

U.S. Works to Expand Areas of Practical Cooperation with China: U.S. Official

WASHINGTON - The United States is working to expand areas of practical cooperation with China while seeking to resolve or manage their differences, a senior U.S. official said Thursday prior to a major round of Sino-U.S. high-level talks.

Hosting a media briefing on the forthcoming seventh round of the Sino-U.S. Strategic and Economic Dialogue (S&ED) and the sixth round of High-Level Consultation on People-to-People Exchange (CPE), Daniel Russell, assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, said that the United States has worked year after year "to help make space for China's



growth."

The special representatives for President Xi Jinping, Chinese Vice Premier Wang Yang and State Councilor Yang Jiechi will co-host the S&ED with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew, who represent President Barack Obama. Meanwhile, Kerry will co-chair the CPE with Chinese Vice Premier Liu Yandong. "We don't always see eye to eye. But the fact is that global challenges require that we cooperate. They require collaborative solutions," Russell said, noting that the two countries

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Accidental Conflict is 'True Danger of Russia-West Clash'

PARIS - Military posturing and increasingly hostile rhetoric between Russia and the West are raising the risk of an accidental slide towards a wider conflict that neither nuclear-armed side wants, experts warn.

Within days of reports that the United States was poised to send heavy military equipment to eastern Europe and the Baltic states, Russia retorted by announcing it planned to add 40 intercontinental nuclear missiles to its arsenal.

It was the latest in a string of threats and confrontations that have included Russian aircraft buzzing

a US destroyer and British fighter jets scrambling after two Russian military aircraft flew near UK airspace.

The bellicose talk on both sides has raised speculation that Russia and the West are involved in a Cold War-style arms race, yet it also presents a more imminent danger: an accidental clash, experts said. "I think it is seriously dangerous. There is a genuine misreading of the other side's intentions, I think on both sides, but especially from Russia," said Kadri Liik, a Russia expert at the European Council on Foreign Relations. (AFP)

UN Special Envoy Condemns New Attacks in Yemen's Capital

GENEVA - The Special Envoy of the UN Secretary-General for Yemen, Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, strongly condemned the series of terrorist attacks on June 17 in Sana'a in an overnight message received by the press on Friday morning. The special envoy extended his deepest sympathies and condolences to the families and friends of those killed and injured by these unconscionable acts.

The series of terrorist attacks included the bombing of three mosques, which have resulted in scores of deaths.

Ahmed deplored the killing of civilians and the targeting of mosques and other civilian objects, say-

ing that such criminal acts can not be justified on any grounds, and called for those responsible to be held accountable.

In his statement, the special envoy also reminded all parties to take all possible measures to prevent any and all violence against religious sites or any other civilian institutions and to remain fully and constructively engaged in the UN-mediated political process.

The UN-led Geneva Consultations on Yemen, or Yemen Consultations, began in Geneva on Monday with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon meeting with the Yemeni delegation that came from Riyadh representing the government. (Xinhua)

Hollande Supports Compromise with Greece Based on European Rules



BRATISLAVA - Compromise with Greece still needs to be sought, but based on European rules, said French President Francois Hollande after meeting with his Slovak counterpart Andrej Kiska here on Friday. "We've showed enough understanding in the past for the problems that Greece faces. The time is up, however, and we expect the Greek government to take difficult and necessary decisions for the future of the country," agreed Kiska.

The Slovak president also highlighted the significance of France in the Europe-wide context and praised its interest

in events in central and eastern Europe. "We discussed the migration situation, as well as the ones in Greece and Ukraine," said Kiska, noting that Slovakia and France are in agreement on those issues. "As far as the issue of refugees goes, we agreed that quotas aren't a solution, but Europe is obligated to express solidarity towards people in need who are fleeing danger and death threats," added Kiska. Hollande weighed in by saying that part of European values is to help such people; for example, from Iraq, Syria and Eritrea, and that everyone needs to share this task. (Xinhua)

Russia Willing to Consider Loans to Greece

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia - Russia is willing to consider giving financial aid to Greece, President Vladimir Putin's spokesman said Friday ahead of talks between the leaders of the two countries.

