awaiting Uzbek authorities concrete steps to improve the human rights situation in the country. Uzbekistan has taken timid steps toward liberalization after President Shavkat Mirziyayev came to power following the death of authoritarian ruler Islam Karimov last year. (Agencies)

Turkey, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan Seek Stronger Ties through Cooperation

ASHGABAT - The foreign ministers of Turkey, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan exchanged views on strengthening mutual cooperation at the fourth trilateral meeting in the Azeri capital Baku yesterday. "This trilateral meeting will strengthen the ties between the three countries," Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said after meeting with his Azeri counterpart Elmar Mammadyarov and Turkmenistan's Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov. Cavusoglu said that the ministers exchanged views on bilateral and regional cooperation and added that the trilateral talks will continue in the upcoming years. He said that there were projects to boost economic ties between the three countries and all parties were "resolute" about enhancing cooperation in the energy sector. "Test drives of the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway begins today [Wednesday]," he said, adding that the project was completed and train service will "hopefully" start in autumn. The Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway is a regional rail project linking Turkey, Georgia and Azerbaijan. It is expected to increase the flow of containers and other types of cargo from Asia to Europe. (Agencies)