

Saudi-Turkish Ties Strained over Differing Views on Qatar

RIYADH, Saudi Arabia — Ties between Saudi Arabia and Turkey have begun to fray due to sharply different policies toward Qatar. Saudi Arabia has led other Arab nations in cutting diplomatic ties with Qatar over allegations the small Gulf nation backs terror groups and that its policies, including its support for Islamist groups, threatens the region. Qatar denies it backs terror groups and says the decision to isolate it is politically motivated. Turkey, which is a strong backer of Islamist groups like the Muslim Brotherhood, has criticized the measures against Qatar and authorized the deployment of additional troops to Qatar in a show of support.

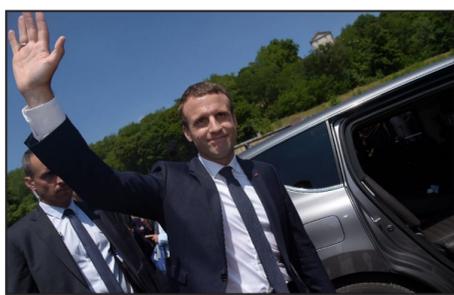


Turkey also sent additional supplies of dairy products to Qatar's capital, Doha, after Saudi Arabia sealed shut Qatar's only land border, impacting a significant source of food imports. Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu held talks late Friday with Saudi Arabia's King Salman about the crisis engulfing Qatar. No statement was issued after their meeting. Saudi tour guides Khalid Abdullah and Edris Ismail told The Associated Press on Sunday that some Saudis are cancelling planned visits to Turkey for the upcoming Muslim Eid holiday, which starts next week. Saudi Arabia says around 250,000 Saudis visited Turkey last year. (AP)

Macron Eyes Next Stage in Revolution in Parliament Vote

PARIS — French voters went to the polls on Sunday in a parliamentary election set to hand a landslide victory to the centrist party of President Emmanuel Macron which would complete his stunning reset of national politics. The new assembly is due to be transformed with a new generation of lawmakers — younger, more female and more ethnically diverse — winning seats in the aftermath of Macron's success in last month's presidential election.

The scale of the change is forecast to be so large that some observers have compared the overhaul to 1958, the start of the present presidential system, or even the post-war re-birth of French democracy in 1945. It is also entirely unexpected: Macron was unknown three years ago and initially given little chance of emerging as president, but he and his 15-month-old *Republique en Marche* (Republic On the Move, REM) party have tapped into widespread desire for



change. And yet despite the zest for renewal the vote has failed to generate much excitement. Official statistics showed

turnout at midday down more than three points over the last election in 2012 at 17.75 percent, revealing a degree of election fatigue. (AFP)

Big Issues Loom over Brexit Talks

BRUSSELS — Britain and the EU begin tough Brexit talks on Monday, trying to complete one of the most complex negotiations in history in less than two years. The talks are starting on time despite chaos in London after Prime Minister Theresa May lost her parliamentary majority this month after a disastrous election result. Here are the key issues as Britain's Brexit minister David Davis and the EU's chief negotiator, Michel Barnier of France, meet in Brussels. Britain seems to have

tacitly accepted the EU's plan for sequenced talks, which will focus first on the terms of Britain's withdrawal, with negotiations on a future relationship and trade deal coming later. In her letter triggering the two-year Brexit process on March 29, May had insisted that Britain wanted to discuss them in parallel. EU officials suggested the apparent climbdown could buy May's unstable government breathing space to actually decide what kind of future relationship it wants. (AFP)

Trump Again Blasts 'Distraction of the Witch Hunt'

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump early Sunday morning hurled a series of testy tweets defending his crisis-ridden presidency, once again decrying the "witch hunt" against him. "The MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN agenda is doing very well despite the distraction of the Witch Hunt," the Republican leader tweeted while away on his first weekend to Camp David, the official US presidential retreat in the mountains of western Maryland. "Many new jobs, high business enthusiasm," he wrote Sunday, also point-

ing to his successful nomination of conservative justice Neil Gorsuch to the top US court. "Infrastructure, Healthcare and Tax cuts in the works!" he continued. Sunday's tweets followed Trump's furious Twitter outburst on Friday in which he announced he is under investigation in connection with a probe into alleged Russian election meddling that has dogged the administration and gained steam in recent weeks. A source on Trump's legal team claimed the president was referring to a Washington ... (More on P6)... (19)

