

# Democrats Herald Agreement on Sweeping Russia Sanctions Bill

WASHINGTON — Congressional Democrats announced Saturday that a bipartisan group of House and Senate negotiators have reached an agreement on a sweeping Russia sanctions package to punish Moscow for meddling in the presidential election and its military aggression in Ukraine and Syria.

Rep. Steny Hoyer of Maryland, the No. 2 House Democrat, said lawmakers had settled lingering issues with the bill, which also includes stiff economic penalties against Iran and North Korea. The sanctions targeting Russia, however, have drawn the most attention due to Presi-



dent Donald Trump's persistent push for warmer relations with President Vladimir Putin and ongoing investigations into Russia's interference in the 2016 campaign.

Passage of the bill, which could occur before Congress breaks for the August recess, puts Congress on possible collision course with Trump. The White House had objected to a key section of the bill that would mandate a congressional review if Trump attempted to ease or end the sanctions against Moscow. But if Trump were to veto the bill, he risks sparking an outcry from Republicans and Democrats and having his decision overturned. (AP)

## Green Economy Proves to be Critical Means to Eradicate Poverty: UN Official

UNITED NATIONS - Green economy which requires economic development without sacrificing the environment proves to be a critical means to eradicate poverty worldwide, said UN Environment Program Deputy Executive Director Ibrahim Thiaw.

"The environment is one of the major contributors to poverty eradication because the poorest people in the world have assets related to the environment, such as soil, water, fisheries, and for-

ests," Thiaw told Xinhua in a recent interview.

"We are convinced that poverty eradication may be achieved best when the environment is well protected," he said.

An annual high-level forum on sustainable development concluded earlier this week at the UN headquarters with an outcome document which calls for the expeditious implementation of a set of global goals to lift millions out of poverty and also conserve the environment as well as



achieving social equality. The document acknowledges that 1.6 billion people still live in "multidimensional poverty," though extreme poverty has fallen globally; and climate change, as well as land degradation, are posing threats to small-scale food producers, thus leading to possible hunger and poverty. (Xinhua)

## Russia, Syrian Opposition Sign Agreements on Eastern Ghouta De-Escalation Zone

MOSCOW - Russian military officials and the moderate Syrian opposition have signed agreements regarding the de-escalation zone in Eastern Ghouta on the outskirts of Syria's capital Damascus, Russia's Defense Ministry said Saturday.

"These documents define the borders of the de-escalation zone, the deployment sites and powers of the de-escalation control forces, as well as the routes for delivering humanitarian aid and free passage to the residents," said a statement released

by the ministry.

The documents, a follow-up to the Astana agreements, were signed as a result of negotiations held in Egypt's capital Cairo between deputies of the Russian Defense Ministry and the moderate Syrian opposition with the mediation of the Egyptian side, according to the statement.

The first humanitarian convoy to the de-escalation zone and the evacuation of the wounded are planned in the coming days, the ministry said. (Xinhua)

## Tension between Israel, Palestinians Warns of Mideast Conflict Outbreak

RAMALLAH - Palestinian analysts expected that the flaring tension between Israel and the Palestinians over Jerusalem warns of an outbreak of more conflict between the two sides, unless an immediate and serious pressure is exerted on them to reach a peace agreement.

They warned that the ongoing crisis between the two sides over Al-Aqsa Mosque in East Jerusalem may fuse an explosion that leads to uncountable consequences.

Three Palestinians were killed and hundreds in-

jured Friday in a series of clashes between Palestinian demonstrators and Israeli soldiers in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as part of protests against the construction of electronic gates at the entrances to Al-Aqsa Mosque. After an emergency meeting of the Palestinian leadership, President Mahmoud Abbas announced Friday a freeze of ties with Israel on all levels until Israel commits itself to cancel all its procedures in Jerusalem, especially at Al-Aqsa Mosque. (Xinhua)

## 'You Belong Here' Germany Tells Turks as Row with Ankara Rages

BERLIN - Germany sought on Saturday to reassure the country's three million people of Turkish descent it would stand by them as a row with Ankara escalates, saying they were not the target of changes to government policy on Turkey.

In a letter published in German and Turkish in daily newspaper Bild, Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said Germany had no quarrel with Turkish people in either country but could not stand by as "innocent" German citizens were jailed.

