

Trump to Raise Defense Spending by 54 Billion Dollars: WH

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump is seeking to increase U.S. defense spending by 10 percent, or 54 billion U.S. dollars, White House (WH) revealed Monday.

The money to boost military building-up may come from deep cuts to almost every non-security category, including foreign aid and domestic discretionary programs, according to White House officials.

"This budget will be a public safety and national security budget," Trump said at a bipartisan gathering of U.S. governors at the White House Monday morning.

"We will increase security and



we will decrease lower-priority programs. Most federal agencies will see a reduction as a result," the conservative Washington Times newspaper quoted an Office of Management and Budget official asking anonymous as saying. Trump's plan will also call for hikes in spending on homeland security, intelligence, the Department of Justice and law enforcement, said a Politico report, quoting another unidentified senior official as its source. Trump will propose "dollar for dollar cuts" elsewhere, the official said. So far few details were provided on how the cuts will be made and over what time period... (More on P4)... (18)

Russia Looks for Positive Signals in Trump's Speech to Congress

MOSCOW - Russia's deputy foreign minister said on Tuesdays that relations with the United States were at their lowest ebb since the Cold War, but hoped they could improve under U.S. President Donald Trump. Russia will analyze Trump's debut address to Congress later on Tuesday for signs of any change in the U.S. stance, Sergei Ryabkov told parliament in Moscow.

"It will be important to analyze those signals and approaches which will be

a part of Trump's first appearance as the head of a superpower," the RIA news agency quoted Ryabkov as saying. "It would be desirable to believe that changes in Washington will create a window of opportunity for an improvement of a dialogue between our countries." In Washington, Trump's opponents accuse him of already getting too close to Moscow. A U.S. congressional committee is investigating contacts between... (More on P4)... (19)

Putin Says New Syria Sanctions Would Hamper Peace Talks

BISHKEK - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday said Moscow opposed any new sanctions against the Syrian leadership as they would undermine peace efforts to end the country's protracted war. Russia and the United States are headed for a clash at the UN Security Council as Moscow prepares to veto a draft resolution that would impose sanctions on its ally Damascus.

"In terms of sanctions against the Syrian leader-

ship, I think that now they are completely inappropriate," Putin said at a press conference in Kyrgyzstan. "This would not help the negotiation process but would only interfere or undermine confidence," Putin said, adding that Russia "will not support any new sanctions in relation to Syria". The UN Security Council will vote Tuesday on the text drafted by the United States, Britain and France that would punish 11 Syrians and 10 entities linked to chemical attacks in 2014 and 2015. Russia



has vowed to use its veto to block the measure, which would be the seventh time that Moscow has resorted to its veto power to shield the regime of Bashar al-Asad. A fresh round of UN-led peace talks aimed at ending the Syrian conflict are currently struggling to get off the ground in Geneva. (AFP)

Turkey Targeting Syria's Manbij in Next Military Move: Erdogan

ISTANBUL - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Tuesday reiterated his resolve to capture northern Syrian town of Manbij as part of Turkey's ongoing military operation. "Our determination continues," the president told reporters at Istanbul's Ataturk Airport prior to his departure for Pakistan. "The next phase is Manbij as we have earlier determined."

He said if Ankara agrees with Russia and the United States, there are steps

to be taken for the capture of both Manbij and Raqqa, a stronghold of the Islamic State (IS) in northern Syria. "It is important for us to discuss the issue with Russia as a close country to us and at the same time to be in solidarity with the United States as a strategic partner of Turkey and the coalition forces as well," Erdogan said. "If our allies are really sincere, we will act with you so long as we cleanse Raqqa from... (More on P4)... (20)

U.S. Senate Confirms Wilbur Ross as Commerce Secretary

WASHINGTON - U.S. Senate on Monday confirmed Wilbur Ross as the commerce secretary, an appointment key to setting U.S. trade policies. Ross's nomination was approved in a 72-27 vote, with strong support from Democrats. The 79-year-old billionaire investor is set to play an important role in setting trade policies and negotiating trade deals for the Trump administration. During his confirmation hearing, Ross told lawmakers that renegotiation of the North American

Free Trade Agreement was the top priority for the Trump administration. He downplayed the chances of an overall trade war with trading partners, saying that he was not antitrade and that tariffs played a role both as a negotiating tool and a tool "to punish offenders who don't play by the rules." He also reiterated his intention that the United States would negotiate bilateral agreements instead of multilateral ones, because it's less likely to "get to a sensible result" from multilateral negotiations.



