

Iran and IS are Major "Threats" to Middle East: Trump

JERUSALEM - Speaking in an address to the press in Jerusalem on Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump said Iran is a "threat" to the region and must stop training "terror group."

In statements following a working meeting with Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, Trump noted Iran and the Islamic State (IS) as the major threats to the Middle East.

He called on to strengthen the longtime partnership between Israel and the United States to struggle Iran and the IS.

"This moment in history calls for us to strengthen our cooperation as both Israel and America face threats like IS and other terror groups and countries like Iran, which sponsors terror and foments violence not only here



but all over the world," he said. He staged a firm stance, saying the U.S. and Israel should unanimously declare that "Iran can never be allowed to possess a nuclear weapon, not ever, ever, and must cease its training and funding of terror groups and militias, and must cease immediately."

Shiite armed groups, reportedly backed by Iran, are fighting along President Bashar Assad's army against rebels Syria. Trump, who arrived in Israel after visiting Saudi Arabia over the weekend, said that the stand against Iran is a common interest of Israel and major parts of the Arab world. "(This is) deep consensus in the world, including the Muslim world." (Xinhua)

EU Nations Set tough Negotiating Mandate for Brexit Talks

BRUSSELS - The 27 European Union nations handling Britain's exit from the bloc set a tough negotiating mandate for the talks, the EU's chief negotiator said Monday, stressing that the discussions would be tension-filled. The talks will quickly center on the tens of billions in costs London would be expected to pay for the divorce. EU ministers built on the strong stance which was reached unanimously at an EU summit last month, and further tightened the legal wording in

the mandate for Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier. The 27 ministers said in a statement Britain "must honor its share of all the obligations undertaken while being a member" and also "fully cover the specific costs related to the withdrawal, such as the relocation of EU agencies currently based in the U.K." The cost estimates for Britain have gone as high as 100 billion euros (\$111.8 billion) for the withdrawal, a sum which British government officials have ridiculed, with British Foreign



Secretary Boris Johnson going as far as to venture that the EU should pay Britain instead for its departure. Monday's explicit

language on the payments Britain should make even included "a schedule of payments" from London. (AP)

Outgoing WHO Chief Says World 'Better Prepared' for Health Crises

GENEVA - The World Health Organization's outgoing chief Margaret Chan defended her legacy Monday, insisting the world had become better prepared to face health emergencies like Ebola on her watch. In her final address to WHO's member states, Chan acknowledged that mistakes had been made during her decade at the helm, but stressed that while "we falter sometimes, ... we never give up." "The world is better prepared, but not nearly well enough," she told

the some 4,000 delegates gathered from WHO's 194 member countries for its annual assembly in Geneva. Chan, whose successor will be elected Tuesday, presented a range of achievements she insisted dispelled "the frequent criticism that WHO has lost its relevance". She had reason to be on the defensive: During her tenure, WHO faced crushing criticism for its handling of several health emergencies, but none more than the west Africa. (AFP)

May Climbs down on 'Dementia Tax' Plans after Poll Lead Halves

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May made a public climbdown on Monday over plans to force elderly people to pay more for their social care, after her governing Conservative Party's opinion poll lead halved in the run-up to a national election. In her biggest misstep of the campaign to date, May set out plans last week to transfer a greater share of the cost of care for the elderly from taxpayers to recipients who can afford to fund it themselves. That raised concerns some

might see their houses sold off after their deaths to pay for care received, rather than passed on to their descendants. May's opponents dubbed it a "dementia tax", saying it will particularly hit those who need long-term care at home. "We will make sure nobody has to sell their family home to pay for care. We will make sure there's an absolute limit on what people need to pay ... so you will always have something to pass on to your family," May said on Monday. (Reuters)

EU Chief Negotiator Barnier given Greenlight to Start Brexit Talks

BRUSSELS - European Union (EU) Chief Negotiator for Brexit Michel Barnier on Monday was given greenlight to kick off Brexit talks. "We have a mandate supported by all EU 27 countries," Barnier proclaimed at a press conference following EU's General Affairs Council which adopted unanimously a decision authorizing Brexit negotiations. The Council also adopted the first set of negotiating directives tackling three main areas - safeguarding the status and rights of

citizens, reaching an agreement on the principles of the financial settlement of the UK's obligations as an EU member, and providing for the new external borders of the EU. Hailing the Council's decision as "a milestone", Barnier said: "We are ready to sit down at the negotiating table with the UK. Our objective is to rapidly reach an agreement on the issues put forward by the Council today." The European Commission on May 3 sent its recommendations to the Council 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 April 29, when 27 remaining members of the EU

unanimously adopted the two-phase guidelines for Brexit talks. The Brexit talks is believed to kick off after Britain's snap election on June 8. (Xinhua)