German Minister Sees Hope of 'Soft' Brexit, with Conditions

BERLIN — Germany's foreign minister says there may now be a chance of a "soft" British exit from the European Union that keeps the U.K. in the bloc's single market, but is warning that Britain couldn't pick and choose its conditions. Brexit negotiations start on Monday, with question marks over Britain's approach after Prime Minister Theresa May lost her parliamentary majority in an election meant to strengthen her hand in the talks. German Foreign Minister

Sigmar Gabriel told Sunday's *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper that "maybe there is now a chance to achieve a so-called 'soft Brexit.'" But he said staying in the single market would require Britain to accept EU workers' freedom of movement. It also would have to accept the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice, "or at least a joint court that is staffed by Europeans and Britons" and in principle follows the ECJ's rulings, Gabriel said. For many Brexit advocates, those conditions



would be impossible to accept as last year's referendum campaign focused on getting back control over laws and immigration from the EU. Gabriel said "it would

naturally be best if Britain didn't leave at all." "It doesn't look like that at the moment," he added. "But we want to keep the door open for the British." (AP)

AIIB Wins Achievements in Short Time Despite Challenges: S. Korean Deputy Minister

JEJU ISLAND, South Korea — The China-initiated Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) won achievements in a short time of just one and a half years despite challenges facing the international development bank, South Korea's deputy finance minister said. "AIIB already generated achievements in one and a half years of its establishment," Song In-chang, deputy minister for international affairs at South Korea's Ministry of Strategy and Finance, told Xinhua Saturday on the sidelines of the AIIB's annual meeting. The second annual meeting of the AIIB's board ... (More on P6)... (20)

Trump is Using 'Cold War Rhetoric' on Cuba: Russia

MOSCOW — The Russian Foreign Ministry has criticized President Donald Trump's decision to freeze a detente with Cuba and his verbal attack on the Caribbean island's leaders. Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement Sunday that Trump is "returning us to the forgotten rhetoric of the Cold War." The statement says that "It's clear the anti-Cuba discourse is still widely needed. This can only induce regret." Despite Trump's campaign pledge to improve relations with Moscow, there has been no significant improvement in foreign policy cooperation between the two countries. Last week, the U.S. Senate voted overwhelmingly to back new sanctions on Russia. Moscow maintains close ties with Havana, and in March signed a deal to ship oil to Cuba for the first time in over a decade. (AP)

U.S. Supreme Court Mulls Trump's Travel Ban, but Decision Remains Unknown

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court is weighing the fate of President Donald Trump's travel ban. But it remains unknown what the outcome will be. Just six weeks after coming into office, Trump signed an executive order in March that would ban citizens of six Muslim-majority nations from entering the United States for a period of 90 days. The Trump administration says it needs the 90-day window to better ascertain the supposed terror threat coming from these nations. The countries in question



are Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen — countries that were initially cited by the former Obama administration as "countries of concern." Critics of the ban call it unconstitutional, while supporters say the White

House and Congress should be, by law, deciding national security policy, not the courts. On Monday Trump's ban lost a battle in the 9th circuit court, and the executive order is now being ... (More on P6)... (21)

Saudi-Led Airstrike Kills 25 Civilians in Yemen

SANAA — A total of 25 people were killed when a Saudi-led coalition warplane struck a popular market in Yemen's northern province of Saada, Houthi-controlled state Saba news agency reported on Sunday. The agency quoted an official as saying the airstrike happened on Saturday evening and targeted al-Mashnak popular market at the center of Shada district in Saada. He said the victims were customers and owners of commercial shops and several others were critically injured.

The agency gave no further details, but said it will publish pictures of the scene later on Sunday. Saada is the main stronghold of Shiite Houthi movement and where the group's leader Abdulmalik al-Houthi is based. This is the latest in a series of airstrikes hitting Yemeni civilians since the war began in March 2015. Ten days ago, four members of a family were killed when Saudi-led coalition warplanes hit a house in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, according to residents and medics. (Xinhua)

Russia, China Fostering Strategic Relations: Lavrov

BEIJING — Russia and China maintain a constant dialogue on all the aspects of their bilateral strategic relations, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said at a meeting with his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi on Sunday. "All the aspects of our multifaceted strategic relations are covered by a constant dialogue," Russia's top diplomat said. "Today, there is a good opportunity to look at the state of bilateral ties, at how the agreements reached by our leaders are fulfilled and, of course, to prepare for tomorrow's session of BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa] foreign ministers," Lavrov said. Contacts between Russia and China are maintained at various levels very intensively, Lavrov noted. "Last month, you were in Moscow and then we met quite recently in Astana. Our leaders also maintain quite regular and intensive relations," Russia's top diplomat said. Such active interaction is needed in the contemporary world, the Russian foreign minister said. "As you noted quite rightly, the situation in the world requires constant attention. It is unstable and largely unpredictable," Lavrov said, addressing his Chinese counterpart. "And it is very important for us, of course, to do everything to ensure that the fundamentals of international law and the UN Charter remain the main instruments of building relations between countries and peoples," Lavrov said. (TASS)

