

Russian Armed Forces Ready to Counter any Threat: Putin

MOSCOW - Russian armed forces are ready to complete any mission and counter any potential aggression, Russian President Vladimir Putin said Tuesday in marking the former Soviet Union's victory in World War II.

"The lessons of the war teach us to be vigilant, and Russian Armed Forces are ready to counter any potential of aggression," Putin said in an address prior to a military parade at Moscow's Red Square to celebrate the 72nd anniversary of the victory in the Great Patriotic War, or World War II. Underlining that Russia will strengthen the traditions of patriotism and loyalty to the country, the president said Russian servicemen will for-



ever guard their homeland as soldiers in the Great Patriotic War did.

"Russian servicemen are ready to complete any mission and sacrifice themselves for their homeland and people," Putin said. In his address, Putin also said concerted efforts are needed from the international community to fight neo-nazism, terrorism and extremism. The president said Russia is ready to work with the international community in countering those challenges, noting that the country "will always be on the side of those who stick to equitable cooperation." A total of 27 foot formations took part in the parade, and dozens of pieces of armaments were displayed. (Xinhua)

New Poll Setback for German Social Democrats before State Vote

BERLIN - Germany's Social Democrats (SPD), stung by defeat in a state election on Sunday, fell to their lowest level in more than three months in a poll on Tuesday, underlining the scale of the task they face to oust Angela Merkel in a September election. The weak poll performance comes five days before a nail-biting weekend vote in North Rhine-Westphalia, home to almost a quarter of the German population, that is being widely seen as the biggest

test of opinion before the Sept. 24 federal vote. The loss in the northern state of Schleswig-Holstein, the second this year, has ratcheted up the pressure on the SPD. The party saw a revival after choosing former European Parliament President Martin Schulz as leader at the end of January, but the 'Schulz effect' looks to be evaporating. The SPD, junior partner in Chancellor Merkel's right-left coalition, fell 1.5 ...*(More on P4)...(25)*

Turks in Germany Won't be Allowed to Vote on Death Penalty: Merkel

BERLIN - Turks living in Germany will not be allowed to vote in any referendum on reinstating the death penalty, Chancellor Angela Merkel said in remarks broadcast on Tuesday. Germany allowed Turks to vote last month in a referendum that endorsed broad new powers for President Tayyip Erdogan. But many local authorities banned campaign rallies, something Erdogan compared to nazism, causing a diplomatic rift. Merkel, who is seeking a fourth term in a September election, has said Europe

should not push Turkey away despite concerns about Erdogan's tightening grip on power and mass arrests since a coup attempt last July. But she confirmed what her spokesman said last week, that Germany would not authorize Turkish consulates and embassies to act as polling stations on reinstating the death penalty - banned in all European Union countries - in Turkey. "We usually don't answer hypothetical questions but this question is unfortunately, unfortunately not ...*(More on P4)...(27)*

UK Labour Leader Corbyn: I Won't Quit if I Lose Election

MANCHESTER, England - Jeremy Corbyn vowed to carry on leading Britain's opposition Labour Party if he loses a national election on June 8, defying polls showing he is on course for defeat and concerns from within his party that his leadership threatens its future. Corbyn, who officially launched his party's election campaign on Tuesday, told BuzzFeed News he would carry on whatever the outcome. "I was elected leader of this

party and I'll stay leader of this party," he said. Corbyn has pledged higher taxes on the wealthy and a crackdown on powerful corporations since he took control of the center-left Labour Party in 2015 thanks to a surprise surge in support amongst grass roots member for his socialist agenda. But he has struggled to unite Labour's elected ranks behind his political vision or convince the wider public of his leadership credentials, diminishing the party's ability to exert pressure on issues like Britain's exit from the European Union. Some recent opinion polls have put Prime Minister



Theresa May's Conservatives ahead of Labour by more than 20 percentage points and on course for a landslide victory. May ...*(More on P4)...(26)*

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White House Climate Change Meeting Postponed

WASHINGTON - The White House has postponed a Tuesday meeting to discuss whether the United States should withdraw from the landmark international climate deal struck in Paris under the Obama administration. The White House said late Monday that the meeting would be rescheduled. This is the second time a meeting of top aides on the issue has been delayed. Donald Trump pledged during the presidential campaign to renegotiate the accord, but he has wavered on the issue since winning the presi-

dency. His top officials have appeared divided about what to do about the deal, under which the United States pledged to significantly reduce planet-warming carbon emissions in the coming decade. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, the former chief executive of the oil company Exxon, said at his Senate confirmation hearing in January that he supports staying in the deal. But Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Scott Pruitt has said the



