

Trump, Putin Look to Work together on Syria

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin signaled improving prospects for cooperation in Syria in what the White House called a "very good" phone discussion that included a focus on setting up safe zones in the war-torn nation. The Kremlin said the leaders also agreed in Tuesday's call to try to set up their first in-person meeting in July, on the sidelines of an international summit in Germany. The White House later confirmed that information. The call marked the first time Trump and Putin have spoken since the U.S. launched missiles against an air base in Syria, an attack that outraged Russia, one of the Syrian gov-



ernment's strongest backers. The U.S. military action sparked new tensions between Washington and Moscow, with top U.S. officials sharply condemning Putin's continued support for embattled Syrian leader Bashar Assad. But the leaders appeared to again be edging toward closer cooperation following the exchange. The Kremlin said Trump and Putin agreed to bolster diplomatic efforts to resolve the Syrian civil war, which has left hundreds of thousands dead and millions more displaced. The White House announced it would send a top State Department official to Russian-led talks on Syria that begin Wednesday in Kazakhstan. (Xinhua)

Turkey, EU Leaders to Meet Despite Strains: Minister

ANKARA - Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said on Tuesday a Turkey-EU summit was expected to be convened, local media reported. Cavusoglu added that the date of "a big summit" would be determined after talks with EU officials at an upcoming NATO meeting on May 24-25 in Brussels, Belgium, according to Turkey's A Haber news channel. Some EU leaders had demanded a meeting with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the NATO summit, he said,

adding that some European governments had admitted they had been wrong on Turkey. "They understood that they were making a mistake," the minister said. Turkey had no problems with common European values "as these are our values as well," he said, pointing out that the only problem is the EU's approach. Erdogan said earlier that Turkey would stop pursuing EU membership if the bloc failed to open new accession chapters. (Xinhua)

British Parliament Dissolved for Snap Election

LONDON - Britain's Parliament was officially dissolved on Wednesday, but without the traditional pomp and ceremony. At precisely one minute past midnight to Wednesday, all 650 members of Parliament, from Prime Minister Theresa May to back bench MPs, were stripped of their titles, becoming ordinary citizens. May will visit Queen Elizabeth II on Wednesday afternoon to mark the dissolution of Parliament. Under a fixed term law, in-

troduced by former Prime Minister David Cameron, the parliament sits for exactly five years which sets a specific timetable for dissolution and a new election. Current Prime Minister Theresa May used a break-clause in the fixed-term law to call a snap election on June 8, as Britain prepares to negotiate with the European Union on its withdrawal from the bloc. The dissolution of Parliament also signaled the official start of Britain's election campaign, with all 650



parliament seats are up for grabs. But the dissolution does not mean that Britain's government comes to an end. "Government ministers remain in charge of their departments until after the result of the election is known and a new administration is formed," said a Parliament spokesman. (Xinhua)

Japan's Abe Sets 2020 as Target for new Constitution amid Public Contention

TOKYO - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said on Wednesday that he hopes to see a revised constitution go into effect in 2020 under a plan that will see the first-ever change to the post-war charter. Speaking in a video message at a gathering to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the constitution being enacted, Abe said he wanted the language in the revised constitution to mention Japan's Self-Defense Forces. The current charter makes no mention of the existence of the Self-Defense Forces in its war-renouncing pledges, which has led to a great

deal of controversy regarding the constitutionality of Abe and his ruling Liberal Democratic Party camp's push to expand the scope of the nation's forces. "By making explicit the status of the SDF in the constitution during our generation's lifetime, we should leave no room for contending that the SDF may be unconstitutional," the prime minister said. conservative and pro-revision forces, the ruling camp command a two-thirds majority in both chambers necessary to call a national referendum on changing the constitution. (Xinhua)

UNITED NATIONS - The UN special envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura will join the high-level meeting on Syria in Astana, the capital city of Kazakhstan, on May 3-4, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric told reporters here Tuesday. "In view of the urgency and importance of re-establishing a de-escalation of the situation in Syria and moving on confidence-building measures, he has agreed to attend the meeting as an observer at the invitation of the Kazakh government," Dujarric said at a daily news

briefing here. While in Astana, the special envoy will be supporting efforts by the guarantors of the ceasefire and other participants to de-escalate the military situation, he said. "He will be accompanied by a technical delegation of UN experts who have been present in previous Astana meetings." De Mistura will also use the opportunity to conduct political consultations with the ceasefire guarantors and others that will be present, the



spokesman said. "This will be particularly timely as he is at present putting finishing touches on his deliberations regarding the next round of intra-Syrian talks in Geneva." The upcoming talks will be the fourth international conference on Syria, where a political crisis broke out in March 2011 and developed into a civil war. (Xinhua)