Macron, Putin to Meet in Versailles Next Week

PARIS - French President Emmanuel Macron will host President Vladimir Putin in Versailles next Monday, their first meeting after Macron pledged during his election campaign to deal firmly with Russia while also seeking to work with Putin against the Islamic State group. The French presidential Elysee Palace announced that Macron will meet Putin at the Grand Trianon, part of the sumptuous estate of the Palace of Versailles, for an exhibition about Russian emperor Peter the Great.

The exhibition, organized with the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia, marks 300 years of diplomatic relations between France and Russia. (AP)

Turkey Says Summons U.S. Envoy over Washington Street Brawl

ANKARA - Turkey summoned the U.S. ambassador to Ankara on Monday to protest the treatment of Turkish security officials in the United States during a visit by President Tayyip Erdogan last week, the foreign ministry said. During Erdogan's visit to Washington to meet U.S. President Donald Trump, a brawl erupted between protesters and Turkish security personnel outside the Turkish ambassador's residence.

Turkey blamed the violence on demonstrators linked to the militant Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), while Washington's police chief described the incident as a "brutal attack" on peaceful protesters. The Turkish foreign ministry said it summoned the U.S. ambassador to protest "aggressive and unprofessional actions" by U.S. security personnel to the security team of Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. (Reuters)

Macron, Gentiloni Eye better Eurozone Integration to Overcome Migratory, Economic Challenges

PARIS - French President Emmanuel Macron and visiting Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni vowed to boost integration of the European bloc to tackle immigration crisis and bridge gaps among the economies of the single-currency zone. After a working dinner at the Elysee Palace on Sunday, Macron called for deeper European integration to handle flows of migrants that flooded European states, especially Italy and Greece.

"We did not quite hear the warnings that Italy

sent us. I want us to address a real reform of the right of asylum and of our current regulations to better protect those countries most subject to this migratory pressure," he said. In a long-term, Macron expects to draw up a road-map aimed to better improve integration among European member countries via "the creation of a common budgetary capacity, a real Europe and a real euro area of investment that will reduce the divergence among our economies, which has created financial tensions."

"France wishes to work very closely with Italy, Germany, with all the countries that share our values and wants to move forward in this direction to a real revival of our European perspectives," he said. Macron and Gentiloni will meet again on May 26-27 at the Group of Seven (G7) Summit in Taormina, Sicily, Italy, where leaders of the seven richest states will gather to discuss climate, international security, migration and international trade. (Xinhua)

US-Islamic Summit in Riyadh Ends, with new Center for Combatting Extremism Launched

RIYADH - The Arab Islamic American summit concluded on Sunday in Riyadh, highlighting the readiness to form counterterrorism force of 34,000 soldiers and a Middle East coalition by next year, Al Arabiya local news reported on Sunday. The summit was attended by U.S. President Donald Trump and leaders of 55 Islamic countries. The summit launched a global counterterrorism center in Riyadh, which aims to monitor and combat extremism. Riyadh hosted on Saturday and Sunday

three summits during Trump's visit to Saudi Arabia, which is his first overseas trip since his election as president. Saudi Foreign Minister, Adel al-Jubeir, said that Saudi Arabia wants to send a message to the West that the Islamic world is "not an enemy," adding the Riyadh comes second after the United States in the fight against Islamic State (IS) militant group. He added: "The efforts will be an effective partnership between the Islamic world and the West to combat terrorism." (Xinhua)

UN Envoy Eyes new Syria Peace Talks in June

United Nations - Despite little progress in the latest round of Syrian peace talks, negotiations are set to resume in June, the UN envoy said Monday.

Staffan de Mistura told the Security Council that "important gaps remain between the parties on major issues" following the sixth round in Geneva held last week.

The Syrian government and the opposition took part in four days of indirect talks aimed at ending the war that has killed more than 320,000 people since 2011.

De Mistura said all sides were ready to return to the table for a new round of talks "which we intend to target sometime in June."

The envoy said the talks are to lay the groundwork for "a real negotiation" and expressed hope that this "will be possible before too long."

Hopes for a breakthrough were dim when the negotiations opened last week, with the fate of President Bashar al-Assad still a major stumbling block.

The opposition insists that Assad must leave power as part of any peace deal but the government has rejected the demand.

