

Diplomatic Crisis in Middle East Disrupts Regional Security, Political Balance

BEIJING - Saudi Arabia and its allies have severed diplomatic ties with Qatar in an escalation of power struggle in the Middle East which endangers the region's political balance and hinders global efforts to end conflicts in the region. Observers said cracks in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) that dominates regional affairs after 2011 may lead to more intense struggle between Shiite and Sunni powers and weaken counter-terrorism operations. Egypt, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Yemen and the Maldives followed Saudi Arabia on Monday to broke off ties with Qatar. Riyadh accused it of supporting extremism and destabilizing



the region, accusations denied by Qatar. Qatar has for years played as a mediator and power broker for regional disputes. The gas-rich country backed the Muslim Brotherhood, interacted with Iran, and held channels with Hamas and extremist groups like al-Qaida, a policy that sometimes angered its neighbor but was generally accepted by the Arab world and its western allies. Although Qatar stood firmly with Saudi Arabia on major regional issues, such as the civil wars in Syria and Yemen, the two countries differed on stance with Iran, and were competing for the leading role in the Arab world. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

President Xi Eyes Bigger Role for California in China-U.S. Cooperation

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping Tuesday called on California to play a bigger role in promoting exchange and cooperation between China and the United States. He said he hoped California could continue to promote bilateral exchanges between localities and contribute more to China-U.S. cooperation in areas including technology, innovation and green development. Xi made the remarks in his meeting with visiting California Governor Jerry Brown at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. "Since the two countries established diplomatic ties, China-U.S. relations have weathered various tests and always moved forward, bringing huge benefits to both peoples," Xi said. "Bilateral relations also contributed a lot to peace, stability and prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and the world." China pursues a path of peaceful, open and green development, he said, calling on the two sides to enhance communication and expand cooperation to push forward the sound and stable development of bilateral ties. Xi said local-level exchanges and cooperation were an important pillar of China-U.S. relations, hoping that the two sides could make local-level exchanges and cooperation into a new engine for the growth of bilateral relations. (Xinhua)

UN Ocean Conference Opens with Call for Global Action to Save Planet

UNITED NATIONS - Top United Nations officials Monday urged coordinated global action to protect the planet when an international conference on the health of the world's oceans and seas opened here. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned governments that unless they overcome short-term territorial and resource interests, the state of the oceans will continue to deteriorate, when he addressed his first major UN conference since taking office.

UN Ocean Conference opened Monday morning with a traditional Fijian ceremony at the UN General Assembly. "Improving the health of our oceans is a test for multilateralism, and we cannot afford to fail," the secretary-general said. "We must jointly address the problems of governance that have held us back," he said, calling for a new strategic vision of how to govern the oceans and marine resources. One of the main challenges, he said, is to end



the "artificial dichotomy" between jobs and healthy oceans. "The conservation and sustainable use of marine resources are two sides of the same coin," he noted. The UN chief called for strong political leadership and new partnerships, based on the existing legal framework, and concrete steps, such as expanding marine protected areas and reducing plastic waste pollution. (Xinhua)

U.S. Committed to De-Escalating Tensions after Gulf Rift: White House

WASHINGTON - The White House said Monday that the United States was committed to de-escalating tensions in the Gulf after some Arab countries decided to sever ties with Qatar. "The President is committed to continuing to have conversations with all of the people involved in that process, with all of those countries," said White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders here at a briefing. "We want to continue to de-escalate that." Meanwhile, speaking at a press

conference in Australia, U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis on Monday sought to downplay the impact of the diplomatic rift in the Middle East on the campaign against the Islamic State (IS). "I am positive there will be no implications coming out of this dramatic situation at all," said Mattis. Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Egypt said earlier on Monday that they decided to cut off diplomatic relations with Qatar. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Committed to Protecting Environment: PM

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif reiterated that Pakistan knows its duties towards the environment and would keep on ensuring its protection. In a message regarding 'World Environment Day' the premier said that it would be ensured that our infrastructural, industrial and related initiatives are environment friendly. Nawaz stressed that it is the shared duty of each and every one to care for the environment as a sacred trust to be passed onto posterity. "In the international domain, Pakistan has already ratified the 'Paris Agreement' and, thereby, stands committed to collaborate in global efforts to protect the environment," he said in a message on the World Environment Day.

