

Russia will Respond to U.S. Attempts to Encircle it: Putin

MOSCOW - President Vladimir Putin said Moscow would react to the Washington's attempts to encircle Russia with missile defense systems, Russian News Agency Tass reported Wednesday.

"The U.S. missile defense systems will be installed in Eastern Europe, Mediterranean and the northern seas. The systems have already been installed in Alaska, so practically the entire Russian territory will be surrounded by these systems," said Putin in an interview with American film director Oliver Stone. Putin indicates that this is another major strategic mistake because Russia will respond



adequately to all these actions. "It will mean nothing more than another round of arms race," he declared. The Russian leader also noted that after the United States exited the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty (ABMT) in 2002, Russia was forced to develop its missile strike capabilities in order to maintain the strategic balance of forces in the world. Former U.S. presidents Bill Clinton and George W. Bush had requested Moscow support the United States withdrawing from the ABMT, said Putin. He stressed that "there was no reason for these," although the American side interpreted as alleged threat from Iran. (Xinhua)

Egypt Parliament Approves Islands Transfer to Saudi Arabia

CAIRO - The Egyptian parliament approved in a final vote on Wednesday a controversial deal under which Egypt is to transfer two Red Sea islands to Saudi Arabia, the Egyptian state TV reported. The approval came during a general session that was held earlier in the day following the approval of the parliament's defense and national security committee. The parliament's legislative committee passed it on Tuesday. The Egyptian parliament

is divided over a maritime demarcation deal signed last year, according to which Egypt will hand over the two Red Sea islands of Tiran and Sanafir to Saudi Arabia. The majority of members are in favor of the deal. Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi and his administration see that the two islands originally belonged to Saudi Arabia and it is time to return them to their rightful owners, while opposers of the deal believe that the islands are Egyptian



and giving them up will be sacrificing national soil for temporary interests. Egyptian courts have previously nullified

the agreement that was signed in April 2016 during a rare visit of Saudi King Salman to Egypt. (Xinhua)

Putin Signs Order to Approve Anti-Doping Measures before June 20

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed an order for a set of anti-doping measures that the government shall approve before June 20, the Kremlin said Tuesday. The national anti-doping plan for sports was adopted by Russia's Independent Public Anti-Doping Commission on Feb. 1, 2017, according to the order published on the Kremlin's website. A number of Russian athletes were banned from participating in the 2016 Summer Olympic Games. The

whole Russian team was also prohibited from taking part in the later Paralympic Games, following an investigation of the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) that had disclosed a wide use of doping among Russian athletes. The Russian authorities took a series of measures aimed at preventing doping in Russian sports circles in the wake of the prohibition, such as establishing the Independent Anti-Doping Commission in July 2016, so as to prevent the abuse of prohibited substances in sports. (Xinhua)

Poland Disagrees with EU Decision over Refugees, but Respects it: Official

WARSAW - Poland respects the decision of European Commission (EC) over refugees, but does not agree with it, Polish government's spokesman Rafal Bochenek said on Tuesday. Earlier on Tuesday, the EC decided to launch the EU law infringement procedures against Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary - countries which refuse to take in refugees within the relocation mechanism. Bochenek said that Poland does respect this decision, but disagree

with it, since the government has repeated at the very beginning that obligatory relocation was not a good solution to the migration crisis. The spokesman emphasized that the European borders should be sealed, and more humanitarian aid should be brought to the people in need on the site. Krzysztof Szczerski, chief aide of Polish President Andrzej Duda, told Polish Press Agency that the European Commission has chosen a "wrong and unacceptable" road. (Xinhua)

UN Rights Chief 'Alarmed' by Impact of Gulf Crisis

GENEVA - The UN human rights chief said Wednesday he was alarmed by the possible impact of the diplomatic isolation of Qatar, warning it could lead to widespread suffering among ordinary people. "I am alarmed about the possible impact on many people's human rights in the wake of the decision by Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt and Bahrain to cut diplomatic and economic ties with Qatar," Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said in a statement. "It is becoming clear that

the measures being adopted are overly broad in scope and implementation," he added. His comments came after Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt abruptly severed all ties with Qatar on June 5, accusing it of supporting "terrorism" - allegations Doha strongly rejects. Zeid warned Wednesday that the move had "the potential to seriously disrupt the lives of thousands of women, children and men, simply because they



belong to one of the nationalities involved in the dispute. "We are receiving reports that specific individuals have already been sum-

marily instructed to leave the country they are residing in, or have been ordered to return home by their own government," he said. (AFP)