UN Syrian Envoy to Join Astana Talks: Spokesman

EU Brexit Talk Directives Put Citizens' Rights on Center Stage

BRUSSELS - The European Commission on Wednesday sent its recommendations to the Council of the European Union (EU) to open the Brexit negotiations with London, putting EU citizens' rights and status on center stage. The move came on the heels of an EU summit on Saturday, when 27 remaining members of the EU unanimously adopted the two-phase guidelines for Brexit talks. The Commission's recommendations, in line with the guidelines, included draft negotiating directives



covering four main areas and provided necessary details to conduct the first phase of the negotiations. Safeguarding the status and rights of 3.2 million EU citizens living in Brit-

ain and 1.2 million British citizens living in the 27 European Union countries is the first priority of the negotiations, the Commission stressed in the recommendations. (Xinhua)

EU's Juncker Says British PM May is a 'Tough Lady'

BRUSSELS - The head of the European Commission Jean-Claude Juncker said on Wednesday he has noted that British Prime Minister Theresa May was a "tough lady" but that he respected her and liked her as a person. Juncker was asked by reporters to comment on remarks by May on Tuesday that she had been described by one of her colleagues "as a bloody difficult woman" and that Juncker would be the next person to find that out in the course of Brexit negotiations. "I deeply respect the British prime minister. I like her as a person. I have noted that she is a tough lady, so this is not for the future, this is a real-time description," Juncker told reporters. He also said talk of Britain walking out of negotiations on Britain leaving the EU was wrong. (AP)

China Urges all Sides in North Korea Standoff to 'Stop Irritating' One another

BEIJING - China on Wednesday called on all parties in the Korean standoff to stay calm and "stop irritating each other" a day after North Korea said the United States was pushing the region to the brink of nuclear war. The United States has urged China, reclusive North Korea's lone major ally, to do more to rein in its neighbor's nuclear and missile programs which have prompted an assertive response from the Trump administration, warning that the "era of strategic patience" is over. The United States has sent a nuclear-powered aircraft carrier to Korean waters and a pair of strategic U.S. bombers flew training drills with the South Korean and Japanese air forces in another show of strength this week. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang, asked about the bomber flights, the drills and North Korea's response, stressed that the situation was "highly complex" and sensitive. "The urgent task is to lower temperatures and resume talks," he told reporters. "We again urge all relevant parties to remain calm and exercise restraint, stop irritating each other, work hard to create an atmosphere for contact and dialogue between all sides, and seek a return to the correct path of dialogue and negotiation as soon as possible." The flight of the two bombers came as U.S. President Donald Trump raised eyebrows when he said he would be "honored" to meet North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the right circumstances, and as his CIA director landed in South Korea for talks. (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

Xi Stresses Rule of Law, Cultivating Legal Talent

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping on Wednesday called for more efforts in promoting rule of law and cultivating talent for the cause. Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks while inspecting China University of Political Science and Law ahead of Youth Day, which falls on May 4. Fully implementing the rule of law is an essential requirement and an important safeguard measure in adhering to and developing socialism with Chinese characteristics, said Xi, while talking with senior law profes-

sors and students. The implementation of the rule of law would be impossible without a high-quality legal workforce, said Xi. Xi called on the country's law schools to enhance their research on basic issues in rule of law and related areas and provide theoretical support for the socialist rule of law with Chinese characteristics. "We should have confidence in developing our own legal sciences discipline and contribute to global rule of law with Chinese wisdom and practice," Xi said. China should take successful legal practices worldwide as reference, but not simply copy them, according to Xi. (Xinhua)

Iranians must Give Rouhani Second Term to Make Good on Nuclear Deal: Vice President