Paris pact "is a bad deal for America" that will cost jobs. Ivanka Trump, who serves as an adviser to her father, was supposed to meet separately Tuesday with Pruitt and Sen. Lisa

Murkowski, R-Alaska. That meeting is still expected to take place, according to a White House official who requested anonymity to discuss private talks. (AP)

U.S. Congress Confirms Air Force Secretary Nominee

WASHINGTON - The U.S. Senate on Monday confirmed Heather Wilson as Air Force Secretary, the first service secretary nominee to be approved by Congress.

The upper chamber of Congress voted 76 to 22 to hand the rein of the U.S. Air Force to Wilson, who was a former House member representing the state of New Mexico.

Wilson, 56, graduated from the United States Air Force Academy in 1982 and obtained a doctorate in the University of Oxford, after which



she served in the U.S. Air Force for seven years. Wilson was appointed to the National Security Council in 1989 under the senior Bush administration and after an intermediate period in the private sector, she was elected to

the House of Representatives. Wilson was the first female military veteran elected to a full term in Congress. The position of Air Force Secretary was the first of ...*(More on P4)...(28)*

Moroccan, Saudi FM's Discuss Pressing Issues in Mideast

RABAT - Moroccan Foreign Minister Nasser Bourita discussed here on Monday the situation in the Middle East with his Saudi counterpart Adel Ben Ahmed Al Jubeir. Al Jubeir told the press that he extended an invitation from Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz to King of Morocco Mohammed VI to attend a summit of the Arab and Islamic countries, where the United States will also participate. He noted that the talks with Bourita covered matters of common interest.

For his part, Bourita said they discussed pressing issues in the Arab world, adding that Rabat supports all initiatives taken by Riyadh in the region. He underlined that the official visit of the Saudi minister comes within the framework of continued political consultations and coordinations between the two countries. (Xinhua)

Poland Faces Criticism at UN Human Rights Forum

GENEVA - The United States and other countries criticized Poland at the U.N.'s Human Rights Council on Tuesday for new laws that are seen as limiting the independence of the judiciary and public media.

Several Western nations also criticized Poland for its restrictive abortion laws, calling on the mostly Roman Catholic nation to give women the right to safe and legal abortions. And they highlighted a rising xenophobic atmosphere that has resulted in more crimes against foreigners.

The European Union has voiced concern about the Polish government since the conservative Law and Justice party assumed power in 2015 and moved quickly to consolidate power by limiting the independence of the Constitutional Tribunal and public media.

The debate Tuesday in Geneva marked the first time that the country's recent record was reviewed by the world human rights forum. All U.N. members face such periodic reviews.

The U.S. representative at the session, Sheila Leonard, said her country was concerned about the developments in Poland. "We remain deeply concerned about judicial independence," Leonard said. "We are also concerned about the continued discrimination and incidents targeting minorities in Poland, including homophobic, xenophobic and anti-Semitic speech and acts." Polish officials defended their record, saying the changes Law and Justice introduced were in line with European norms. (AP)

Australia Destroys Irreplaceable French Plants in Quarantine Mishap

SYDNEY - Irreplaceable and rare plant specimens dating back to the 1800s have been destroyed by Queensland State Biosecurity officials in Australia because of insufficient paperwork. The collection of flowering plants were sent by France's Natural History Museum in Paris to Queensland's herbarium in Brisbane to help Aussie flora researchers. But instead of arriving at their assigned destination, the specimens were incinerated. According to a spokesman from the Queensland Department of Agriculture, the body has established a review into its current procedures. (Xinhua)

UK's Labour Leader Says he Won't Try to Reverse Brexit

LONDON - The leader of Britain's main opposition Labour Party promised Tuesday to correct a "rigged" economic system if it wins next month's parliamentary election - but said he won't try to reverse the country's decision to leave the European Union.