Nieghbor News

China, Brazil Agree to Enhance Fiscal, Financial Cooperation

SHANGHAI — Senior finance officials from China and Brazil Sunday agreed to step up cooperation in fiscal and financial areas to advance bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership. Finance officials from both countries met in Shanghai on Sunday ahead of the second BRICS finance ministers and central bank governors meeting. Sunday's meeting was co-chaired by Shi Yaobin, vice finance minister of China, and his Brazilian counterpart Marcelo Esteveo. The two sides exchanged views and reached agreement on a range of issues including macro-economic policy, structural reform policy, cooperation under G20 and BRICS frameworks, taxation policy, and fi-

nancial and investment cooperation. Shi Yaobin said China was willing to enhance macro-economic policy coordination, work together with Brazil to improve global governance and seek more potential on two-way investment. He added that China and Brazil were major emerging economies and important members of the G20 and BRICS, and that the two sides should explore potential in fiscal and financial cooperation to make good preparation for the BRICS summit in September. Marcelo said China and Brazil had a lot of potential for more cooperation, adding that as emerging markets and BRICS countries, the two nations had made contributions to global economy. (Xinhua)

Iran, China Hold Joint Naval Drill in Persian Gulf

TEHRAN, Iran — Iran's navy has conducted a joint exercise with a Chinese fleet near the strategic Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. The official IRNA news agency said Sunday's drill included an Iranian warship as well as two Chinese warships, a logistics ship and a Chinese helicopter that arrived in Iran's port of Bandar Abbas last week. It said the scheduled ex-

ercise came before the departure of the Chinese fleet for Muscat, Oman. It did not provide further details. The U.S. navy held a joint drill with Qatar in the Persian Gulf on Saturday. U.S. and Iranian warships have had a number of tense encounters in the Persian Gulf in recent years. Nearly a third of all oil traded by sea passes through the Strait of Hormuz. (AP)

India, China Hold Talks for Strengthening Strategic Partnership, Mutual Dialogue

BEIJING — India today said it looks forward to strengthen its strategic partnership and mutual dialogue with China as the two sides held talks here amid differences over a host of issues including the USD 50 billion CPEC and India's NSG membership bid. Minister of State for External Affairs V K Singh met Foreign Minister Wang Yi on the sidelines of the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting being held here to finalise the agenda for this year's BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit to be held in September in China's

Xiamen city. They discussed steps to strengthen strategic relations on the directions laid down by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chinese President Xi Jinping during their meeting at Astana recently. Wang referred to the fruitful and constructive meeting between Xi and Modi on the sidelines of Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) on June 8-9 at Astana. In his opening remarks, Singh said that External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj wanted to visit Beijing but health and other restrictions did not permit her. (Agencies)

Mamnoon Meets Saudi King, Discusses Bilateral Ties

ISLAMABAD — Pakistani President Mamoon Hussain held a meeting with Saudi King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud to discuss bilateral relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, Radio Pakistan reported on Sunday. The two leaders spoke about the situation in South Asia and Middle East, the daily reported. While in Jeddah, Hussain also met with the president of Yemen, Abd Rabbu Mansour Hadi, and Speaker of the National Assembly of Kuwait Mar-

zoq bin Ali Al-Ghanim, and discussed matters of mutual interest. Hussain returned home after performing Umrah and was seen off at the airport by Governor Jeddah Mishaal bin Majid bin Abdulaziz. The president's meeting with the Saudi monarch comes days in the backdrop of a deepening diplomatic rift in the Middle East, days after Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif held talks with King Salman during a one-day trip to the Kingdom. (Monitoring Desk)

Turkmenistan Intensifies National Oil and Gas Company's Activity

ASHGABAT — The measures are being taken to intensify the activity of the Turkmen National Oil and Gas Company and redistribute equity participation of its founders, Altyn Asyr TV channel reported June 17. Turkmen Deputy Prime Minister Maksat Babayev presented the report on the implementation of the "Program for the Development of the Turkmen

Oil and Gas Industry until 2030" at the governmental meeting. Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov instructed to thoroughly examine the situation in the world oil and gas market. The president pointed to the need to increase the export potential of the industry, the volume of production of high-quality oil and gas chemical products. (Trend)