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras traveled to Russia as his country struggles to reach a deal with its creditors for new loans it needs to avoid defaulting on debt payments at the end of the month. Without



the bailout, Greece could be headed for bankruptcy or an exit from the euro. Tsipras's visit has given

rise to speculation that the Greeks may be seeking Russian loans.

"If the Greeks ask for a

loan then we will consider it, but they have not yet asked," Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, told The Associated Press. "We would do this because they are our partners and this is a normal practice between countries who are partners." The talks between Putin and Tsipras began after both men addressed investors and Russian government officials at Russia's biggest annual economic forum. (AP)

Europe's Peaceful Period 'Now Over': Poland

ZAGAN, Poland - NATO member Poland said Thursday that the post-Cold War period of peace is "now over," as the European Union grapples with various crises including the Ukraine conflict and terrorism. Poland's defence minister spoke alongside NATO head Jens Stoltenberg in western Poland while attending the first full exercise of the

Western defence alliance's new rapid reaction force -- part of NATO's biggest defence reinforcement since the Cold War. "After tens of years of peace, that peaceful period after the Cold War is now over," Defence Minister Tomasz Siemoniak told reporters in Zagan. "Because there are more and more crises erupting around Europe... It's not only the Ukrainian

and Russian crisis but also ISIS and a number of different crises in northern Africa," he said, using an acronym to refer to the jihadist Islamic State group. He added that Europe had to do more to defend itself, saying "I think it's a task for all of us to persuade the public that they should be ready to do more before it's too late." (AFP)

Putin's Ally Suggests Russian Leader Could Hold Early Vote

ST. PETERSBURG, Russia - Vladimir Putin's long-time ally suggested Thursday that the Russian president could order an early vote to win a mandate for much-needed economic reforms, comments that sent shock waves through Russia's business and political elite. Russia's economy, hit by Western sanctions and its own dependence on oil prices, has entered a recession, dropping 2.2 percent in the first quarter of the year. Prominent economists have warned that unless Russia makes drastic reforms, it is doomed for stagnation.

Alexei Kudrin, Russia's finance minister from 2000-11 and the man who invited Putin in for a job in Russia's presidential administration in the late 1990s, suggested at an investment conference Thursday



in St. Petersburg that Putin could hold an early election in order to "win the mandate" for economic reforms. Speaking to The Associated Press, Kudrin said he hadn't discussed the idea with Putin, whose current term expires in 2018. Still, he insisted the move was necessary, because of a "dire

need of serious measures to restore the economy." "If you're not ready to conduct (structural reforms) before the re-election, which anyone hardly does, then you need to do it after the election and do the election early," Kudrin explained. (AP)

S. Korea Pledges to Help Vietnam in Transport Infrastructure Development: Official

HANOI - South Korea's Vice Minister of Strategy and Finance (MoSF) Joo Hyung-hwan pledged to build transport infrastructure development projects in Vietnam via a 12 billion U.S. dollar preferential loan package.

Joo made the remark while meeting with Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen Tan Dung in capital Hanoi on Friday during his visit to Vietnam. According to Joo, the MoSF will continue close coordination with relevant Vietnamese agencies to implement agreements in financial cooperation signed by the two countries' leaders. Concerning the South

U.N. Needs \$1.6 Billion for Yemen Aid, Warns of 'Looming Catastrophe'

GENEVA - The United Nations said on Friday that \$1.6 billion was now needed to face a "looming catastrophe" in Yemen where a Saudi-led coalition has been launching air strikes against Houthi fighters in a campaign to restore the govern-

ment in exile. "Over 21 million people or 80 percent of the population are now estimated to be in need of some form of humanitarian aid and or protection," U.N. spokesman Jens Laerke told a news briefing. Stephen O'Brien, U.N.

Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, launched the revised funding appeal, telling donors that a "looming catastrophe" was in the making across Yemen with families struggling to find food, he said. (Reuters)

Russia 'Open to World', will Cooperate with West: Putin

SAINT PETERSBURG - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday said his country was open to the world and would cooperate with the West despite persistent tensions over the Ukraine crisis. "Russia is open to the world," the Russian president told foreign and Russian investors at the Saint Petersburg

International Economic Forum. "Our active cooperation with new centres of global growth in no case means that we intend to pay less attention to our dialogue with our traditional Western partners," he told the country's main economic forum. Putin pointedly ignored the tensions with the West, seeking instead to

tout his government's successes. "I would like to focus our attention on economic issues," Putin said with a smile, noting that a deep crisis many had predicted "had not happened." "We have stabilised the situation," he said. "We have a stable budget. Our financial and banking systems have adapted to new conditions." (AFP)

Neighbour News

China, Russia agree to Deepen Cooperation in Investment

ST. PETERSBURG - The second meeting of the China-Russia Investment Cooperation Committee here on Thursday, agreed to deepen cooperation in investment and implement their cooperation projects at an early date.

The meeting was co-chaired by visiting Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli and Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov.

At the meeting, the two sides determined a list of additional large-scale cooperation projects that the two countries aim to carry out in the near future.

Since China and Russia officially launched the intergovernmental mechanism for in-

vestment cooperation in September 2014, the fields of bilateral investment cooperation have kept enlarging and the number of projects has been growing, with tangible results achieved, Zhang said.

The meeting determined a fresh list of large-scale cooperation projects, in addition to the initial list of 32 major projects that the two sides agreed on at the first meeting of the investment cooperation committee.

Zhang said the two sides should focus energy on implementing these major projects, promote continued development of bilateral investment cooperation, and further highlight key areas for production capacity and investment cooperation. The two sides should

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Iran Commander Rules out Inspections of Military Sites

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian commander has reaffirmed that the Islamic Republic will not allow access to or inspections of its military sites under a potential nuclear agreement with six world powers.

On Friday, Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff of the Iranian Armed Forces Major General Hassan Firouzabadi said any visits to or inspections of Iran's military sites "are forbidden," stressing that "everyone should heed this red line."

"National interests and security necessitate that outsiders and those who have spared no effort in opposing the Islamic establishment not be granted access to our military centers under any protocol or agreement," he added.

On May 20, Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei said Iran will not allow any inspections by foreign countries of its military sites. The Leader also stressed that foreigners will not be permitted to interview Iranian scientists in the nuclear domain. Iranian negotiators have also reaffirmed that no such visits or interviews will be accepted as part of a deal between Iran and the P5+1.

Negotiators from Iran and the five veto-wielding members of the UN Security Council - the US, Britain, France, Russia and China - plus Germany are in talks on the text of a final deal over Iran's civilian nuclear activities. They face a self-defined deadline of June 30. (Agencies)

20 Militants Killed in Air-Raid in NW Pakistan

ISLAMABAD - At least 20 militants were killed and 18 others injured in an air-raid by Pakistani army in the country's northwestern tribal area of Khyber Agency on Friday, said an army statement.

Public Relations, the mouthpiece of Pakistani army, issued the statement saying that the troops backed by army jet fighters pounded several hideouts of militants in Khyber Agency, a volatile tribal region along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border.

The statement said the killed militants included some key commanders of Taliban.

Identities of the killed and injured militants have not been revealed yet, however, the region is known to be a stronghold of militants belonging to the proscribed Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and an allied group Lashkar-i-Islam. Friday's airstrike is a continuation of the army's ongoing operation Khyber-2 in the Agency which was launched to flush out militancy from the area. (Xinhua)

Uzbekistan and China Deepening Economic Cooperation

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan and China this week signed a protocol on expanding trade and economic cooperation as part of China's Silk Road Economic Belt initiative. During the 3rd meeting of the China-Uzbekistan intergovernmental cooperation committee held in China's northern city of Rizhao, top Chinese security official Meng Jianzhu and First Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Rustam Azimov agreed to deepen all-round cooperation and strengthen bilateral ties.

head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, said at the opening ceremony of the China-Uzbekistan trade and economic forum prior to the meeting, Xinhua reported.

Meng said that China and Uzbekistan should push bilateral cooperation to a higher level and a greater scope. Efforts should be made for connecting both countries' development strategies, further optimizing trade structure, improving the investment environment, coordinating infrastructure projects, and boosting connectivity, Meng said. (TCA)