

# China, U.S. to Hold First Diplomatic and Security Dialogue

BEIJING - China and the United States will hold their first diplomatic and security dialogue next Wednesday in Washington D.C., a Foreign Ministry spokesperson announced here Friday.

Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi will co-chair the dialogue with U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and Secretary of Defense James Mattis, said spokesperson Lu Kang at a daily press briefing.

Fang Fenghui, a member of China's Central Military Commission (CMC) and chief of the CMC Joint Staff Depart-



ment, will also participate in the dialogue.

The two sides will exchange views on China-U.S. relations and other issues of common concern, Lu said.

The diplomatic and security dialogue is one of four high-level mechanisms established during the Mar-a-Lago meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Donald Trump in Florida in April.

The other three are dialogues on economics; law enforcement and cyber security; and on social, cultural and people-to-people exchange. (Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### China, Russia Pledge to Strengthen Cooperation Along Yangtze, Volga Rivers

HEFEI - China and Russia pledged to strengthen cooperation along the Yangtze and Volga rivers, as the two sides Friday signed a host of cooperation agreements at a meeting held in Hefei, capital of east China's Anhui Province. The second meeting of the council of cooperation between the upper and middle reaches of the Yangtze River and the Volga Federal District was co-chaired by Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi and Mikhail Babich, Russia's Presidential Plenipotentiary Envoy to the Volga Federal District.

Noting the rapid development of the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination between China and Russia, Yang said that the "Yangtze-Volga" mechanism is running smoothly with fruitful results, helping to advance bilateral ties and cooperation.

He expressed hope that the two sides can make good use of the opportunities brought by the Belt and Road Initiative, jointly implement priority cooperation projects and expand areas of cooperation based on the needs of the people living along the two rivers. (Xinhua)

## Official Talks on Brexit to Start Monday

LONDON - Talks on Britain's exit from the European Union will start next Monday, it was announced Thursday.

The British government's Office for Exiting the EU confirmed the date in an official announcement from London.

Meanwhile, a joint statement issued in London and Brussels said: "The first round of talks that will see Britain leave the European Union will start on Monday June 19."

"Following discussions in Brussels today, both sides

agreed that the formal negotiations under the Article 50 process can now start." In the joint statement issued Thursday, officials said: "Michel Barnier, the European Commission's Chief Negotiator and David Davis, Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, agreed today to launch Article 50 negotiations on Monday June 19." The discussions about Britain's new relationship with the EU are expected to last for two years.

Prime Minister Theresa May had announced that



Britain would be prepared to leave Europe without a deal if necessary, with her now famous message "no deal is better than a bad deal". But following the

general election last week, when May lost her overall majority in the House of Commons, there have been growing calls for a softer Brexit. (Xinhua)

## EU Discusses Arctic Issues in Northern Finland

HELSINKI - The EU Commissioner responsible for Arctic policies, Karmenu Vella, on Thursday underlined the impact of Arctic development for the whole world.

Vella spoke at the opening of the first ever EU Arctic Forum in Oulu, Northern Finland. Vella noted that the Arctic region keeps warming at twice the speed the rest of the globe, local Oulu newspaper Kaleva reported.

Finnish Foreign Minister Timo Soini said the Arctic region needs growth, but "in a responsible way". Both Vella and Soini de-

scribed the decision of U.S. President Donald Trump to disengage from the Paris climate accords as a great disappointment. Soini said that he would like to appeal to Trump on the grounds that "protecting the Arctic is a good business".

Vella said that the European Union is now more united in relation to the Paris climate accords. "They are not negotiable", she said. "For us the planet continues to be the first in the order of importance", she underlined.

Finnish Prime Minister Juha Sipilä held talks in ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

## China, Pakistan Vow to Jointly Fight Terrorism

BEIJING - China and Pakistan on Friday agreed to improve security and anti-terrorism cooperation, to guarantee the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

The agreement came out of a meeting between Meng Jianzhu, head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, and Pakistan's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee Zubair Mahmood Hayat.