TEHRAN - Iran's president must get a second term to secure the economic benefits that he promised would result from a diplomatic thaw with the West, Vice President Masoumeh Ebtekar said ahead of a May 19 election. Hassan Rouhani's hard-line challengers for the presidency, some of whom are close to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, say he traded away too much in a 2015 deal with world powers that limited Iran's nuclear work but failed to deliver sufficient rewards. In a rare interview with

a trio of foreign reporters at an EU-Iran business forum on Sunday, Ebtekar, one of Iran's 12 vice presidents, said voters should not give up on Rouhani. "He needs more time ... He has to be given a chance to be able to continue his program," said Ebtekar, one of Iran's most prominent women politicians. "Rouhani has done a lot to overcome some of the hurdles that the investors find when they are coming," she said in a nod to concerns over red tape and opaque rules voiced by foreign companies that Iran hopes to attract. (Reuters)

Mamnoon Emphasizes Need for Promoting Development Oriented Research

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain has emphasized the need for promoting development oriented research to compete with modern day challenges. He was addressing the awards ceremony of National Research Program for Universities in Islamabad on Wednesday. The president said that research and development are interlinked and by cementing the bond

between the two we can cater the emerging needs of our industries and development agencies. He called upon all stakeholders to play their constructive role for the culmination of ongoing development projects in the country. He stressed the need for providing, enabling and inclusive environment in the educational institutions that encourages and grows new ideas. (Daily Times)

Turkmenistan Discusses Co-Op Issues with Regional Countries

ASHGABAT - Turkmen Foreign Minister Rashid Meredov discussed the cooperation issues with his Kazakh counterpart Kairat Abdrakhmanov, Kyrgyz counterpart Er-lan Abdyladaev and Tajik counterpart Sirojiddin Aslov in Ashgabat, the Turkmen Foreign Ministry said in a message May 2. The high-ranking delegations arrived in Ashgabat to participate in the sixth meeting of foreign ministers of the countries participating in the Central Asia + Japan dialogue. Earlier, Meredov met with Japanese and Uzbek foreign ministers. According to the message, at the meeting with the Kazakh delegation, the sides stressed that the cooperation between Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan reached a qualitatively new level due to the political will of the leadership of the two countries. At the meeting with the Kyrgyz delegation, the

sides stressed the role of high-level visits. The cooperation as part of international organizations was mentioned among the priority areas. At the meeting with the Tajik delegation, the sides discussed the issues of further development of bilateral relations in the political, diplomatic, trade, economic, cultural, humanitarian spheres. Ashgabat attaches great importance to the regional cooperation. The role of major joint projects, namely, the construction of a transnational gas pipeline, through which Turkmen natural gas has been supplied through Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan to China since 2009, as well as the Kazakhstan-Turkmenistan-Iran railway, commissioned in 2014, has been also stressed. The railway project which is being currently implemented through the territory of Afghanistan is connected with Tajikistan. (Trend)

Le Pen as President would Seek French Electoral Law Change: Aide

PARIS - Presidential candidate Marine Le Pen would try to change France's electoral law by referendum if she wins the presidency on Sunday and her National Front (FN) party fails to win a parliamentary majority in June, a senior FN official said. Le Pen, who is standing against centrist candidate Emmanuel Macron in Sunday's presidential run-off, would then call new elections under the new rules. France holds parliamentary elections on June 11 and 18. "If the new Assembly is hostile to us, we would change the electoral law via a referendum organized as soon as next summer, then the president would dissolve the National Assembly. (Reuters)

Preparing for G20 Summit is like 'Herding Cats':Merkel

BERLIN - Preparing a meeting of the Group of 20 economic powers is like "herding cats", German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Wednesday as her officials try to reach consensus among the group ahead of a leaders' summit she will host in July. The G20 was a crucial forum for tackling the global financial crisis that took hold in 2008, but forging consensus has proven harder this year as the group must deal with a shift toward more protectionism under U.S. President Donald Trump. "We are 20 different countries, with 20 different political systems, with 20 dif-

ferent development levels. Everything must be unanimously approved," said Merkel, who will host world leaders at the July 7-8 G20 summit in Hamburg. "This is no simple task," she told a G20-sponsored meeting of business leaders in Berlin. "The sherpa process, as you could imagine, is quite a challenge. It is like herding cats." The Hamburg G20 summit is taking on increased significance as Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin plan to hold their first face-to-face meeting on the sidelines of the meeting. Ministerial meetings in the build-up to the summit have proven tricky. (Reuters)