A series of expert-level talks will take place to pursue discussion on a range of issues including the thorny matter of a new constitution, but the UN envoy stressed that these would not be decision-making meetings. "We are not seeking to draft a new Syrian constitution in Geneva," said De Mistura. "We are laying foundations for the time when the Syrians can do that." (AFP)

Nieghbor News

China, Russia to Jointly Build Wide-Body Passenger Jets

SHANGHAI - China and Russia Monday set up a joint venture to build wide-body passenger jets in the latest attempt to break into the lucrative market longtime dominated by Boeing and Airbus.

The Shanghai-based China-Russia Commercial Aircraft International Co., Ltd (CRAIC) has completed its business registration and obtained a license to operate, its Chinese parent, state-owned Commercial Aircraft Corporation of China (COMAC), said.

COMAC Chairman Jin Zhuanglong said the joint venture marks key progress in a Sino-Russian program to develop wide-body aircraft and aims to produce

"competitive" long-haul planes for the world's aviation market.

CRAIC will be responsible for research, manufacturing, marketing, sales and services of its aircraft. According to an agreement by COMAC and its Russian partner United Aircraft Corp (UAC), 280-seat jets with a range of 12,000 kilometers will be prioritized. The aircraft design process will soon begin, according to the plan. The general assembly line will be based in Shanghai.

An eight-member strong board of directors, half from China and half from Russia, will be headed by UAC Vice President Vladislav Masalov. (Xinhua)

Iran Vows Continued Support to Iraq, Syria in Fight Against Terrorism

TEHRAN - Iran's recently re-elected President Hassan Rouhani said on Monday that Iran will continue to support the Syrian and Iraqi governments in their fight against terrorism. Rouhani conveyed the message that as in recent years Iran has supported the Syrian and Iraqi governments through diplomatic efforts and military advisors, it will maintain this policy in the future.

Iraqis and Syrians have together fought the

so-called Islamic State group with Iran's support, Rouhani said, adding that without Iran no regional security and stability is foreseeable. Furthermore, he dismissed the labeling of Lebanon's Hezbollah Shiite group as "terrorists."

Rouhani added that Hezbollah is a respected and trusted group among Lebanese people and accusing Hezbollah of being terrorists will not help solve the terrorism problem. (Xinhua)

Sharif in Riyadh to Attend US-Arab-Islamic Summit

RIYADH - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Sunday arrived in Saudi Arabia for a three-day visit to participate in the first-ever Arab-Islamic-American Summit, being held in Riyadh.

Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz invited Prime Minister Nawaz for the summit. The invitation was delivered by Saudi Information Minister Awwad bin Saleh al-Awwad, who visited Islamabad last week.

The prime minister, upon arrival at the King Salman airbase, was received by Governor of Riyadh Prince Faisal Bin Bandar Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saud and senior of-

ficials. The premier is accompanied by his Adviser on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz, First Lady Begum Kulsoom Nawaz, his son Hussain Nawaz and Advocate Akram Sheikh.

In addition to King Salman and US President Donald Trump, 55 heads of state and governments from the Muslim world have been invited to participate in the summit. The prime minister will also join the world leaders to attend the inauguration ceremony of the World Centre against Extremism, an important counter-radicalisation initiative by Saudi Arabia. (Monitoring Desk)

Turkmenistan Sums up Results of May 21 Elections

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan sums up the results of the elections to the country's parliament instead of early retired members and to the local authorities in connection with changes in the administrative and territorial structure of regions. Results of the voting will be made public soon, says a message from the country's Central Election Commission.

According to the Commission, all polling stations were simultaneously opened on the territory of constituencies in time. Twenty-one of them were opened in Ashgabat, 40 - in Ahal, 11 - in Balkan, 59 - in Dashoguz, 31 - in Lebap and 93 - in Mary provinces. In total, 175,521 voters were registered by constituencies to elect members of local authorities. (Trend)

Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan to Delevop Fields in Caspian Sea

DUSHANBEH - Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan will develop fields in the Caspian Sea.

The national holding company "Uzbekneftegaz" and the state concern "Turkmennebit" signed a memorandum of understanding as a result of the talks of Presidents of the two countries in Turkmenistan's Avaza, Gazeta.uz reports.

The Office of the Uzbek President said the document proposes establishment of a mutual and long-term cooperation on a joint exploration and development of the fields in the Caspian shelf of Turkmenistan. The two countries plan to extract hydrocarbon raw materials on the terms of the production sharing agreement. (AKI)