

US Security Officials in Israel to Discuss Syria Agreement

JERUSALEM - Officials with the U.S. National Security Council arrived in Israel on Tuesday to discuss with their Israeli counterparts the recent U.S.-Russian truce agreement for Syria, officials and media said.

The delegation includes officials from other U.S. security agencies, and the meetings will be attended also by senior Israeli security officials, a U.S. official confirmed.

The Hebrew-language Ha'aretz newspaper reported that the American officials are expected to update the Israelis on the joint U.S.-Russian efforts to achieve a truce in Syria and what would be Iran's status in the war-torn country.



On Saturday, Russia and the U.S. announced a preliminary agreement on the terms of a ceasefire in southern Syria.

The agreement affirms a call for "the reduction and ultimate elimination" of foreign fighters from southern Syria, including Iran and its proxies, according to a report in the Times of Israel.

However, Israel, which has been lobbying Russia and the U.S. against the establishment of permanent Iranian bases in Syria, accepted the deal with worries. On Monday, Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he had informed the U.S. and Russia that Israel will continue to carry out military attacks in Syria. (Xinhua)

Macron Vows "General Mobilization" for Better Life in Marginalized Districts

PARIS - French President Emmanuel Macron on Tuesday unveiled "a plan of general mobilization" for better life in marginalized districts in the country.

Improvement of public services, including health, education and housing in addition to incentives to encourage recruitment of poor skilled jobseekers in sensitive cities are the pillar measures in the social plan unveiled during his visit on Tuesday Tourcoing, one of the

poorest cities in northern France.

The plan of "general mobilization", according to Macron, aimed at "bringing back the common law in the districts so that everyone has access to the same services...and restore this minimal base which has sometimes been forgotten."

"Those who live in the poorest cities are children of the Republic, they have the same success as others," Macron added. (Xinhua)

Erdogan Again Visits Qatar for Cooperation, Regional Issues

DOHA - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan arrived here on Tuesday evening for the second official visit since the gulf crisis began, Qatar News Agency (QNA) reported on Wednesday. The Emir of Qatar Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, and the Turkish president, held the meeting of the third session of the Qatar-Turkey Supreme Strategic Committee.

During the meeting, the two leaders discussed the bilateral cooperation, in addition to reviewing the

latest developments in the region, especially the gulf crisis.

The two sides signed 14 agreements and memorandums of understanding (MoUs), making a total of 40 deals in the fields like defence, investment, and economy.

Meanwhile, Qatar, Turkey and Iran officials agreed to launch the Qatar-Turkey route through



Iran in a move to boost trade between the two countries.

Doha is the last stop in Erdogan's three-day visit

which began in Russia, then Kuwait. The president is accompanied by a high-level delegation. (Xinhua)

European Parliament Legalizes "Market Distortion Approach" in New Anti-Dumping Law



BRUSSELS - As a crucial step to update European Union's (EU) protectionism arsenal, the European Parliament gave green lights on Wednesday in its plenary session to

amendments on its regulation for anti-dumping and anti-subsidized imports from countries outside the union. The core of the amendments is using the "sub-

stantial market distortions," which is stated neither in the anti-dumping nor the anti-subsidy rules of the World Trade Organization (WTO), as a replacement of the "surrogate country approach". The amendment came against a backdrop of the expiry in December 2016 of the Article 15 of the Protocol on China's accession to the WTO, which allowed the EU to regard China as a Non-Market Economy and use the "surrogate country approach" in its anti-dumping investigations against

China. In accordance with Article 15 of the accession protocol signed when China joined the WTO in 2001, the "surrogate country" approach expired on Dec. 11, 2016. Some Chinese analysts believe that by adopting the "market distortion" scheme, the EU is trying to kill three birds with one stone: safeguard its reputation as free trader, fulfill obligations endowed by Article 15 while keeping its trump card—the surrogate country approach. (Xinhua)