"China considers terrorism the common enemy

of us all. China hopes the two sides will keep in close contact and strengthen coordination in fighting terrorism to ensure safety of the economic corridor, and to maintain the safety and stability of both countries and the region," said Meng, also a member of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee. Zubair said Pakistan expects better security cooperation with China to guarantee the smooth progress of cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative and the building of the economic corridor. (Xinhua)

## Russia's Economy Expands despite Western Sanctions: Putin

MOSCOW - Western sanctions on Russia have had only a limited effect and the country's economy has even partly benefited from them, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Thursday.

Sanctions are a double-edged sword as Russia lost 50 billion to 52 billion U.S. dollars while Western countries lost 100 billion dollars, Putin said during his annual "Direct Line" questions-and-answers session.

Meanwhile, some sectors of the Russian economy, particularly the agricul-

tural sector, have benefited from the sanctions, Putin said.

The Russian agricultural sector has shown a 3-percent growth and the country has become the world's biggest wheat exporter, said the Russian leader.

The country has also significantly reduced its food imports and has increased domestic production of pork and poultry, he said.

Other sectors positively affected by the sanctions include radio electronics, aircraft building, space industry, pharmaceutical ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

## Putin Highlights Economy, U.S. Relations, Regional Conflicts in Annual Call-in

MOSCOW - In his annual call-in with the public and media in and outside Russia on Thursday, President Vladimir Putin highlighted the national economy, the Moscow-Washington relations and regional conflicts involving Russia, among others.

Putin chose to answer 73 questions among the 1.9 million questions he received at the 15th nationally televised "Direct Line" questions-and-answers session.

WESTERN SANCTIONS "A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD"

The Russian top leader said that Western sanctions against Russia have had only a limited effect, and the national economy has even benefited from them.

Russia has managed to overcome its recession and achieved a year-on-year growth of 0.7 percent in the first quarter of 2017, he said. Western sanctions, imposed since 2014 over Crimea, are a double-edged sword since Russia lost some 50 billion U.S. dollars while the West lost 100 billion dollars, Putin said, adding some sectors



of the Russian economy, particularly the agriculture, have benefited from the sanctions.

He announced that the Russian agricultural sector has shown a 3-percent

growth, and the country, now the world's biggest wheat exporter, has significantly reduced its food imports and increased domestic production of pork ...*(More on P4)...(29)*

## Airstrike may have Killed IS Leader in Syria: Russia

MOSCOW - A Russian airstrike may have killed Islamic State leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in northern Syria on May 28, the Russian Defense Ministry said Friday. It said in a statement that Russian Su-35 and Su-34 warplanes carried out a strike against a location in a Raqqa suburb, where IS leaders met, killing several high-ranking commanders, 30 middle-level field commanders and up to 300 militants.

"According to information, which is being checked through various channels, IS head Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, who was present at the meeting, was also killed," the statement said.

The U.S. side was notified in advance on the time and ...*(More on P4)...(30)*

## Macron Meets with Other European Leaders in Paris

PARIS - French president Emmanuel Macron is holding a series of meetings with European leaders in Paris, as Brexit negotiations are due to start next week.

Macron successively meets Friday with Dutch Prime minister Mark Rutte, Estonian Prime minister Juri Ratas and has a working lunch with Spanish head of government Mariano Rajoy.

The French presidency's office says Macron will detail his agenda for Europe. Defense and security issues, migration and climate change are among France's priorities for an EU summit scheduled next week.

In a joint statement Friday in the Elysee courtyard, Macron said his meeting with Rutte helped define "common goals" of France and The Netherlands for the Brexit negotiations that will ...*(More on P4)...(32)*

## AIIB Chief Vows to Help Tackle Infrastructure Gap, Climate Change

JEJU ISLAND, South Korea - Chief of the China-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) vowed Friday to help tackle major challenges of infrastructure gap and climate change by investing in infrastructure and other productive sectors. AIIB President Jin Lique made the remarks in his opening address for the second annual meeting of the AIIB's board of governors, which kicked off in South Korea's southern resort island of Jeju. The meeting will last until Saturday.



