

Pope Asks Trump to be Peacemaker, Gives him Environmental Letter

VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis urged U.S. President Donald Trump to be a peacemaker at their highly anticipated first meeting on Wednesday, and Trump promised he would not forget the pontiff's message.

Under clear blue skies, Trump, who exchanged sharp words with the pope during the U.S. election campaign last year, received a tribute from the Swiss Guard in a Vatican courtyard when he arrived. He entered a small elevator taking him to the third floor of the Apostolic Palace and, after a long ceremonial walk past frescoed corridors, shook the pope's hand at the entrance to the private study, which the frugal pontiff uses only for of-



ficial occasions.

Before the door of the wood-lined elevator closed, a Vatican protocol official was heard quipping to the president that it was not "like Trump Tower in New York".

Francis smiled faintly as he greeted Trump outside the study and was not as outgoing as he sometimes is with visiting heads of state. Trump, seeming subdued, said "it is a great honor".

Even when the two were sitting at the pope's desk in the presence of photographers and reporters, the pope avoided the small talk that usually occurs before the media is ushered out. The two talked privately for about 30 minutes with translators. (Reuters)

Germany Hopes G7 Summit can Help Convince U.S. on Climate

BERLIN - Germany is hoping that a G7 summit in Italy this week can play a role in convincing the United States to remain in the Paris climate agreement, a senior German official said on Wednesday. The official, briefing reporters in Berlin before the summit, said Germany planned to put climate on the agenda of the G20 summit it will host in Hamburg in early July, suggesting that might also help sway U.S. President Donald Trump.

"If the G7 can make a contribution then that is important," the official said when asked about how other G7 countries might try to convince Trump on the climate issue.

"A lot can happen in five weeks," the official said, pointing to the G20 summit. "(Climate) will also be on the agenda there. I think one needs to look at



this as a process."

The official said the aim was to include conten-

tious issues like trade and climate in the G7 communique. (Reuters)

Trump Says Meeting with Pope was "Honor"

VATICAN CITY - President Donald Trump says meeting with Pope Francis was the "honor of a lifetime."

Trump tweeted Wednesday that a private meeting with the pontiff at the Vatican leaves him "more determined than ever to pursue PEACE in our world."

Trump met with Francis Wednesday for a half hour. The president and pope have a contentious history, but appeared on good terms after their conversation.

Trump will soon be leav-

ing Rome, en route to Brussels for meetings with NATO leaders.

The president has spent the week traveling to holy Muslim, Jewish and Christian sites during his first official trip abroad.

The European Union is hoping that Thursday's talks with U.S. President Donald Trump will stress continuity in their relations after the early months of his administration increased fears that the trans-Atlantic friendship was on the wane. (AP)

German Parliament Group Scraps Turkey Trip at Last Minute

BERLIN - A delegation of German lawmakers scrapped plans to visit Turkey after being told at the last minute that it wouldn't be able to hold talks with officials or visit the Turkish parliament building, a deputy parliament speaker said Wednesday.

The cancellation adds to a growing list of issues straining German-Turkish relations, and comes on top of Turkey's refusal to allow another group of lawmakers to visit German troops stationed at a Turkish airbase as part of

the campaign against the Islamic State group. Deputy speaker Claudia Roth, a member of the opposition Greens, was to head a four-member delegation from three parties on a May 25-28 visit to Ankara, Diyarbakir and Istanbul for meetings with officials, government and opposition lawmakers and non-government groups. The group included the head of the German parliament's human rights committee. "Yesterday we received the information... (More on P4)... (25)

New WHO Head Seeks U.S. Bipartisan Support for Global Health

GENEVA - The new head of the World Health Organization (WHO) voiced hope on Wednesday that bipartisan support would prevail in the U.S. Congress to fund global health initiatives, despite deep budget cuts proposed by the Trump administration. But Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, a former Ethiopian health and foreign minister elected as the first African WHO director-general on Tuesday, also said the United Nations agency would be seeking new donors.

U.S. President Donald

Trump proposed cuts on Tuesday of about 32 percent from U.S. diplomacy and aid budgets, or nearly \$19 billion. His fellow Republicans in Congress assailed his plan, making it unlikely the cutbacks will take effect.

Tedros, asked about the proposed cuts to U.S. and multilateral aid agencies, told a news conference that donors should not suddenly pull out of existing programmes.

"I am a strong believer that there should be an exit strategy, that means a gradual exit that avoids



any shocks," he said. "When there are finance cuts like this, the most affected are the poor."