The prime minister said the World Environment Day was actually a day for serious introspection. It was a day to comprehend the true significance of connecting people to nature, he added. He said nations all around the world needed to carefully review their policies and practices, and try to improve their understanding of how best they could all collaborate to synergistically protect and preserve the common habitat. "We need to synchronise our policies, develop and adopt new environment-friendly technologies, and ensure that all our developmental efforts lead to outcomes that are also environmentally sustainable," he added. (Monitoring Desk)

UN Chief Calls for Greater Attention to Healthy Environment to End Poverty

UNITED NATIONS - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned Monday that the international community should pay greater attention to the protection of environment, otherwise ending poverty is out of the question. In his message marking World Environment Day with the theme of "Connecting People to Nature," Guterres said that "without a healthy environment we cannot end poverty or build prosperity" and stressed that "we all have a role to play in protect-

ing our only home." World Environment Day this year highlights the vast benefits that clean environments provide to humanity, including food security, improved health and climatic stability. The theme "Connecting People to Nature" seeks to encourage people to get back outdoors. Celebrations are underway in Canada, this year's host country, and also around the world, where thousands of people are taking part in massive beaches and parks clean-ups. (Xinhua)

US State Alliance Upholding Paris Agreement Expands to 13 Members

SAN FRANCISCO - The U.S. Climate Alliance, launched by three states in the wake of President Donald Trump's announcement to withdraw from the Paris agreement on climate change, has expanded to include a total of 13 members as of Monday. Co-chaired by Governors Jerry Brown of California, Andrew Cuomo of New York and Jay Inslee of Washington, the alliance said Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Oregon, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island,

Vermont and Virginia have joined the coalition. "The president has already said climate change is a hoax, which is the exact opposite of virtually all scientific and worldwide opinion," said Governor Brown, who has been on a trip in China since Saturday to expand climate partnership with local and national leaders there. "I don't believe fighting reality is a good strategy -- not for America, not for anybody." In addition to convening U.S. states committed to achieving the U.S. goal



of reducing emissions 26-28 percent from the 2005 level and meeting or exceeding the targets of the federal Clean Power Plan, the alliance will act as a forum to sustain existing climate programs, promote the sharing of information and best practices and implement new programs to reduce carbon emissions from all sectors of the U.S. economy. (Xinhua)

UN Calls for Two-State Solution for Israel, Palestine

UNITED NATIONS - UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday called for ending of Israel's occupation since 1967 and achieving a negotiated two-state solution to resolve the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Monday marks 50 years of the start of the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, which resulted in Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, Gaza and the Syrian Golan. "Ending the occupation that began in 1967 and achieving a negotiated two-state outcome is the only way to lay the foundations for enduring peace that meets Israeli security needs and Palestinian aspirations for statehood and sovereignty," said Guterres in a statement. (Xinhua)

Trump's 'Been Clear to Me' to Try to Rebuild Russia Ties: Tillerson

WELLINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump told his top diplomat that the dispute over probes into links between his inner circle and Russia should not undermine U.S. efforts to rebuild relations with Moscow. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said on Tuesday. Speaking in New Zealand after a trip to Australia, Tillerson reiterated the U.S. commitment to the Asia-Pacific region as global leaders have expressed growing mistrust over the Trump administration, which has withdrawn from key international agreements since taking office. At home,



Trump's administration has been plagued by questions over links to the Russian government. Tillerson said Trump told him to try to improve ties with Russia regardless of the U.S. political backdrop. "I can't really comment on any of that because I don't have any direct knowledge," Tillerson told a news conference in Wellington, when asked how worried he was that the U.S. political crisis could take down the Trump administration. (Reuters)

