

Trump, Erdogan Vow to Repair U.S.-Turkish Relationship

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan pledged on Tuesday to repair bilateral relationship fraught with difficulties in the past.

Speaking at the White House with Erdogan, Trump hailed the Turkish people as "friends and allies for many, many decades" for the United States and pledged support for Turkish fight against the Islamic State (IS) and a Kurdish militant group known as the PKK.

However, the pledge was made as the United States and Turkey were involved in stark disagreement over



the Trump administration's recent decision to arm Syrian Kurds, a key force in the fight against the IS in Syria. Currently, the U.S.-led coalition against the IS is backing the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), comprised of mostly the People's Protection Units (YPG) Kurds and some local Arabs.

Also on the eve of Erdogan's meeting with Trump, the Pentagon was reportedly preparing to further arm Syrian Kurds with antitank weapons.

While the antitank weapons could be used to thwart IS' suicide bombing attacks by trucks, the weaponry could also be used to strike Turkish tanks in Syria. (Xinhua)

Macron Emphasizes EU by Naming Le Drian to French Foreign Ministry

PARIS - France's outgoing defense minister Jean-Yves Le Drian was appointed to head up a newly created Europe and Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, a move cementing Emmanuel Macron's campaign pledge to focus on giving the European Union a new impetus.

The 69-year-old Le Drian is a longstanding close friend of former Socialist President Francois Hollande, a rare popular minister in Hollande's deeply unpopular government and an experienced political

heavyweight by the standards of some of his new ministerial colleagues. He backed Macron early on, and had been tipped to retain the defense portfolio. The decision to put Sylvie Goulard, a European expert, into his old role instead, further emphasizes Macron's European push. Le Drian will also be supported on the Europe portfolio by junior minister Marielle De Sarnez, a centrist European expert who has been a member of the European parliament since 1999. (Reuters)

Macron Picks Pro-EU Conservative Le Maire as French Finance Chief

PARIS - Bruno Le Maire, named French economy minister on Wednesday, is a reform-minded conservative whose expertise on Europe and staunch defense of the Franco-German relationship will prove valuable as new President Emmanuel Macron pushes for closer EU integration.

Le Maire, a pro-European German-speaker, came second to ex-President Nicolas Sarkozy in the battle for the leadership of The Republicans (LR) party in 2014, and finished fifth in the party's presidential primaries last year. He became LR candidate Francois Fillon's inter-

national affairs spokesman, but resigned when the former prime minister was embroiled in a financial scandal this year. Le Maire has since distanced himself from his party, calling for the right to work constructively with Macron to ensure the president's five years in office succeeds and prevents the far-right making further electoral inroads.

"He is very thorough, knows his dossiers extremely well, and will be a big asset for European issues," said a French diplomat who has worked with him in the past. (Reuters)

McMaster Says OK for Trump to Share info with Russia

WASHINGTON - US National Security Advisor H.R. McMaster said on Tuesday that it was "wholly appropriate" for President Donald Trump to share classified information with Russian officials during their meeting in the Oval Office last week.

Trump decided to mention the information in the "context of the conversation" with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, McMaster told reporters in the White

House, calling it "wholly appropriate to that conversation" and "consistent with the routine sharing of information between the president and any leader with whom he's engaged."

During those conversations, Trump disclosed the city from which the intelligence was derived, McMaster confirmed.

However, McMaster did not make clear if the information was highly classified as the Washington Post reported one day ear-



lier. Earlier on Tuesday, Trump tweeted that he has "the absolute right" to share certain information with Russia. "As President I wanted to share

with Russia (at an openly scheduled W.H. meeting) which I have the absolute right to do, facts pertaining to terrorism and airline flight safety. (Xinhua)

UNSC Sees "Ample Possibility" to Use Sanctions Against DPRK

UNITED NATIONS - There is "ample possibility" for the UN Security Council (UNSC) to impose new sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in response to its missile launch, said council President Elbio Rosselli on Tuesday. He made the remarks after a closed-door meeting among the 15 council members on the issue of the DPRK. The meeting was convened two days after the DPRK test fired a ballistic missile. Rosselli, the Uruguayan ambassador to the United Nations, voiced absolute

rejection of the continued nuclear tests and missile launches conducted by the DPRK, adding the council will be working on ways to resolve the threat.

