

Shanahan, Pompeo, Dunford to Brief US Congress on Iran Situation

TEHRAN - Both chambers of the US Congress are scheduled to be briefed amid the Trump administration's escalating of tensions with Iran. Top security officials — including acting Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Joseph Dunford — will appear before the House of Representatives and the Senate on Tuesday.

Some high-profile lawmakers and congressional leaders have already been briefed individually, such as Trump's ally, South Carolina Republican Senator Lindsey Graham, who has backed Trump's anti-Iran policy.

"It is clear that over the last several weeks Iran has at-



tacked pipelines and ships of other nations and created threat streams against American interests in Iraq," Graham said on Twitter. "If the Iranian threats against American personnel and interests are activated we must de-

liver an overwhelming military response... Stand firm Mr. President." Unless Trump bypasses the law, he would need backing from the Democratic-held House and Republican-held Senate to go to

war with Iran.

Trump earlier dismissed reports that he was trying to initiate negotiations with Iran in the wake of US withdrawal from the Iran nuclear deal, tightening sanctions against Tehran and even blacklisting the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC). Military confrontation with Tehran could also ruin the president's chances of reelection as he had promised his supporters to stay away from global conflicts as much as possible.

Iran can defend itself: Rep. Gallego While Congress war hawks trumpet prospects of war with Iran, the president's opponents accuse him of creating tensions in the word. ...*(More on P4)...(10)*

Brexit Shifts Politics in Ireland as Parties Look North

DUBLIN - When Britain voted to leave the European Union, few voters outside Northern Ireland thought about what it would mean for the British province. Three years on, Northern Ireland is inching closer to holding a referendum of its own -- on reunification with Ireland.

A united Ireland, and Northern Ireland's withdrawal from the United Kingdom, remain distant prospects, and a unity referendum may not happen soon.

But, as an unexpected consequence of Brexit, the political landscape is shifting.

The two largest parties in the Irish republic, Fine Gael and Fianna Fail, both of whom ultimately favor a united Ireland, have expanded their political networks north of the border to position themselves for a possible "unity vote". Fine Gael, Ireland's governing party, has also taken the unusual step of selecting one-time Northern Ireland ...*(More on P4)...(13)*

BRUSSELS - China and the European Union (EU) on Monday signed two agreements on civil aviation cooperation in Brussels.

The milestone deal meets a longtime aspiration of both sides to expand practical cooperation in this sector. European Commission (EC) President Jean-Claude Juncker said the agreements, "a first big step," "will create jobs, boost growth and bring our continents and peoples closer together."

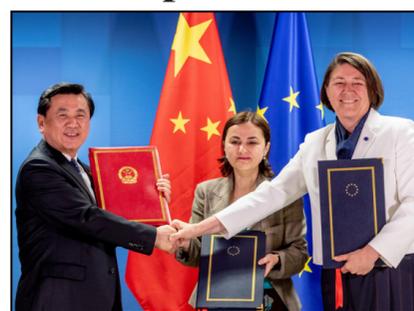
The move, which came

Milestone Deal on Civil Aviation to Enhance China-EU Cooperation

amid uncertainties worldwide furthered by U.S. unilateralism and trade protectionism, reaffirms the EU commitment to safeguarding openness, free trade and multilateralism while enriching the content of the China-EU comprehensive strategic partnership.

"In an increasingly unsettled world, Europe's partnership with China is more important than ever before," Juncker noted.

LANDMARK DEAL The deal is the first of its



kind ever reached in the 20 years of cooperation in the civil aviation sector between China and Europe.

The bilateral agreement

on civil aviation safety provides a legal framework for expanding cooperation in multiple aspects such as ...*(More on P4)...(11)*

Bomb-Carrying Drone from Yemen Rebels Targets Saudi Airport



DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Yemen's Iranian-allied Houthi rebels said Tuesday they attacked a Saudi airport and military base with a bomb-

laden drone, an assault acknowledged by the kingdom as Middle East tensions remain high between Tehran and the United States. There were no immedi-

ate reports of injuries or damage.

The attack on the Saudi city of Najran came after Iran announced it has quadrupled its uranium-enrichment production capacity, though still a level far lower than needed for atomic weapons, a year after the U.S. withdrew from its nuclear deal with world powers.

Underlining the tensions, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani is seeking expanded executive powers to better deal with "eco-

nomie war" triggered by the Trump's administration's renewal and escalation of sanctions targeting the Islamic Republic, the state-run IRNA news agency reported Tuesday.