But he added: "I don't take it as a closed issue, and I will continue to engage and use that bipartisan po-

sition that I have already experienced while working as minister of health in my own country, but also when I was chairing the Global Fund (to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria)." (Reuters)

With Threat 'Very High', France Set to Extend State of Emergency

PARIS - President Emmanuel Macron wants a sixth extension of France's state of emergency since the Paris attacks of November 2015, his prime minister said Wednesday, adding that the terror threat "remains very high".

The new president, elected on May 7, also wants legislation to boost the powers of the security forces, Edouard Philippe said, two days after the Manchester concert suicide bombing that claimed 22 lives.

"France and the United Kingdom are fighting the same enemy," Philippe said after a meeting of his defence council. "The terrorist threat remains, in Europe, in our two countries, at a very high level." Macron is seeking a new extension of the state of emergency, ... (More on P4)... (26)

NATO must 'Step up' after Manchester Attack: Stoltenberg

BRUSSELS - NATO head Jens Stoltenberg said on Wednesday that the Manchester bombing shows the alliance must agree at a summit with US President Donald Trump to do more to combat terrorism.

Terrorism will be top of the agenda at Thursday's meeting in Brussels which comes amid sharp divisions over joining the US-led coalition against the Islamic State group. "I expect NATO allies to step up and agree to do more in the fight against terrorism, not least because of the attack we saw in Manchester," Stoltenberg told a news conference on the eve of the summit. Trump arrives in Brussels later Wednesday having said NATO was "obsolete" because it did not focus on ... (More on P4)... (29)

Macron Ally Faces Nepotism Allegations, Amid Cleanup

PARIS - French President Emmanuel Macron's effort to clean up politics has suffered its first blow, with a newspaper report suggesting a dubious property deal by one of his ministers. Social Cohesion Minister Richard Ferrand denies wrongdoing.

Investigative paper Le Canard Enchaîné reported Wednesday that in 2011, an insurance company then run by Ferrand struck a rental deal with a company owned by Ferrand's romantic partner for 42,000 euros (\$47,000) a year. The paper also says Ferrand hired his son as a parlia-



mentary aide for a gross salary of 8,704 euros for a "few months."

Ferrand's office said in a statement that he did nothing illegal.

Macron wants a new law on the "moralization" of politics that could forbid

politicians from hiring family members. Corruption scandals stained previous administrations. Government spokesman Christophe Castaner said the minister's honesty is not in question, given the ... (More on P4)... (27)

UK Deploys 1,000 Soldiers to Protect Key Sites after Bombing

MANCHESTER, England - British security forces arrested three more suspects Wednesday in connection with the Manchester concert bombing and sent hundreds of soldiers to secure key sites across the country, including Buckingham Palace and the British Parliament at Westminster. Home Secretary Amber Rudd said the bomber, identified as British-born Libyan Salman Abedi, "likely" did not act alone when he killed 22 people and wounded dozens at an Ariana Grande concert Monday night in Manchester.

She said he had been known to security forces "up to a point." Many at the concert

were young girls and teens enthralled by Grande's pop power. The youngest victim of the bombing named so far was just 8 years old.

Officials are examining Abedi's trips to Libya and possibly Syria as they piece together his allegiances and try to foil any new potential threats. The government said nearly 1,000 soldiers were deployed Wednesday instead of police in high-profile sites in London and other locations. Police said three men were arrested Wednesday in south Manchester, where a day earlier a 23-year-old man was also arrested and a ... (More on P4)... (30)

ASEAN, Dialogue Partners Discuss Cooperation in Clearing Mines

VIENTIANE - Experts from member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and their dialogue partners on Tuesday were discussing plans on clearing mines in the region over the next three years.

The experts met for the Expert Working Group on Humanitarian Mine Action (HMA EWG) under the fifth ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting-Plus (ADMM Plus).

During the two-day meeting which is co-chaired by Laos and Russia, the experts will exchange lessons and best practices on humanitarian mine action, reported Lao state-run media Vientiane Times. They will seek development of appropriate mechanisms for cooperation among defense forces of the ADMM Plus countries and for the coordination of military and civilian groups in overcoming explosive remains from war. In his opening remarks at the meeting on Tuesday, Permanent Secretary of Defense Khamsy Vongkhamso said unexploded ordnance of war still posed a threat to human security in the region and around the world.