There is ample possibility for the council to use sanctions to respond to the current situation without closing other options "through creative, subtle and peaceful diplomacy," Rosselli said. He said the council emphasized the importance of maintaining peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia at large, while urging the DPRK to show sincere commitment to de-nu-



clearization immediately. He also called on all UN member states to honor their obligations under Security Council resolutions on sanctions on the DPRK. According to previous Se-

curity Council resolutions, the DPRK is banned from conducting any launches that use ballistic missile technology, nuclear tests or any other provocation. (Xinhua)

Political Tensions Escalating Between Germany and Turkey

BERLIN - Unfolding daily events are continuing to contribute to the rising tensions between Germany and Turkey, German newspaper Bild reported on Wednesday.

Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim gave Berlin an ultimatum to choose between alliance with Turkey and support for the rebels on Tuesday. German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel warned that if Turkey continues to "blackmail" Germany, a tolerance level will be eventually reached. Bild reports said that Germany has put in motion



concrete plans to start moving their military facility in Turkey to Jordan. German troops will inspect the Jordanian airbase Mufawak Salti on Wednesday to ascertain how quickly the move can occur.

The heated exchanges come in the wake of rising tensions between the two governments. Last week, Germany accepted asylum claims from former high-ranking Turkish generals, ... (More on P4)... (22)

IS Mining to Stop Families Fleeing as Iraqi Forces Advance

BAGHDAD - Islamic State militants are planting bombs near front doors in Mosul to prevent civilians leaving, a federal police commander and witnesses said on Wednesday, as Iraqi forces make their final push against the jihadists after seven months of fighting.

Trapped in a shrinking area of the city, the militants are increasingly using the several hundred thousand civilians under their control as human shields to avoid being targeted or perhaps tarnish what Iraqi leaders describe as imminent victory.

Backed by a U.S.-led coalition, Iraqi forces have made rapid gains since opening a new front in northwest Mosul this month and have now dislodged Islamic State from all but about 12 square km (5 square miles) of the city. (Reuters)

EC Sets out new Approach on Interoperability of Information

BRUSSELS - The European Commission (EC) on Tuesday set out a new approach to achieve the interoperability of European Union (EU) information systems for security, border and migration management by 2020.

According to the Commission, the latest report proposed the way to address structural shortcomings of the information systems for borders and security under three main areas. That is to maximize the utility of existing information systems, to developing complementary systems to close information gaps where necessary and to ensure interoperability between EU systems.

The report also put forward a new approach to the management of data, where all EU information systems for security, border and migration management are interoperable in full respect of data protection and fundamental rights.

The main features of the approach include European search portal, shared biometric matching service and common identity repository, said the Commission.

The Commission will discuss the new approach with the European Parliament and the Council in order to reach a common understanding on the way before the end of 2017.

Following the recent global cyber attack, the report stressed its commitment to accelerate work to review the 2013 EU cybersecurity strategy in order to provide an effective response to cyber threats. (Xinhua)

Germany Asks U.S. for Classified Briefing on Lockheed's F-35 Fighter

BERLIN - The German Air Force this month sent the U.S. military a written request for classified data on the Lockheed Martin Corp F-35 fighter jet as it gears up to replace its current fleet of fighter jets from 2025 to 2035.

The letter, sent by the Air Force's planning command and seen by Reuters, makes clear that the German government has not yet authorized a procurement program and is not committed to any particular aircraft to replace its current warplanes.

It said the defense ministry would carry out "an in-depth evaluation of market available solutions, including the F-35, later this year," ... (More on P4)... (23)

May Says will Continue to Share Intel with U.S.

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May said on Wednesday the government has confidence in its relationship with the United States, and will continue to share intelligence with Britain's most important defense and security ally. President Donald Trump has defended his decision to discuss intelligence with the Russians during a White House meeting last week, saying he had an "absolute right" to share "facts pertaining to terrorism and airline flight safety". "Decisions about what President Trump discusses with anybody that he has in the White House is a matter for President Trump," May told a news conference

when asked whether Trump's disclosure had made her reluctant to share intelligence with him. "We continue to work with the United States and continue to share intelligence with the United States as we do with others around the world because we are all working together to deal with the threats that we face."