On Friday, German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble compared Turkey's detention of six rights activists, including a German, to the authoritarian former communist East Germany.

"However difficult the political relations between Germany and Turkey, one thing is clear: you, people of Turkish roots in Germany, belong here with us, whether you have a German passport or not," Gabriel wrote in Saturday's open letter.

"We have always striven for good relations with



Turkey, because we know that good relations are important for you (German Turks)," he added.

He said Germany would review cooperation and especially economic aid for the fellow NATO member and campaign for Europe to take a clear position on Ankara.

Gokay Sofuoglu, chairman of the Turkish community in Germany, welcomed Gabriel's conciliatory words. (Reuters)

## Trump Warns of 'Serious Consequences' Unless Iran Releases Imprisoned Americans

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump warned Friday that Iran will face "new and serious consequences" unless imprisoned Americans are released.

"President Trump is prepared to impose new and serious consequences on Iran unless all unjustly imposed American citizens are released and returned," said the White House in a statement. The warning came days after the Trump administration slapped new sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile program and other non-nuclear activities and called Iran "one of the most dangerous threats to U.S. interests and to regional stability." On the other hand, the Trump administration declared for the second time on Monday that Iran was complying with a 2015 nuclear deal struck between Iran and the six world powers of Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States. (Xinhua)

## Trump Slams NY Times for 'Foiling' Bid to Capture IS Chief

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump on Saturday attacked The New York Times and its "sick agenda," alleging that one of the paper's reports thwarted a US bid to take out Islamic State chief Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

"The Failing New York Times foiled US attempt to kill the single most wanted terrorist, Al-Baghdadi. Their sick agenda over National Security," Trump wrote in one of a barrage of early morning tweets.

Trump did not expand on his charge against



The Times, or explain what revelation by the daily is supposed to have hampered Baghdadi's capture.

The New York Times told the Politico news site in a statement: "We have asked the White House

to clarify the tweet." US media suggested that Trump may have been referring to a Fox News report about comments made by a top general at a security conference on Friday in Aspen, Colorado. (AFP)

## U.S., China should be Committed to Stable Global Economic Growth

BEIJING - Trade friction between the world's two largest economies could undermine stable global growth. Both countries are urged to act with awareness of their responsibility.

The United States and China have held a ministerial-level economic dialogue in Washington.

They discussed ways to reduce the United States' trade deficit with China, but the talks ended in disagreement with no outcome.

The United States' trade deficit with China is \$347 billion, accounting for nearly half of its total deficits. The figure is more than five times larger than its second-biggest deficit, with Japan.

In the dialogue, the United States pressed China to correct its excess steel production and ease regulations on foreign investment. China offered almost no answer. The gap between the two sides was so wide that a post-talks press conference was canceled shortly after the dialogue began.

During their meeting in April, U.S. President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping agreed to devise a "100-day action plan" aimed at correcting the trade imbalance between the two countries.

This could be viewed as a way to procrastinate and prevent trade friction from coming to the fore during the 100-day period. Now that the dialogue, which marked the end of this period, has fallen apart, the two sides have lost a way to deter confrontation. (Agencies)

## Neighbor News

### China Strongly Opposed to Disintegration of Syria

BEIJING - China's Special Envoy to Syria Xie Xiaoyan underlined that his country's strong opposition to plans to disintegrate Syria, stressing the need for all states to fight against terrorist groups.

"China is opposed to any form of the disintegration of Syria and we believe that the country's integrity should be maintained and different countries should fight against terrorists," Xie said in a meeting with Iranian Supreme Leader's top aide for international affairs Ali Akbar Velayati in Tehran on Saturday.

Warning that certain countries' interference can exacerbate the crisis, he said such meddling "has led to the reinvigoration of the terrorists in Syria and the spread of their presence to other areas". Xie noted that he plans to discuss bilateral, regional, international

and Syrian issues with Iranian officials during his trip, and said, "Iran and China enjoy common positions not only on Syria but also on other regional and international issues." Iranian President Hassan Rouhani in a meeting with Chinese Vice-President Li Yuanchao in Bangkok in October underlined the need for Beijing to play a more active and significant role in Syria and Yemen.