U.S. Attorney General Calls Russia Collusion Accusation "Detestable Lie"

WASHINGTON - U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions on Tuesday strongly denied the accusation that he colluded with Russia during last year's Donald Trump campaign, calling it an "appalling and detestable lie." Testifying publicly before the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee, Sessions also denied he had a third meeting with Russian Ambassador Sergey Kislyak during the 2016 campaign. "Not one thing happened that was improper" in his two meetings as a senator with the Russian ambassador last year, he told the lawmakers, vowing to defend his "honor against scurrilous and false allegations." (Xinhua)

May, DUP Party Close to Signing Accord to Keep Conservatives in Power

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May held talks lasting two hours at Downing Street Tuesday to discuss an agreement with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) to prop up her minority Conservative government. May and the leader of the DUP, Arlene Foster, were both tight lipped after the crucial meeting, but later Foster said on her social media site: "Discussions are going well...and we hope soon to be able to bring this work to a successful conclusion". The Northern Ireland party has come to May's aid after last week's general election left the prime minister eight seats short of the 326 seats needed in the House of Commons to command an overall majority. The DUP's 10 MPs at Westminster would give May the working majority she needs to keep the Conservatives in power. (Xinhua)

Brexit Talks to Start as Scheduled Despite Losing Parliamentary Majority: May

PARIS - Visiting British Prime Minister Theresa May on Tuesday said that talks to launch procedures of Britain's divorce from the European Union will start as scheduled next week. In a joint press meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron at the Elysee Palace, May stressed that the "timetable has not changed and negotiations will begin next week," dismissing fears of a possible delay in Brexit talks after she lost parliamentary majority in a snap general



election. "We will find an agreement that is both in the interest of the United Kingdom but also of the 27 countries that will remain in the European Union," she added. For his turn, Macron wished "negotiations on the exit

from the European Union and then on the future relations with the United Kingdom will start as soon as possible." "The door of course is still open as long as Brexit negotiations have not been concluded," he said. (Xinhua)

Britain can Stay in EU but Perks will End: Verhofstadt

STRASBOURG, FRANCE - The EU will keep the door open for Britain to return, but only on worse terms than it currently has, European Parliament Brexit negotiator Guy Verhofstadt said Wednesday. A day after France and Germany both said Britain could reverse Brexit if it wanted, Verhofstadt said Britain's budget rebates and opt outs from EU rules would disappear if it did so. "Yesterday Emmanuel Macron, the new French president, spoke about an open door, he said if Britain is changing its mind it will find an open door," Verhof-

stadt told the European Parliament. "I can say I agree, I don't disagree with him. But like in Alice in Wonderland, not all the doors are the same," he added. "It will be a brand new door, with a new Europe, a Europe without rebates, without complexity, with real power and with unity." Britain currently gets a multi-billion-euro rebate on its budget payments to the EU, and has opt-outs on a range of issues from joining the single currency to the Schengen passport-free area. (AFP)

Iraq Urges Cooperation to Halt Financing Terrorism Amid Gulf Crisis

BAGHDAD - Iraqi Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi on Tuesday said Iraq rejects isolation of any state in the Gulf region, calling for cooperation to halt financing terrorism. "We have common interests with the neighboring countries and we want to put out the fire in the region," Abadi said at a press conference after his weekly cabinet meeting. "We are not part of the (Gulf) crisis, but Iraq is against any blockade on any Gulf state. It is not a political stance; it is a matter of principle," he said. Abadi said in the televised press conference that Iraq has witnessed 13 years of sanctions and "our people had suffered too much and we don't want that happen to others." "Regimes are not affected by the blockade; the blockade hurts people," Abadi said, referring to the crisis between some Arab nations and Qatar. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Egypt and some other countries announced cutting diplomatic ties with Qatar, accusing the Gulf state of supporting and financing "terrorism" as well as interfering in their internal affairs. Qatar denies the accusations. Observers believe that the crisis created serious crack in the Gulf Cooperation Council. Abadi also said that he will visit Saudi Arabia soon and his visit has no relation to the recent Gulf crisis. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