During the campaign, Ross and Peter Navarro, head of the newly-created National Trade Council at the White House, had worked together to help

Trump develop the trade, regulatory and energy policy agenda, which focused on reducing U.S. trade deficit and boosting manufacturing. (Xinhua)

Europe Sees Sharp Decline of Migrant Arrivals Via Mediterranean this Year: IOM

GENEVA - A total of 16,775 migrants and refugees have crossed the Mediterranean Sea to reach Europe since the start of the year, down from almost 125,000 arrivals over the same period in 2016, the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) reported Tuesday.

According to IOM's latest figures, 13,457 arrivals have been documented in Italy, up from 8,981 in the first two months of last year. A further 2,318 have been



registered in Greece and 1,000 migrants have landed in Spain. IOM reported that 485 people, including children, had lost their lives so far this year, 60

more than the number of migrants who died on sea routes to Europe last year. Most deaths, which are 444, have been recorded on the... (More on P4)... (21)

Britain and Russia Discuss Easing Tensions, Avoiding Military Accidents

MOSCOW - One of Britain's most senior military commanders met Russian military chiefs in Moscow on Tuesday to discuss how to reduce tensions between the two countries, the Interfax news agency reported.

British Vice Chief of the Defence Staff General Gordon Messenger met General Alexander Zhuravlev, the deputy chief of Russia's general staff, and discussed how best to prevent accidents and other incidents involving the two countries' militaries, the news agency said.

Tensions between London and Moscow escalated after Russia's 2014 annexation of Ukraine's Crimea and its intervention in Syria. Britain has complained in particular about what it says are frequent flights by Russian long-range bombers close to its air... (More on P4)... (22)

Trump Meets with Senior Chinese Official

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday met with visiting Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi at the White House, pledging to enhance bilateral high-level exchanges and cooperation in all areas.

During the meeting, Yang first conveyed greetings to Trump from Chinese President Xi Jinping, while the U.S. president asked Yang to relay his greetings to President Xi. Yang noted that President Xi not long ago held an important phone conversation with President Trump, which offered clear guidance on the direction of the development of the China-U.S. relations in the next stage.

By following through on the spirit of the phone conversation and upholding the principles of non-conflict, non-confrontation, mutual respect and win-win cooperation, China is willing to enhance exchanges with the U.S. at all levels from top down, and expand coordination and cooperation with U.S. on bilateral, regional and global issues, respect each others' core interests and major concerns, Yang said.

Ensuring the steady and healthy development of the China-U.S. ties will surely benefit both peoples and the world as a whole, Yang added.

Trump said he was very happy to hold the very important phone conversation with President Xi. He said the U.S. highly regards its cooperative relations with China, while highlighting the need to enhance high-level exchanges, strengthen cooperation in all areas, and increase coordination and cooperation on global and regional affairs. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

China, Singapore Vow more "Belt and Road" Cooperation

BEIJING - China and Singapore pledged to strengthen cooperation in the "Belt and Road" Initiative.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with his Singaporean counterpart Vivian Balakrishnan on the sidelines of a series of high-level cooperative meetings between the two countries. Stressing the significance of building "a partnership of all-round cooperation keeping with the times", Wang called on both sides to beef up "Belt and Road" cooperation, facilitate regional integration, and promote the building of a closer

community of common destiny between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Wang also said he hopes Singapore, a coordinator of China-ASEAN ties, will play a constructive role in helping push for greater development of China's relations with the ASEAN, and promote regional peace, stability and prosperity. Noting that Singapore attaches great importance to its ties with China, Balakrishnan said the country is willing to become China's long-term reliable cooperation partner. ... (More on P4)... (24)

Pakistan Wants ECO as "Strong Economic Block"

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan Foreign Affairs Adviser Sartaj Aziz on Tuesday urged members of the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) to transform the grouping into a strong economic block through full exploration of its human and material resources. Speaking at the opening session of the ECO council of foreign ministers, which will finalize agenda for the summit to be held on Wednesday, he said that "immediate attention should be paid to intra-regional trade, which is far below its potential."

