

# No Breakthrough in Brexit Talks as New Deadline Approaches

BRUSSELS — British Prime Minister Theresa May failed Friday to make any breakthrough in Brexit talks with the European Union, as time runs out to move the negotiations into a critical second phase before the end of the year.

At a summit in Brussels, May met with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, the leaders of Belgium, Denmark, Lithuania and European Council President Donald Tusk, seeking to move the talks onto future relations between Britain and the EU, especially their trade ties.

"There are still issues across the various matters that we are negotiating on," May told



reporters after her meetings.

"But there has been a very positive atmosphere in the talks and a genuine feeling that we want to move forward together," she added. Britain is set to leave the bloc on March 29, 2019, but the negotiations must be wrapped up in less than a year to leave parliaments time to ratify the agreement.

EU leaders are set to decide in three weeks if the negotiations have made "sufficient progress" — on Britain's financial settlement, the status of Irish borders and the rights of citizens hit by Brexit — for the talks to be expanded. Currently, it seems unlikely that will happen. (AP)

## Syria War has Killed More Than 340,000: New Toll

BEIRUT — Syria's grinding war has killed over 340,000 people since it broke out in 2011, including more than 100,000 civilians, a monitor said on Friday.

The death toll increased as key international powers step up diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the brutal conflict, and just days before a fresh round of peace talks in Geneva.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights told AFP it has documented 343,511 deaths in Syria between the eruption of an anti-

government uprising in mid-March 2011 and the start of this month. Among them are 102,618 civilians, including nearly 19,000 children and 12,000 women. More than 119,000 pro-government forces have been killed, including 62,000 Syrian troops, tens of thousands of loyalist militiamen, and 1,556 fighters from Lebanese movement Hezbollah, according to the estimate. Another 59,000 fighters from rebel groups, Islamist factions, and the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces were also killed. (AFP)

## Trump Tells Turkey's Leader: US to Stop Arming Syrian Kurds

ANKARA, Turkey — The United States will cut off its supply of arms to Kurdish fighters in Syria, President Donald Trump told the Turkish president on Friday, in a move sure to please Turkey but further alienate Syrian Kurds who bore much of the fight against the Islamic State group. In a phone call with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Trump said he'd "given clear instructions" that the Kurds will receive no more weapons — "and that this nonsense should have ended

a long time ago," said Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu. The White House confirmed the move in a cryptic statement about the phone call that said Trump had informed the Turk of "pending adjustments to the military support provided to our partners on the ground in Syria." The White House called the move "consistent with our previous policy" and noted the recent fall of Raqqa, once the Islamic State group's self-declared capital but



recently liberated by a largely Kurdish force. The Trump administration announced in May it would start arming the Kurds in anticipation of the fight to retake Raqqa.

"We are progressing into a stabilization phase to ensure that ISIS cannot return," the White House said, using an acronym for the extremist group. (AP)

## Polls Must 'Ratify' Catalonia's Desire for Independence: Puigdemont



OOSTKAMP, Belgium — Catalonia's deposed leader Carles Puigdemont Saturday launched his campaign for regional elections by calling on

Catalans to make known their desire for independence. "We Catalans demonstrated to the world that we have the capacity and

the will to become an independent state. And on (December) 21, we must ratify this," he said in Oostkamp in Belgium, where he travelled after the Catalan parliament declared unilateral independence. Puigdemont was sacked as Catalan president after that declaration on October 27 as was his entire regional government. Madrid imposed direct rule on the once semi-autonomous region to stop the independence drive. At the time, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano

Rajoy also dissolved the Catalan parliament and called next month's elections in a bid to "restore normality" to the region. Puigdemont, who is awaiting possible extradition to Spain where he is wanted on charges of rebellion, sedition and misuse of public funds, is running at the head of the Junts per Catalunya ("All for Catalonia" in Catalan) grouping. It comprises people from his conservative, separatist PDeCAT party as well as members of civil society. (AFP)

## Macron Outlines Plan Tackling Violence against Women



PARIS — President Emmanuel Macron has announced an initiative to address violence and harassment against women in France, with plans aimed at erasing the sense of shame that breeds silence among victims and changing France's sexist culture. In a speech on Saturday marking the International

Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women, Macron laid out a plan to encourage women to take action, strengthen laws against offenders and educating citizens on the issue — starting from nursery school. He said that 123 women died of violence against them in France last year. (AP)

## Nieghbor News

### China to Boost Economic Ties with Pakistan through Private Sector

BEIJING — China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) that is a pilot and major project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has proved to be an effective agent for boosting cooperation among the non-governmental sectors. Since it was first proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping in 2013, the BRI has been successful in terms of facilitating non-governmental projects, notably in infrastructure including transportation. China is confident that Pakistan will be a major beneficiary of the BRI. All the CPEC's related projects were being implemented smoothly with the cooperation of the private sector, officials said Saturday. The cooperative partner-

ship both at government and private level between the two countries was meeting their stipulated targets, they added. About the overall impact of the BRI, the sources said in 2011, there were only 17 China-Europe freight train trips, and the figure has exceeded 3,000 so far this year, according to the China Railway Corp. Similarly this is the case of other countries including Pakistan. As of the end of 2016, Chinese companies had built 56 zones for economic and trade cooperation in more than 20 countries along the Belt and Road routes, with a total investment of over 18.5 billion U.S. dollars, creating almost 180,000 jobs for host countries. (Monitoring Desk)