The question came during a press briefing ahead of Britain's June 8 election, which polls show May is on course to win, and in which national security is seen as one of her political strengths. May is a former interior minister who spent six years in charge of the domestic security brief. (Reuters)

Nieghbor News

China, U.S. Enjoy Potential for Cooperation through Tech Innovation

HOUSTON - China and the United States are highly complementary with great potential for deepening cooperation in the field of technology innovation, government officials and entrepreneurs said here on Tuesday.

The 2nd U.S.-China Innovation and Investment Summit (UCIS) kicked off in Houston on Tuesday with the participation of senior officials and entrepreneurs from the two countries. Li Qiangmin, the Chinese consul general in Houston, said at the summit that innovation has become a new engine for the cooperation between China and the United States.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner said "we have about 18 billion dollars worth of business with China, and that is between the city of Houston and China on the annual basis. It is my hope that I am going to do everything I can to increase that relationship between the two." U.S.-China Innovation Alliance President Bernard Harris told Xinhua that the summit is important for the companies in the two countries. "I think everything is important in this conference, and it provides a platform where U.S. and Chinese companies can come together," he said. (Xinhua)

Iran's VP Withdraws from Presidential Race, Backs Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iran's first Vice President and presidential election candidate Eshaq Jahangiri announced on Tuesday to withdraw from the presidential race in order to back incumbent President Hassan Rouhani.

"I will use all my power to support Dr. Rouhani and to support his programs," Jahangiri said in a statement, according to the official IRNA news agency.

Jahangiri, the reformist hopeful, urged all his supporters to vote for Rouhani, said the report. He further expressed hope that Rouhani will win the election by a landslide so he could improve the country's

future. Concerns over "democracy, freedom, economy and the country's progress" will enable officials to overcome difficulties, he added.

On Monday, Tehran's conservative Mayor, Mohammad Baqer Qalibaf, also said that he withdrew from the presidential race to back another conservative candidate, Ebrahim Raisi.

On April 21, of the 1,636 registered candidates, six qualified, including three principalists, better known as conservatives, as well as two centrists and one reformist, to compete for the four-year presidential term. (Xinhua)

Pakistan a Highly Attractive Destination for Investment: Nawaz

HONGKONG - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has said that Pakistan is highly attractive destination for investment that no global player can afford to miss the opportunity.

While speaking at "One Belt-One Road Pakistan Investment Forum" in Hong Kong on Wednesday, the Prime Minister said Pakistan has the sixth largest population in the world, rising middle class, rich human and natural resources, a strategic location and political stability.

Nawaz Sharif urged prospective investors to benefit from economic revival of Pakistan and enjoy the first mover's advantage. He said Pakistan is ready to do business with the world.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan is a gateway to energy rich Central Asia,

oil rich Gulf and economically advanced Far East. It stands at the crossroads of an economic revolution which would produce a win win outcome for all involved.

The Prime Minister said nine Special Economic Zones are being established along CPEC route where foreign companies can invest in factories, warehouses, logistic centres and much more for consumption in Pakistani market and export.

He said the Government has devised a comprehensive plan to create an investment friendly environment. We have liberalized investment policies to welcome Foreign Direct Investment, offered incentives to attract new capital inflows including tax exemptions, tariff reductions and investment facilitation services. (Monitoring Desk)

Turkmenistan-Belarus Political Consultations Held in Ashgabat

ASHGABAT - The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan held political consultations with Foreign Ministry of Belarus. The consultations took place at the level of deputy foreign ministers. The delegation of the Belarusian side was led by First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Andrei Evdochenko. Noting the high dynamics of the political interstate dialogue, the parties discussed the current state of relations and exchanged views on the implementation of the provisions of the Program of Cooperation between the Foreign Ministries of the two countries.

Expressing satisfaction with the mutual support of international initiatives in various international organizations, the sides noted the need for further development of relations in this direction. It was also noted the parties' interest in the development of inter-parliamentary ties. Discussing the implementation of previously reached agreements and signed documents, the sides exchanged views and proposals on the development of a complex of bilateral relations in the political-diplomatic, trade-economic and cultural-humanitarian spheres. (AKI)