Moscow to Retaliate U.S. Move Against Russian Media

MOSCOW - Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said here on Tuesday his government will take retaliatory measures if Russia's international news network RT America is forced to register as a foreign agent in the United States. "If we talk about tit-for-tat (measures), it means adequate...The president has said that our reaction will be quick and mirror-like," the minister said. On Monday, RT America registered as a foreign agent in the U.S. at the demand of the U.S. Department of Justice. Lavrov said it will take a short period of time before

Moscow takes action. The State Duma, Russia's lower house of parliament, is scheduled on Wednesday to conduct the second and the third readings of an amendment to the Russian legislation that will "make it possible to recognize foreign media as performing the function of a foreign agent," Deputy Chairman of the State Duma Ivan Melnikov said Tuesday. State Duma's Deputy Speaker Pyotr Tolstoy also said the draft bill is set to be approved by the Duma and submitted to the Federation Council, the upper house of parliament, for approval. (Xinhua)

Key EU Lawmaker Warns UK it Must Act to Unblock Brexit Talks

LONDON - A leading member of the European Parliament is meeting Prime Minister Theresa May on Wednesday, and warned that Britain needs to do more to settle the terms of its divorce from the European Union or risk negotiations being delayed even further.

Manfred Weber is due to meet May at 10 Downing St. In a video message he said Britain needs to resolve issues including its outstanding financial commitments, because "when somebody is leaving a club" they must pay their bills. EU leaders say lack of progress on divorce terms is preventing talks from moving on to future relations and trade. They are due to decide next month whether there has been sufficient progress to move on. Weber, who heads the center-right EPP group in the European Parliament, said Tuesday that at the moment "it doesn't look as if we are going to be entering into the second phase" next month.

The European Union (Withdrawal) Bill is designed to prevent a legal vacuum by converting some 12,000 EU laws into British statute on the day the U.K. leaves the bloc in March 2019.

But many lawmakers claim the bill gives the government too much power to amend legislation without parliamentary scrutiny.

And opponents of Brexit - both from the opposition and from May's Conservative Party - are trying to amend it to soften the terms of Britain's exit from the bloc.

Debate in the House of Commons has turned testy, with Brexit-backing Conservatives accusing their pro-European party colleagues of trying to stop Britain from leaving the EU. (AP)

China, EU Need "Greater Wisdom" for Old Problems: Chinese Premier

MANILA - China and the European Union (EU) should strive to solve their old problems with greater wisdom, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said here Tuesday. Li made the remarks when meeting with European Council President Donald Tusk on the sidelines of a series of leaders' meetings on East Asian cooperation in the Philippine capital of Manila.

China and the EU are an important force for safeguarding world peace and stability and for promoting economic development and prosperity,



Li said. Noting that both China and the EU have seen their development entering a new and critical phase, Li urged the two sides to maintain the current positive momentum in bilateral relations by substantiating their consensus reached at the

China-EU leaders' meeting on the basis of mutual respect and equal treatment. To that end, he said the two sides should also push forward their negotiations for an investment agreement and enhance people-to-people exchanges. (Xinhua)

May's Brexit Deadline will be Challenged by her Own MPs

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May's Brexit deadline was Tuesday facing opposition from her own MPs. May wants to enshrine in law that Britain and the EU will part company at precisely 23:00 hours on March 29, 2019. As MPs started their marathon debate on the EU Withdrawal Bill in the House of Commons, behind the scenes a number of Conservative MPs were meeting party managers to call for the government to scrap its strict timeline. London-based newspapers reported that the number of MPs prepared to vote against the prime minister was in

double figures, pointing to a humiliating defeat for May if they carry out their threat. The Independent reported that former Education Secretary Nicky Morgan and another former government minister, Anna Soubry, were among the rebels. Morgan, reported the Independent, said May's plan showed she was "tone deaf and tin eared", while Soubry told journalists she had warned May that there were some Conservative MPs who have never rebelled in their political careers but were now talking, for the first time ever, of rebelling against the government. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

Healthy U.S.-China Relations Benefit Whole World: Chinese Diplomat

HOUSTON - The steady and fast development of China-U.S. relationship benefits the world as a whole, Chinese Consul General in Houston Li Qiangmin said Tuesday. Delivering a speech at a luncheon with some 300 politicians, businessmen and scholars, Li briefed his audience about U.S. President Donald Trump's state visit to China and the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC). According to Li, Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Trump shared consensus that China and the United States have extensive shared interests and responsibilities for upholding world peace, stability

and prosperity, and the direction of China-U.S. relations can have an important influence on the whole world.

