

Crunch Time for British PM as Brexit Talks Enter Decisive Phase

LONDON - This month has been described by British media as "make or break" for Theresa May, the embattled British prime minister under pressure due to stalled Brexit talks and intra-party challenges.

On Friday, May is scheduled to hold private talks with Donald Tusk, president of the European Council, as the duo attend the European Social Summit in Sweden on the future of Europe's welfare systems.

Political commentators in London say it will give May a chance to air her views on Brexit with Tusk



ahead of the key European Council meeting in December, which many believe will shape the Brexit deal.

The meeting in Sweden comes towards the end of what has been one of May's most turbulent months in the Brexit roller-coaster ride.

Just weeks ago, the headlines were of a leader facing the prospect of a challenge from around 40 MPs from her own Conservative Party.

EU negotiators called for Britain to state details of its divorce bill before any future relationship could be discussed. (Xinhua)

Britain Lauds Qatar's Efforts in Fighting Terrorism: Report

DOHA - A senior British official has praised Qatar's efforts in fighting terrorism financing, the Gulf Times reported Friday.

Alistair Burt, minister of state for the Middle East at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, made the remarks on the sidelines of the Qatar-sponsored anti-terrorism conference held in London, the report said. Burt said his country rejected accusations against Qatar of supporting terrorism by its neighboring Arab countries, adding that Qatar is a "strong partner" in the battle against terrorism.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Egypt severed political and commercial ties with Qatar in June, accusing Doha of supporting terrorism and interfering in their internal affairs. Qatar has strongly denied the charges, while rejecting a list of tough demands put forward by the Saudi-led quartet for restoring the diplomatic ties.

Previous mediation efforts launched by Kuwait, Turkey and the United States have failed to broker an end to the stand-off in the Gulf. (Xinhua)

Trump Delivers Thanksgiving Address, Touting U.S. Economy

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump on Thursday delivered a Thanksgiving video address to Americans, touting the state of the U.S. economy. "Our country is doing very well. Our stock market has hit a new all-time high. Unemployment has hit a 17 year low. We've created 5.5 trillion dollars worth of values," Trump said during his roughly four-minute video address. He also praised the U.S. military, first responders and citizen volunteers, especially those who assisted in the face of natural disasters and mass



shootings. Earlier Thursday, Trump also praised on Twitter his administration's accomplishments

and vowed to build a wall along the U.S. border with Mexico. The president is spending Thanksgiving

with his family at his Mar-a-Lago estate in the southeastern U.S. state of Florida. (Xinhua)

Refugee, Migrants Changing Routes in Risky Journeys to Europe: UNHCR



GENEVA - Refugees and migrants showed signs of changing their routes in risky journeys to Europe during the third quarter of 2017, the UN refugee agency UNHCR said on Thursday. "Over the past

months, the sea route to Greece has gained more traction, sea arrivals to Italy have reduced and we have seen migrants and refugees using increasingly diversified journeys to reach Europe," said

Pascale Moreau, director of UNHCR's Europe Bureau. The number of crossings from Libya to Italy has dropped, with about 21,700 people arriving by sea to Italy between July and September, the lowest number for this period of the past four years. "Despite the reduction of crossings via the Central Mediterranean route, thousands continue to attempt desperate and dangerous journeys to Europe," said Moreau. She noted with deep concern that as of Nov. 20, close to 3,000 people are

estimated to have died or gone missing at sea and another 57 known to have died along land routes in Europe or at Europe's borders in 2017. The actual numbers are likely to be higher, she noted. During the third quarter of the year, an increased proportion of those arriving in Italy had departed from Tunisia, Turkey and Algeria and the top three nationalities arriving in Europe via the Mediterranean routes were of Syrian, Moroccan and Nigerian nationality. (Xinhua)

Trump Spends 100th Day in Private Properties as U.S. President

WASHINGTON - Donald Trump celebrated his first Thanksgiving Day as U.S. president in his own resort of Mar-a-Lago palace in the southeastern state of Florida, marking the 100th day he spent at his private properties since taking office on Jan. 20 this year.

According to the New York Times' tracker, Trump has spent 28 days at Mar-a-Lago this year, surpassed by his stay at the Trump National Golf Club in New

Jersey, where he has spent 39 days.

Mar-a-Lago is his second most visited property, which the president has frequently referred to as the "Winter White House" on Twitter.

In his presidential campaign, Trump repeatedly promised that if elected, he would "rarely leave the White House because there's so much work to be done," and he "would not be a president that takes time off." (Xinhua)

China Says it Will Make Efforts on Syria Reconstruction

BEIJING - China hopes Syria can show "flexibility" in promoting peace talks, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Friday in a meeting with an adviser to Syria's president, adding that China would help with its reconstruction. Syria's six-year-old civil war has killed hundreds of thousands of people, forced millions to flee in the worst refugee crisis since World War Two and embroiled regional and world powers.

For years, Western and Arab countries backed an opposition demand that President Bashar al-Assad quit power, but since Russia's 2015 entry into the war, his government has won back major cities and now looks militarily unassailable. Leaders of Russia, Turkey and Iran agreed on Wednesday to help support a full-scale political process in Syria and announced an agreement to sponsor a conference in the Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi to try to end the war.

Wang told Bouthaina Shaaban, a senior aide to Assad visiting China, that engagement over the future of Syria's political arrangements had intensified, and that he believed it would contribute to a formal peace process talks in Geneva.

"China hopes the Syrian side can seize the opportunity, display flexibility, and promote dialogue and negotiation to achieve substantive results," Wang said, according to a statement from China's foreign ministry.