China, Russia Agree to Deepen Innovation Cooperation

BEIJING - China and Russia held their first innovation dialogue in Beijing Tuesday and Wednesday, with both countries agreeing to strengthen cooperation in innovation and entrepreneurship. The dialogue was co-hosted by China's Ministry of Science and Technology and the Ministry of Economic Development of the Russian Federation. The dialogue aimed to improve discussion and research on political support for innovation development, and push forward cooperation be-

tween micro, small and medium-sized enterprises in technology and capital markets, said Huang Wei, China's vice minister of science and technology. The meeting will bring new opportunities to align the Belt and Road Initiative and the Eurasian Economic Union, said Russian Vice Minister of Economic Development Oleg Fomichev. Nearly 200 representatives from Chinese and Russian government offices, colleges and research institutions among others joined the discussions. (Xinhua)

Sharif's Visit Yields no Breakthrough in Resolution of Saudi-Qatar Row

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's mediation visit to Saudi Arabia for finding a diplomatic solution to the Qatar crisis did not achieve any immediate breakthrough. Mr Sharif returned to Islamabad in the early hours of Tuesday after a day-long visit to Jeddah, where he met King Salman bin Abdul Aziz and urged an early resolution of "the impasse in Gulf... in the best interest of Ummah". According to the Saudi Press Agency (SPA), King Salman and Mr Sharif discussed the "latest regional developments" in addition to bilateral relations. The Saudi monarch responded by telling Mr

Sharif that "the fight against extremism and terrorism is in the interest of all Muslims and the Ummah". Saudi Arabia and its allies, UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, cut off diplomatic ties and transport links with Qatar on June 5 on the pretext that its policies are fuelling extremism and terrorism. The crisis erupted late last month over fears that Qatar was trying to improve its ties with Iran, which Saudi Arabia and its allies wanted to be isolated. The SPA, while announcing the severing of relations with Qatar, had said it had been done for "protection of national security from the dangers of terrorism and extremism". (Monitoring Desk)

Iran to Stand beside Iraq until Annihilation of all Terrorists: Envoy

TEHRAN - Iranian Ambassador to Baghdad Iraj Masjedi underlined that his country will support Iraq in the anti-terrorism campaign until all Takfiri groups leave the Arab state. "The Islamic Republic of Iran will stand beside the Iraqi nation until withdrawal of the last Takfiri (terrorist) and the Iraqi territories' cleansing of the terrorist grouplets," Masjedi was quoted by RT as saying in a press conference in Iraq on Wednesday. He expressed the hope that Iraq would attain final victory against the terrorists and security would prevail in all its regions. In relevant remarks in 2016, Iranian Foreign

Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif underlined Tehran's all-out support for the Iraqi nation and government in their fight against the terrorist groups. "The Islamic Republic of Iran will stand beside the Iraqi government and nation until the full annihilation of terrorists," Zarif said in a meeting with Head of the Islamic Supreme Council of Iraq Ammar al-Hakim in Tehran. He expressed the hope that the Iraqis would soon gain complete victory against the terrorists, and underlined the necessity for more integrity among different political and ethnic groups in Iraq and the regional countries to defeat terrorism. (FNA)

Turkmenistan Keen to Continue Energy Security Co-Op with UN

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan intends to continue cooperation with the United Nations on energy security issues, said the country's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov. He made the remarks during negotiations with UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres in Ashgabat, the Turkmen Dovlet Habarlary State News Service reported June 13. "Our country will continue active cooperation with the UN on this issue, and in this regard, we rely on you, the distinguished Secretary General, on your sup-

port in these issues," Berdimuhamedov told Guterres. Turkmenistan took over the chairmanship of the Energy Charter Conference in 2017. Ashgabat hosted the Energy Charter Forum, titled "Towards a Multilateral Framework Agreement on Transit of Energy Resources", in late May 2017. Turkmenistan is one of main players in the energy market of the Caspian region and ranks fourth in the world for its gas reserves. The country is studying opportunities to export its gas to Europe and Asia. (Trend)