By increasing production, Iran soon will exceed the stockpile limitations set by the nuclear accord. Tehran has set a July 7 deadline for Europe to set new terms for the deal, or it will enrich closer to weapons-grade levels in a Middle East ...*(More on P4)...(12)*

Spain: Jailed Catalans, Far Right Deputies in New Parliament

MADRID — A fragmented Spanish Parliament convened Tuesday after last month's inconclusive general election, including for the first time Catalan politicians released from pre-trial detention for the occasion, as well as two dozen lawmakers from an upstart far-right party.

Socialist leader Pedro Sánchez won the national election but fell short of enough seats to form a government on his own. He has put off negotiations on govern-

ing alliances until after the European ballot concludes on Sunday, which in Spain coincides with votes to elect local councils and a dozen regional governments.

Escorted by police, four separatists on trial for Catalonia's 2017 secession attempt, including former Catalan regional Vice President Oriol Junqueras, appeared in the Congress of Deputies, while former Catalan regional minister for international ...*(More on P4)...(14)*

Bangladesh Approves 24 Bln USD Development Program for Next Fiscal Year

DHAKA - Bangladesh Tuesday approved a 2.03 trillion taka (24 billion U.S. dollars) annual development program (ADP) in the next fiscal year 2019-20, beginning in July, with transport, power, physical infrastructure and education sectors getting the biggest chunk of money.

Bangladesh's new ADP was approved at a meeting of the country's National Economic Council with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina in the chair on Tuesday. Out of the total amount, around 35 percent of the fund will be mobilized from external resources and the rest from internal resources, Planning Minister MA Mannan told journalists after the meeting. (Xinhua)

Unexploded Shell Discovered at British Beach, Sparking Evacuation, Officials Say

LONDON - A popular British beach area was evacuated Monday after an unexploded shell was reportedly found just offshore from a lighthouse.

The device was discovered at Beachy Head in East Sussex, England. The area is known for the high chalk sea cliff that rises to 531 feet above sea level.

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency said on Twitter that coast guard officials are asking people to "keep a safe distance" after the unexploded shell was discovered Sunday. "A cordon is set up and EOD (Explosive Ordnance Disposal) team are on scene and planning a controlled explosion at low tide later this evening," the agency said. (Fox News)

Ex-Philippine Judge Says She Was Held at Hong Kong Airport

MANILA, Philippines — A former Philippine Supreme Court justice who once accused Chinese President Xi Jinping of crimes against humanity before the International Criminal Court says she was barred from entering Hong Kong for unspecified reasons.

Conchita Carpio-Morales says she was stopped by immigration authorities Tuesday and was held in a room at Hong Kong's airport for about four hours and ordered to take a flight back to



Manila. Carpio-Morales says authorities later told her she could proceed with her trip to Hong Kong but she and her family had already decided to return home. A Hong Kong immi-

gration official who spoke on condition of anonymity in order to speak about a specific immigration case says Carpio-Morales had been admitted to Hong Kong. (Fox News)

Bahrain Defends Decision to Host White House Mideast Meeting

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates — Bahrain is defending its decision to host a White House-engineered conference to address the Israeli-Palestinian crisis, saying its only objective is to support the "brotherly Palestinian people."

The Palestinian Authority has rejected the economic conference planned for next month, saying any peace push that ignores the Palestinian people's aspirations for an independent state is doomed to fail.

Bahrain's foreign minister, Sheikh Khalid bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, said his country supports the Palestinian demand for an independent state with east Jerusalem as its capital. He tweeted Tuesday that it also respects the Palestinian leadership's steadfast position safeguarding Palestinian rights. The Trump administration hopes to rally Arab Gulf countries to get Palestinians to buy into its Mideast peace plan, which has yet to be released. (Fox News)

Hong Kong Leader Presses on with Extradition Bill Undeterred by Critics

HONG KONG - Hong Kong's leader said on Tuesday that her administration was determined to push through an extradition bill that could see individuals sent back to mainland China for trial, despite mounting opposition locally and internationally.

The proposed legislation has stoked mass protests in the former British colony, which was promised a high degree of autonomy under a "one country, two systems" formula when it returned to Chinese rule in 1997.

On Monday, the government said it would bypass legislative procedure to expedite the passage of amendments to the Fugitive Offenders Ordinance, which the U.S. Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo, last week described as threatening the rule of law in Hong Kong. Opponents had disrupted a succession of legislative sessions meant to scrutinize the bill, with brawls breaking out in the legislative council.