The two leaders also agreed to further the strategic guiding role of the head-of-state diplomacy in bilateral relations, give a full play to the four high-level dialogue mechanisms and enhance financial cooperation, said Li.

"I believe our two countries are facing opportunities to enhance bilateral ties better than ever before. As for China and the United States, cooperation is the only right choice, and pursuing win-win outcomes can lead to a better future," he continued. (Xinhua)

Russia Keen to Establish Trade Relations with Pakistan

SIALKOT - Commercial Counselor of Embassy of Russia in Pakistan Sergey Baranov on Wednesday said Russia was keen to establish strong bilateral trade relations with Pakistan.

He said this while addressing a meeting of exporters held at the Sialkot Chamber of Commerce and Industry (SCCI) here on Wednesday.

SCCI President Zahid Latif Malik presided over the meeting while SCCI Vice President Abid Ahmed Khawaja, Dr Mariyam Nouman, Chairman SCCI Departmental Committee on Women Entrepreneurs, Waqas Akram Awan and others also attended it.

The commercial counselor said the Russia was also keen to develop

strong Business-to-Business contacts between businessmen of Pakistan and Russia besides making sincere efforts to explore the mutual trade potential as well.

Meanwhile, Sergey Baranov showed keen interest in the Sialkot-made exports goods and surgical instruments during his visit to several leading industrial units. He witnessed the production process of sports goods and he highly hailed the international standard craftsmanship of the Sialkot based artisans.

On this occasion, Russian Envoy Sergey Baranov said that Russia was intending to boost the mutual trade ties with Pakistan besides making all-out sincere efforts to strengthen the mutual trade. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran-Russia Ties Serve Regional Security: Zarif

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif called for efforts to diversify partnership between Tehran and Moscow, saying enhanced relations between the two countries would benefit security and stability in the Middle East and Central Asia.

In a message to the opening of a conference marking five centuries of ties between Iran and Russia, held in Moscow on Wednesday, Zarif said a review of the long history of relations between Iran and Russia suggests that the two neighbors need to broaden and diversify their interaction.

Enhancement of Tehran-Moscow relations would not only serve the interests of the two nations, but also play a major role in ensuring security, stability and development in Central Asia and the Middle East, Zarif added.

He also expressed confidence that academic meetings as well as scientific and cultural cooperation between the two countries would contribute to cultural diplomacy and stronger relations.

The conference, "Iran, Russia, Five Centuries of Cooperation", opened in the Russian State Archive of Socio-Political History (RGASPI) in Moscow on Wednesday. Back in January, Iranian Foreign Ministry's Center for International Research and Education held a conference in Tehran to mark 515 years of bilateral political relations. (Tasnim)

Ashgabat, Islamabad Mull Prospects for Co-Op in Energy, Transportation

ASHGABAT - Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan Rashid Meredov met with Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission of Pakistan Sartaj Aziz, the Turkmen Foreign Ministry said in a message.

During the meeting held in Ashgabat, the parties discussed the development of ties in the fuel and energy, and transport and communication fields. The two sides put forward proposals on combining activities in the energy system, transport and economic spheres

aimed at realizing the economic opportunities of the countries of the Asian region.

Meanwhile, an exchange of views took place on the international agenda. The Turkmen foreign minister expressed his commitment to the further development of effective multilateral cooperation within the framework of international organizations, including the UN, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO), says the message. (Trend)