"The international community should emphasize and actively support Syria's reconstruction. China will put forth its own effort for this," Wang said, without elaborating on what those efforts would be. (Reuters)

Russia Takes Tokyo to Task over Defense Alliance with Washington

MOSCOW - Russia is concerned that Japan is allowing Washington to use its territory as a base for a U.S. military buildup in north Asia under the pretext of countering North Korea, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Friday. His remarks came at a joint press conference with his Japanese counterpart, Taro Kono, after talks between the two men in Moscow, and prompted Kono to defend Japan's stance toward North Korea and its ties with the United States.

Japan had wanted to focus on resolving a



seven-decade old territorial dispute between the countries but Lavrov's comments on North Korea cast a shadow over the meeting.

"We are expressing deep concern, with facts to back it up, that Japan along with South Korea is becoming a territory for the

deployment of elements of the U.S. global missile defense system which is being rolled out in that region under the pretext of the North Korea threat," Lavrov said.

"We have no problems directly with Japan, we do not see risks there. (Reuters)

May Urges EU to 'Step Forward' with UK for Brexit Deal

BRUSSELS - Prime Minister Theresa May urged the EU to "step forward together" with Britain on Friday as the bloc's leaders hoped she would finally offer a compromise to reach a Brexit divorce deal in December.

The embattled British premier was set to meet EU President Donald Tusk on the sidelines of a summit with ex-Soviet states in Brussels in a bid to unlock negotiations on a future trade deal.

Impatient EU leaders were increasingly hopeful she would bring a new proposal on the thorny issue of Britain's exit

bill, after senior British ministers agreed earlier this week to improve the offer to a reported 40 billion euros (\$47 billion).

Arriving in Brussels, May refused to deny she was ready to bump up the amount Britain would pay when she meets Tusk at 1530 GMT, but insisted any such move must be tied to a final deal on future relations next year.

"These negotiations are continuing but what I'm clear about is that we must step forward together. This is for both the UK and the European Union to move to the next stage," she told reporters. (AFP)

Nieghbor News

Chinese Ambassador Says "16+1" Cooperation Brings New Vitality to China-Estonia Relationship

TALLINN - The "16+1" cooperation between China and Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries injects new vitality into the China-Estonia relationship, Chinese Ambassador to Estonia Qu Zhe wrote on Thursday.

In an article titled "Advance '16+1' Cooperation into New Era Together" published by the Estonian financial newspaper Aripaev, Qu said that the "16+1" summit is now an indispensable platform for frequent communication between government leaders and has become essential for enhancing mutual trust and promoting China-Estonia practical cooperation in the fields of politics, economy and trade, culture and education, tourism as well as people-to-people exchanges.

He expressed the confidence that leaders from China and the 16 CEE

countries will take the opportunity of the sixth meeting of heads of government of China and CEE countries to be held in Budapest, Hungary next week to build on achievements over the past five years after the first meeting of heads of government of China and CEE countries held in Warsaw, Poland in spring 2012.

The "16+1" cooperation compliments and provides added value to bilateral relations between China and each of the 16 CEE countries and the China-European Union (EU) Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, said the ambassador.

"Based upon the principles of mutual respect, equality and mutual benefit, China and the 16 CEE countries work hand in hand to strengthen practical cooperation in various fields," Qu said. (Xinhua)

UN Nuclear Agency Says Inspectors Given Access to All Iranian Sites

VIENNA - The UN nuclear agency Thursday said Tehran has given UN inspectors access to all the nuclear sites they needed to visit to implement the nuclear safeguard regime in the country.

"As of today, the agency has had access to all the locations that we needed to visit," International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) chief Yukiya Amano said at a board meeting in Vienna.

The IAEA is monitoring Iran's implementation of a historic international

deal reached in Vienna in the summer of 2015, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Under the deal, Iran agreed to scale back its nuclear program in return of partial relief from international sanctions.

"The agency continues to verify and monitor Iran's implementation of its nuclear-related commitments under the JCPOA. The nuclear-related commitments undertaken by Iran are being implemented," Amano said. (Xinhua)

Pakistan to Update Gwadar City's Master Plan in Wake of CPEC

KARACHI - With the inclusion of Gwadar Port in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project (CPEC), the government of Pakistan has decided to update the existing plans of Gwadar city to reflect the new strategic direction. Under the new plan, the government is starting process to evaluate the existing environmental condition of Gwadar, and in this regard government is hiring services of a laboratory to undertake environmental monitoring sampling and testing of ambient air, noise, drinking water and wastewater in project area. The current master plan of Gwadar city (last updated in 2005) has two interdependent elements: the port, and the city of

Gwadar. This strategic focus on simultaneous development is primarily due to the natural, symbiotic relationship that exists between a port and the city that surrounds it; one cannot be developed without the other. In addition, the city around a port must also be planned carefully in order to lay foundation of a sustainable regional economy, drive local business and increase port throughput, said the government.

The government said that there is an urgent need to update the existing city plan of Gwadar to reflect the new strategic direction. The development of Gwadar is a strategic priority for the Government of Pakistan. (Monitoring Desk)

Uzbekistan's Industrial City to Implement Green Project

TASHKENT - One of Uzbekistan's big industrial centers is preparing for the implementation of the "Green City of Akhangaran" project.

The issue is the introduction of new highly efficient eco-friendly technologies in the residential sector. The Uzbek Ministry of Housing and Communal Services and the National Energy Saving Company are implementing the projects to improve the life of the population.

One of the most important areas was the improvement of the quality of utilities and the intro-

duction of eco-friendly technologies. The project is implemented in cooperation with China's Jontia Energy Investment Group Co., Ltd. The initiator of the project was the Akhangaran city administration.

To date, due to the deterioration of the heating system, the population uses gas, by heating apartments and houses with gas stoves and other heating appliances.

The modernization of existing central heating boilers built more than half a century ago has been recognized as ineffective. (Trend)