He underscored the need for implementation of ECO trade agreement and removal of trade and non-trade barriers besides establishing a Free Trade Area in the region. Aziz also said that lack of regional connectivity is a major impediment to economic cooperation and said there should be focus on projects for greater connectivity. Secretary General of ECO Halil Ibrahim said that ECO intra-regional trade has increased to 8.3 percent in 2016 as compared to 5.3 percent in 2000, ... (More on P4)... (25)

Iranian FM Hails ECO as Unique Ground for Cooperation

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has praised the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), stressing that it provides an exceptional ground for collaboration among its members. Zarif made the remarks on Monday after arriving in the Pakistani capital Islamabad to take part in the ECO's 22nd foreign ministerial meeting. "ECO is one of the oldest economic cooperation organizations in the devel-

oping world and in Asia. The geographical extent of this organization has in the last 25 years, with the additions to its member states, almost encompassed the whole region," he said. He stressed that ECO is a unique platform for cooperation and development, and that its members should put more focus on the group's operational procedures. Iran is set to hand over ECO's rotating presidency to Pakistan on... (More on P4)... (26)

Tajikistan, Russia Sign Deal for Peaceful Use of Atomic Energy

DUSHANBEH - An agreement on cooperation in peaceful uses of atomic energy has been signed between the government of the Tajikistan and Russia. The document was signed by Farhod Rakhimov, President of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan, on behalf of the Government of Tajikistan, and Alexey Likhachev, Director Gen-

eral of ROSATOM, on behalf of the Government of the Russian Federation. The Agreement has provided the legal basis for interaction between Tajikistan and Russia in the nuclear power sector for the first time in history while determining a wide range of cooperation areas including design, construction, operation and decommissioning of research reactors; spent... (More on P4)... (27)

Putin to Visit Turkmenistan: Kremlin

ASHGABAT - In a phone conversation with Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, Russian President Vladimir Putin said he will visit Turkmenistan in the near future on the Turkmen counterpart's invitation, the Kremlin press service reported Feb. 28.

In this regard, presidential aides and relevant authorities of the two countries will be given instructions to prepare the visit. The Russian president

expressed regret that he was unable to visit Turkmenistan due to the busy schedule of his trip to Central Asia. Putin was among the first to congratulate Berdimuhamedov on his re-election as the president of Turkmenistan. A presidential election was held on Feb. 12 in Turkmenistan. Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, who has been the president since 2007, was re-elected for a third term with 97.69 percent of votes. (Trend)

EU's Juncker to Unveil Post-Brexit Vision

Brussels - European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker will on Wednesday unveil a vision for the future of the EU after Britain's departure, in which he is expected to suggest states integrate at different speeds. After Brexit, like-minded countries could press ahead with closer cooperation on issues ranging from defence to the economy, Juncker has said. Plans for a Europe of variable geometry have run into criticism from eastern European countries, especially on immigration. Juncker's so-called White Paper will be presented to MEPs ahead of a European Union summit in Rome at the end of March where leaders will come up with their own strategy for... (More on P4)... (23)

S. Korea Military Signs Land Swap Deal with Lotte for THAAD

SEOUL - South Korea's defense ministry on Tuesday signed the land swap deal with Lotte Group for Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD). A defense ministry official told Xinhua that the contract to exchange military land for the Lotte-owned golf course was formally signed earlier in the day. Lotte International, a Lotte unit possessing the golf course where the U.S. missile shield is set to be sited, held a board of directors meeting Monday to approve the contract.

Seoul and Washington abruptly announced the decision in July last year to deploy one THAAD battery by the

end of this year. The THAAD site was altered in September into the golf course in Seongju county, North Gyeongsang province.

The golf course evaluated at about 89 billion won (78.6 million U.S. dollars) will be swapped for a military land in Gyeonggi province near the capital Seoul, according to the ministry's press release. Negotiation on the land provision will be launched as the first step between the military authorities of the United States and South Korea. It will be followed by a basic designing of the base, an evaluation of environmental effect and a construction. (Xinhua)