He said explosive remains had not only caused the loss of lives and property but disturbed the process of the country's socio-economic development as well as efforts to eradicate poverty, urging countries to join forces in addressing the issue.

"This non-traditional threat has also become a threat to peace and stability within our region, ... (More on P4)... (28)

Nieghbor News

China Says no one should Bring Chaos to Korean Peninsula

BEIJING - China said on Wednesday no one had the right to bring chaos to the Korean peninsula, a day after it pushed for full implementation of U.N. sanctions against neighboring North Korea for its missile and nuclear tests and called for dialogue.

The United States has been trying to persuade China, North Korea's lone major ally, to do more to rein in Pyongyang, which has conducted dozens of missile launches and tested two nuclear bombs since the start of last year, in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions.

The North has proudly publicized its plans to develop a missile capable of striking the United States

and has ignored calls to halt its weapons programs, even from China. It says the program is necessary to counter U.S. aggression. Its last missile test was on Sunday.

"No matter which party it is, no one has the right to bring war and chaos upon the peninsula," Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi told reporters after meeting German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel.

He said anyone who did that would bear "historical responsibility".

U.S. President Donald Trump has said "a major, major conflict" with North Korea is possible and that all options are on the table, but that he wants to resolve the crisis diplomatically. (Reuters)

Sharif Returns Home after Saudi Arabia Visit

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif has left for home after a three-day visit to Saudi Arabia.

He was seen off by Governor Madina Prince Faisal bin Salman bin Abdul Aziz at Prince Muhammad bin Abdul Aziz International Airport Madina. In his interaction with the governor, Nawaz said that relations between Pakistan and Saudi Arabia are time tested and they have grown with the passage of time.

He said that we highly value our relations with the Kingdom. He said that Pakistan wants to take its relations with Saudi Arabia to new heights.

The governor said that his country highly regards the friendship with Pakistan. It is a brotherly country with religious background.

The governor also appreciated Pakistan's role in fight against terrorism. During his stay in Medina, the prime minister also paid respect at Masjid Nabvi. He offered Nawaf al Riazul Jannah and prayed for the progress and prosperity of Pakistan and the entire Muslim Ummah.

Earlier in Riyadh, the prime minister on the special invitation of Saudi King also attended US-Arab-Islamic Summit. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran, Russia Discuss Cooperation against Terrorism

TEHRAN - Iranian and Russian top security officials in a recent meeting in Moscow highlighted their firm determination to work together closely in combating terrorism.

In a meeting between visiting Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council Ali Shamkhani and Secretary of the Security Council of the Russian Federation Nikolai Platonovich Patrushev in Moscow on Tuesday, the two sides discussed mutual cooperation in fighting terrorism and promoting security in the Middle East.

In the meeting, the two sides reviewed the current trend of Tehran-Moscow cooperation in fighting terrorism and

extremism as well as the need to continue mutual consultations and exchanging views between the security, political and military apparatuses of the two countries in order to reinforce the campaign against terrorism in Syria, Iraq and other areas in the region gripped by security crises.

During the talks, Shamkhani elaborated on the new military and security situation associated with the Syria crisis as well as the destructive consequences of illegal military intervention by some countries which has further complicated the current situation and strengthened the Takfiri terrorism front. (Agencies)

Turkmenistan might Join OPEC Oil Output Cuts: Kuwait

ASHGABAT - Saudi Arabia's oil minister has spoken to countries including Norway, Turkmenistan and Egypt which have signaled a willingness to join oil output cuts, Kuwait's oil minister said.

"He has talked to several countries including Norway, including Turkmenistan, including Egypt, and they have made signs of their willingness to join the collaboration," Kuwait's oil minister Essam al-Marzouq said, referring to his Saudi counterpart Khalid al-Falih, Reuters reported.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries meets in Vienna on Thursday to consider whether to prolong the deal reached in December in which OPEC and 11 non-mem-

bers, including Russia, agreed to cut output by about 1.8 million barrels per day (bpd) in the first half of 2017. The decision pushed prices back above \$50 per barrel, giving a fiscal boost to major oil producers. But it also spurred growth in the U.S. shale industry, which is not participating in the output deal, thus slowing the market's rebalancing. Oil prices fell 1 percent on Tuesday after U.S. President Donald Trump proposed to sell half of the United States' Strategic Petroleum Reserve (SPR) in the next 10 years as well as to speed up Alaskan exploration. The SPR sales would not start until October 2018 and would amount to just 95,000 bpd, or 1 percent of current U.S. output. (AKI)