EU Reassures Turkey over its €3bn Migrants Package

HATAY, Turkey - The EU's 3-billion euro package to help migrants in Turkey will have been fully assigned to projects by the end of the year, the bloc's envoy said Tuesday. All the funds, part of a deal with Turkey to tackle Europe's migrant crisis, will be fully assigned by the end of 2017, said Christian Berger, the EU ambassador to Turkey. Berger was speaking during a visit to the southern Turkish city of Hatay, near the border with Syria. "We will know exactly what we are doing with the three billion euros (\$3.3 bil-

lion) and we will have contracted almost the entire amount of money at the end of this year," he told reporters. Berger was in Hatay for the handover of EU-financed medical equipment worth 220,000 euros (\$247,000) to a medical centre serving 300 refugees daily, which also trains Syrian doctors and nurses. In March last year, Brussels signed an agreement with Ankara to halt the flow of migrants coming to EU member states. In return, the EU undertook to speed up talks on Turkey's accession into the EU and to loosen visa restrictions for Turks. (AFP)

UN Rights Council Opens its 35th Session in Geneva

GENEVA - The UN Human Rights Council on Tuesday opened its 35th regular session at its headquarters here, stressing that a "constructive atmosphere" was crucial for the smooth functioning of the council and made it possible to have a frank dialogue with dignity. The council's president, Joaquin Alexander Maza Martelli, opened the session reminding that the UN Human Rights Council would follow up on all cases of reprisals brought to its attention. Uruguayan President Tabare Vazquez addressed the opening ceremony and noted that it was fundamental that all countries recognized, supported and participated in the council to ensure peaceful coexistence. However, he added that coexistence was currently threatened by situations of injustice, increased individualism and competition for goods and privileges. He thus called for freedom and democracy, and the use of politics as a social practice through which public affairs could be addressed. Vazquez also reminded that the cost of achieving human rights for people today could not be at the expense of the rights of future generations. Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, said during Tuesday's opening session that members of the council, as well as candidates for future membership, had a particular responsibility to cooperate with the council's mechanisms. The UN Human Rights Council's 35th session will be held in Geneva from June 6 to 23. (Xinhua)

Iran, China Increasing Trade Turnover: Ambassador

TEHRAN - The trade turnover between Iran and China has reached \$31 billion, of which \$14.82 billion was Iran's export, China's ambassador to Tehran Pang Sen said during a conference on Tuesday, held in Tehran. He added that during 2016, China increased oil import from Iran by 17 percent to 31.3 million tons, Trend's correspondent reported from the event. He added that Chinese companies increased investment in Iran by 45.14 percent to \$630 million during last year. "China sector its top

partner for Iran for 8th consecutive year," Pang Sen said, adding that military equipment trade also is increasing between the two sides. Chinese ambassador said that his country supports Iran's joining to the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). He also said that China issued visas for 100,000 Iranians during the last year. According to him, the sides held a meeting two months ago and established a common committee for reconstruction of Arak heavy water nuclear reactor. (Trend)

Turkmenistan Hosts Central Asian International Environmental Forum

ASHGABAT - A three-day Central Asian International Environmental Forum began its work at Ashgabat on Monday, the Turkmen foreign ministry reported. Representatives of the Central Asian governments, leaders and international and regional organizations, diplomatic missions in Turkmenistan, leading experts in the field of environmental protection, representatives of the ecological sector and the media are taking part in the forum. The topic of the forum is Climate Change and Water Cooperation in the context of Sustainable Development in Central Asia; the objective is to promote regional dialogue on environmental

issues and joint formation of a vision for a sustainable development strategy for the region. The forum started with the reading of the welcoming address from the President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov and heads of delegations of the Central Asian countries delivered their remarks. On the first day of the Forum, two plenary sessions were held: the Challenges and Opportunities for Environmental Cooperation on Climate Change and Water Resources in Central Asia; Harmonization of the Legislative base of Central Asian Countries in the Field of Water Cooperation and Ecology. (AKI)

U.S. National Security Personnel Charged with Leaking Secret Russian Document

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Department of Justice on Monday brought a charge against a National Security Agency (NSA) contractor for allegedly leaking a top secret document to the media. The contractor, 25-year-old Reality Winner, was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigation on Saturday for allegedly printing out and mailing the document, which contained findings regarding Russian involvement in last year's election, to the press. The classified document was published by media on Monday afternoon, one hour before the Department of Justice announced the single charge against Winner for "gathering, transmitting or losing defense information." (Xinhua)