In a speech Tuesday, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn said the economy is "still rigged in favor of the rich and powerful" and vowed to target "the tax cheats, the rip-off bosses, the greedy bankers." Labour trails far behind the governing Conservatives in opinion polls with four weeks to go until the June 8 election. Corbyn is appealing to voters to back

him as the anti-establishment candidate. "People are alienated from politics and politicians," Corbyn said. "Our Westminster (political) system is broken and our economy is rigged. Both are run in the interests of the few."

But the veteran socialist leads a party that is divided on his leadership, which many Labour lawmakers regard as disastrous. Labour is also divided about Brexit, while Conservative Prime Minister Theresa May has put Brexit at the heart of her campaign. May says voters should increase her majority to strengthen Britain's hand in EU exit talks. (AP)

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Xi Says to Uphold Global Climate Deal

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping told French President-elect Emmanuel Macron in a phone call on Tuesday that he would uphold the Paris Agreement on curbing climate change. China, the world's top emitter of greenhouse gases, and France should "protect the global governance achievements contained within the Paris Agreement on climate change", Xi told Macron, the Chinese foreign ministry said. U.S. President Donald Trump has expressed scepticism about the deal and threatened to pull out.

A meeting of his advisers that had been scheduled for Tuesday was postponed due to scheduling conflicts,

a White House official said. Many nations want Trump to remain in the agreement, meant to rein in rising world temperatures by shifting toward cleaner energies such as wind and solar power, even though he plans to bolster the U.S. coal industry.

Macron told Trump in a phone call on Monday that he would also seek to defend the climate change deal agreed in Paris in 2015.

China has consistently reaffirmed its commitment to the Paris agreement.

Climate change was widely seen as one of the few bright spots of cooperation between Beijing and the previous Obama administration in Washington. (Reuters)

Nawaz Accepts Saudi King's Invitation to Attend US-Arab and Islamic Summit

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Muhammad Nawaz Sharif has accepted the invitation of the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques to attend the upcoming US-Arab and Islamic Summit in Riyadh, the PM's Office said Tuesday. Saudi Arabia's Minister for Information and Cul-

ture Dr Awwad Bin Saleh Al-Awwad extended the invitation to the Prime Minister in a meeting held at the PM House.

The meeting will focus on ways to enhance the cooperation between the Muslim Countries and the United States in the fight against extremism. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran, China Ink Banking Cooperation

TEHRAN - Central Bank of Iran (CBI) and China Export and Credit Insurance Corporation (commonly known as Sinosure) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Tuesday.

The MoU was signed in a meeting in Tehran attended by CBI Deputy Governor for Foreign Exchange Affairs Gholamali Kamyar and Sinosure Vice-President Weimin Zha.

Under the terms of the agreement, the major Chinese state owned enterprise will supply necessary export insurance for offering financing facilities to construction and manufacturing projects to be implemented in Iran and in accordance with future contracts.

As such, institutions as well as public and private companies wishing to finance their projects through Chinese fund, are able to enjoy credit coverage of Sinosure.

Addressing the meeting, Weimin expressed the hope that signing of the MoU could open a new chapter in economic relations between Iran and China and its implementation would benefit the two countries.

In July 2016, General Administration of Customs of People's Republic of China announced that in the post-sanctions era, Iran's oil trade with China increased following the removal of the anti-Iran sanctions after landmark nuclear agreement between Iran and the world six major powers (the US, Britain, Russia, France, China and Germany) in July 2015.

Iran is currently the sixth major oil supplier to China. As one of the traditional customers of Iran's oil products, China, consuming 11,968,000 bpd in 2015, is the second major oil consumer of the world after the US. (FNA)

Uzbekistan to Build Oil Pipeline to Kazakh Border

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan will build an oil pipeline to the border with Kazakhstan in order to supply imported oil to a new refinery, the construction of which began in April 2017 in Uzbekistan's Jizzakh region. The refinery has design capacity of processing of five million tons of oil per year, production of 3.7 million tons of motor fuel, over 700,000 tons of aviation fuel and 300,000 tons of associated oil products.

The cost of the project is \$2.2 billion. It is scheduled to complete construction of the refinery in 2022. The Jizzakh region is located in the central part of Uzbekistan and borders Kazakhstan and borders Kazakhstan in the north, and this will facilitate the construction of the oil pipeline. (Trend)

Mirziyoyev to Kazakhstan and Russia.

At the end of April 2017, Uzbekistan started construction of a new refinery in Zafarobod district of the country's Jizzakh region.

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