The first annual meeting was held in Beijing last year.

Officially launched in January 2016, the Beijing-based AIIB is a multilateral development bank initiated by China and supported by a wide

range of countries and regions, which will provide financing for infrastructure improvement in Asia.

"Asia is at a critical juncture. Its role on the world stage is increasing, thanks ...*(More on P4)...(31)*

## UN Says Aid to 9 Million Syrian Children is in Peril

BEIRUT - The U.N. children's agency warned Friday that a critical funding shortfall is threatening aid to 9 million Syrian children, both in their country and among the refugees in neighboring states. UNICEF said the \$220 million budget gap to its Syria relief programs is the worst it has faced since the start of the conflict, in 2011. It appealed for \$1.4 billion in 2017 to provide relief and education to children orphaned, displaced, wounded, or otherwise affected by the Syria war.

A UNICEF statement on Friday said that "without an injection of new funds, some

critical and lifesaving activities ... are at a serious risk of being cut off, with grave consequences for Syrian children."

U.N. aid programs have suffered from chronic funding shortfall throughout the Syria crisis. On Tuesday, the U.N.'s refugee agency UNHCR said it had managed to raise only \$29 million of the \$153 million it had budgeted to meet humanitarian needs in northern Syria, where a U.S.-supported assault on the Islamic State group's de facto capital Raqqa has displaced more than 100,000 civilians. Moreover, local obstructionism has ...*(More on P4)...(33)*

## Trump Appears to Confirm hse's under Investigation

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump appeared to confirm Friday that he is under investigation for obstruction of justice, claiming that he is being investigated for firing FBI Director James Comey by the man who told him to do it.

It wasn't clear whether the president was basing his tweet on direct knowledge that he is under investigation, or on reports this week that special counsel Robert Mueller is examining whether the president obstructed justice by firing Comey last month amid the ongoing Russia investigation.

Mueller was appointed as special counsel to investigate Russian involvement in the 2016 presidential election and possible collusion by Trump campaign associates with the Russians, but there has been no indication that Mueller told Trump to fire Comey.

"I am being investigated for firing the FBI Director by the man who told me to fire the FBI Director! Witch Hunt," the president wrote in his tweet.

In another tweet earlier Friday, Trump writes, "After 7 months of investigations & committee hearings about my 'collusion with the Russians,' nobody has been able to show any proof. Sad!" Deputy Attorney General Rod Rosenstein submitted a widely circulated memo to the president last month raising concerns over Comey's performance, but Trump later asserted that he had already made the decision himself to fire Comey. (AP)

## New US Bans in Breach of Nuclear Deal: Iran Official

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official slams a new set of sanctions approved by the US Senate against Tehran as a breach of the 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and the P5+1 states, vowing a proper response to the hostile move.

On Thursday, the US Senate voted overwhelmingly for a bill imposing sanctions on Iran over its missile program among other things. To become law, the legislation would have to pass the Republican-led House of Representatives and be signed by President Donald Trump.

Ali Akbar Velayati, senior adviser to Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei on international affairs, said the US Senate's move is "unquestionably in breach of both the spirit and the letter of the JCPOA," referring to the July 2015 deal officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. Velayati said the Iranian committee tasked with monitoring the accord would certainly examine the congressional move and come up with a "decent" response. (Presstv)

## Interior Minister of Uzbekistan to Visit Tajikistan

TASHKENT - Interior Minister, Major-General of Uzbekistan Abdusalom Azizov will visit Tajikistan in late June, Asia-Plus news agency reported. Last time, he visited Tajikistan 19 years ago. The Minister will participate in the meeting

of Interior Ministers of the CIS countries, which will be held in Dushanbe on June 27-29. Azizov will also meet with the leadership of the Interior Ministry of Tajikistan and other high-ranking officials of the Government's power authorities. (AKI)