During the meeting on the sidelines of the 2nd Asia Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) summit, President Rouhani stressed Iran and China's common views on different regional and international issues, and said, "China can play an important role in restoring peace and stability in the region, specially humanitarian aid to the oppressed regional people, including in Yemen and Syria." (Agencies)

### Pakistan Court Ends Hearing on Corruption Allegations of Nawaz Sharif

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's top court on Friday concluded its hearing into corruption allegations against Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's family, but it wasn't immediately clear when the tribunal would announce its decision, defense lawyers and attorneys for the petitioners said.

Under Pakistani law, the Supreme Court has the authority to dismiss the prime minister. Sharif has maintained his innocence throughout the scandal and has appeared before the court in recent weeks, along with his daughter and two sons. The court heard arguments from

both the government side and the opposition after a court-ordered investigation found there was a "significant disparity" between the declared wealth and known sources of income of Sharif's family.

Now a three-judge panel headed by justice Ejaz Afzal Khan will weigh whether the evidence is adequate to dismiss Sharif from office, according to Khurshid Ahmed, a legal expert.

"The Supreme Court today concluded the hearing of this case and it will set a date for announcing the judgment later," said Salman Akram Raja, Sharif family lawyer. (AP)

### Iran Says Maintains Right to React if U.S. does not Comply with Nuclear Deal

VIENNA - Iran would maintain its right to response to U.S. if it does not comply with the nuclear deal in the future, an Iranian official said on Friday after the meetings with world major states in Vienna.

Abbas Araghchi, deputy foreign minister of Iran, told media that the 2015 Iran nuclear deal should be implemented completely in all aspects, noting that Tehran is not satisfied with U.S. regarding the sanctions imposed on Iran Tuesday over its ballistic missile program.

He stressed Tehran maintains its right to show any reaction if U.S. does not follow up its obligations under the deal.

During the U.S. presi-

dential election, Donald Trump doubted the Iranian nuclear deal which was achieved during Obama's administration. Trump administration now is reviewing policy on Iran.

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said on Wednesday new U.S. sanctions contravened the nuclear deal reached after a lot of diplomatic efforts with world major states in 2015. Iran and six world powers, namely Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the U.S., reached an agreement on the Iranian nuclear issue in July 2015, which put it on the path of sanctions relief but with more strict limits on its nuclear program. (Xinhua)

## Hungary's Leader: EU and Soros Seek to 'Muslimize' Europe

BUDAPEST - European Union leaders and Hungarian-American billionaire George Soros are seeking a "new, mixed, Muslimized Europe," Hungary's anti-migration prime minister said Saturday.

Prime Minister Viktor Orban said during a visit to Romania that Hungary's border fences, supported by other Central European countries, will block the EU-Soros effort to increase Muslim migration into Europe.

Orban, who will seek a fourth term in April 2018, said Hungary's opposition parties were no match for his government. (AP)

## Qatar's Ruler Voices Willingness to Talk to Solve Arab Rift

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates - Qatar's ruling emir said on Friday that his embattled Gulf nation remains open to dialogue with four Arab countries that have isolated it, but that any resolution to the crisis must respect his country's sovereignty.

Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani made the comments in his first televised speech since a diplomatic dispute among the U.S. allies erupted more than a month and a half ago. He hailed the solidarity and resolve that Qataris have shown in the face of the crisis, and said it would make the

tiny country, which will host soccer's World Cup in 2022, even more resilient.

"We are open to dialogue to iron out all the pending issues, not only for the benefit of our peoples and governments, but also to spare our region the pointless efforts to dissipate our gains," he said. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain cut diplomatic ties with Qatar and severed air, land and sea links with it on June 5 after accusing it of backing extremist groups. Qatar strongly denies the charge and argues the isolation effort is politically motivated. (AP)

## Uzbekistan Reforming its Tax System

TASHKENT - President of Uzbekistan Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed a decree "On measures to radically improve tax administration, increase tax collection and other compulsory payments."

The document, published in the country's media outlets, outlines the main areas of reforming the system of bodies of the state tax service - wide introduction of modern ICT, strengthening responsibility of officials for the timely provision of reliable information related to tax matters, developing efficient mechanisms

for the prevention of tax offenses and increase of taxpayers' legal culture. Measures will be implemented to expand the tax base by restoring the activities of non-functioning enterprises and improving financial state of low-margin enterprises, according to the document.

Tax monitoring will be introduced in the country since early 2018. It is a modern form of tax control, providing for enhanced information exchange between tax authorities and conscientious taxpayers. (Trend)