"Valuable time for deliberation has been lost," Hong Kong's Chief Executive Carrie Lam told reporters.

"The most serious issue is that we couldn't see a way forward, how to break this deadlock other than to force me to scrap this bill, but this is unrealistic," she told reporters.

She said the bill would now be sent directly to the full legislature on June 12 for a second reading, to try to pass it before the legislature's summer recess. If the bill is passed, Hong Kong would allow, for the first time, ad hoc extradition ...*(More on P4)...(15)*

Neighbor News

Pakistan Appoints Mueenul Haq as New High Commissioner to India

ISLAMABAD Pakistan on Monday announced career diplomat Mueenul Haq as its new High Commissioner to India.

"New Delhi, India, is very important...After consultation, I have decided to appoint Mueenul Haq, the current ambassador in France, who will be sent to (New) Delhi, and I hope that he (Haq) will deliver," Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said in a video statement.

Haq was appointed after Sohail Mehmood left the High Commissioner's post to join as Pakistan's foreign secretary, reported Express Tribune.

Qureshi has expressed hope that Haq would perform his "new job with the best of his abilities."

Along with India, Pakistan has announced new ambassadors to several countries including China, Japan and Brussels. (Monitoring Desk)

Bolivia's President Censures US for Belligerent Anti-Iran Rhetoric

TEHRAN - Bolivian President Evo Morales has censured the United States for its aggressive rhetoric against Iran, saying Washington's recent military buildup in the region is an attempt to boost its military industry.

"We condemn US threatening Iran with war and destruction and its attempt to deploy troops in the Middle East. Imperialism always seeks to keep the military industry at work," Morales tweeted on Monday amid heightened tensions between Tehran and Washington.

His remarks followed an earlier tweet by US President Donald Trump, who warned that a fight with the United States would be "the official end of Iran."

Trump posted his threatening tweet after Sunday's rocket attack on the

Green Zone in the Iraqi capital, Baghdad, where administrative buildings and foreign missions, including the US Embassy, are located.

No one has claimed responsibility for the attack, which came in the wake of back-to-back sudden decisions taken by the US recently, including the withdrawal of its "non-emergency" staff from Iraq. Although the apparent Katyusha attack hurt no one and its target was not specified, Trump was quick to point the finger at Iran.

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif was quick to respond to Trump's latest hostile rhetoric, warning the US president to avoid threatening Iranians and advising him to try respect as the only reasonable way to approach the Iranian nation. (Press TV)

President of Turkmenistan: Construction of TAPI Swiftly Underway

ASHGABAT - The construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline is swiftly underway, Trend reports referring to the appeal of President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov to the participants of the international gas congress opened today in Awaza.

"The implementation of the largest pipeline construction project will have a positive impact on strengthening the economies of all states in the region," the head of state said.

Turkmenistan currently exports natural fuel to China and Russia. The scale of the ongoing work on the phased development of the

Galkynysh gas field was also noted in the message.

Excellent conditions have been formed in the country for attracting investments in this area, and a favorable investment climate has been created, Berdimuhamedov stressed.

"Strengthening cooperation with foreign countries in the oil and gas industry, Turkmenistan takes the most active part in resolving these issues, and so will it remain in the future," the statement reads. Turkmenistan with its natural gas reserves holds one of the leading places in the world and ranks second in the CIS after Russia. Galkynysh gas field is one of the biggest fields in the world. (Trend)

Minister of Health of Uzbekistan Elected Vice-President of World Health Assembly

TASHKENT - Minister of Health of Uzbekistan Alisher Shadmanov has been elected Vice-President of the World Health Assembly (WHA) from the European Region of the World Health Organization (WHO) on May 20, Trend reports with reference to the press service of Uzbek Foreign Ministry.

This testifies to the recognition of large-scale reforms carried out in Uzbekistan and aimed at preserving and further improving the system of public health, creating conditions for raising a healthy generation and developing preventive medicine.

The World Health Assembly is the highest

body of WHO. Its main functions are to determine the directions of WHO activity, select the Director General of the organization, and approve and control the budget. The President of the Assembly and his five deputies are elected one from each WHO region and alternately preside over the plenary sessions of the WHA. About 3,000 delegates from more than 190 countries including about 150 ministers of health and high ranking representatives of leading international organizations, large corporations, international foundations and academia are taking part in this session of WHA. (Trend)