### Pakistan, EU Wrap up Anti-Terror Talks to Jointly Combat Terrorism

ISLAMABAD — Pakistan and European Union (EU) have wrapped up their anti-terrorism talks here with a joint statement, reiterating their resolve to jointly combat terrorism in all its forms and manifestations. Officials of both sides reaffirmed that terrorism continued to pose a threat to states and societies across the globe, the foreign ministry said in a statement late Friday after the sixth round of Pakistan-EU Political Counter-Terrorism dialogue held on Nov. 23 under the framework of the EU-Pakistan Five-Year Engagement Plan. Officials discussed the ongoing EU-Pakistan cooperation and collaboration in the area of counter-terrorism and

agreed to explore further avenues of mutually agreed cooperation including exchange of best practices in areas such as law enforcement/security, criminal justice and rule of law, countering financing of terrorism and preventing violent extremism. "The EU side, while reaffirming its solidarity with the victims of terrorist attacks and recognizing successes of Pakistan in the fight against terrorism, expressed support for Pakistan's continuing efforts in this regard," it said. The two sides agreed to enhance cooperation in dealing with violent extremism in all its aspects and addressing the root causes of these problems. (Xinhua)

### Israel's Nuclear Program Threatens Regional Security: Iran

TEHRAN — An Iranian official said that Israel's nuclear program and its atomic arsenal threatens the security of the Middle East region, Press TV reported Saturday. Reza Najafi, Iranian Ambassador to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), denounced what he called the West's "double-standard approaches" on Israel's move to develop its nuclear program. Israel's continuous nuclear program and its stockpile of atomic arsenal also discredits the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), said the envoy addressing a meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors in Vienna. He also urged Israel to join the NPT so that its

nuclear installations would be subjected to the full monitoring of IAEA safeguards. "The Zionist regime (of Israel) has unfortunately overlooked legitimate demands of the international community over the past years and continued to advance its military nuclear program in blatant violation of all international regulations and with the blind support of certain countries," he was quoted as saying. Israeli military nuclear activities are the main cause of concern among regional nations and the international community, Najafi added, urging the international community's complete ban on any type of nuclear cooperation with Israel. (Xinhua)

### Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan Eye Cooperation in Rail Transport

TASHKENT — Representatives of railway administrations of Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan discussed issues of cooperation on the organization of international passenger transportation, reports the press service of "Uzbekistan Temir Yullari". The delegations of the JSC "Uzbekistan Temir Yollari" and JSC "Kazakhstan Temir Zholy" mulled the results of joint work in 2017. The sides also discussed ways to improve the efficiency of work and

prospects for the development of passenger communication between the two countries. The parties reached an agreement on the application of a discount system for the purchase of a travel document (ticket), depending on the period of its preliminary acquisition. Representatives of the railway administration also discussed a number of other issues of bilateral mutually beneficial cooperation. Following the meeting, there was signed a protocol of the meeting. (Trend)

### Iran, Russia Presidents' Talks 'Very Effective': Envoy



MOSCOW — Iranian envoy to Russian Federation emphasized the effectiveness of talks held between Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in the past four years. "During the past 4 years, Rouhani and Putin have held 12 meetings," Mehdi Sanaie said in a meeting with Leader of the Russian Liberal Democratic Party Vladimir Zhirinovskiy. "The meetings which aimed at developing bilateral cooperation in political, economic and cultural fields were very effective," he added. He also underscored the need for holding round tables and expert meetings between the two countries' lawmakers.

Meanwhile, Zhirinovskiy referred to the importance of the recent Sochi Tripartite Summit held between Iran, Russia and Turkey on establishing stability in the region and in the world as well. He also evaluated launching international North-South corridor as essential in promoting bilateral economic cooperation. The Liberal Democratic Party members in Russian Duma are ready to take a trip to Iran, he said, calling for developing parliamentary ties with Iran's Majlis (Parliament) and its factions. The tripartite meeting which was held on Wednesday in Russian Black Sea resort of Sochi focused on the results of Syria peace talks held in Astana, Kazakhstan and the beginning of political process within Syria. (IRNA)

### Erdogan Sues Main Opposition Party Leader: Report

ANKARA — Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Friday is suing the main opposition party chief, seeking hundreds of thousands of dollars in damages over "slandering" comments about him and his family, state media reported. Ahmet Ozel, a lawyer for Erdogan, made an application to an Istanbul civil court for 1.5 million Turkish liras (\$380,000, 320,000 euros) in compensation for "spiritual damage" from Republican People's Party (CHP) leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu, state-run news agency Anadolu reported.



Kilicdaroglu on Tuesday demanded to know whether Erdogan was "aware" that his family, including his children, were "sending millions of dollars of money to tax havens", the Anadolu news agency reported. "Do your children have millions of dollars sent to

overseas accounts?" Kilicdaroglu asked during the CHP group meeting in parliament. The comments were "slander" against the president, Ozel said, describing them as "humiliating, insulting, false accusations", Anadolu reported. (AFP)

### Al-Sisi Vows Forceful Response after Mosque Massacre

CAIRO — Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi has vowed to respond forcefully after attackers killed at least 235 worshippers in a packed mosque in restive North Sinai province, the country's deadliest attack in recent memory. Al-Sisi declared three days of mourning would begin Saturday, the day after the gun and bomb assault on the Rawda mosque, roughly 40 kilometres (25 miles) west of the North Sinai capital of El-Arish. In a televised speech the president pledged to "respond with brutal force", adding that "the army and po-

lice will avenge our martyrs and return security and stability with force in the coming short period". Several hours later Egyptian air force jets destroyed vehicles used in the attack and "terrorist" locations where weapons and ammunition were stocked, an army spokesman said. Witnesses said assailants had surrounded the mosque with all-terrain vehicles and detonated a bomb. They then mowed down panicked worshippers as they tried to flee and used congregants' vehicles they had set alight to block routes to the mosque. (AFP)

### S. Korea Inclined for More Investments in Iran: Ambassador



TEHRAN — South Korea has shifted its focus from trade to investments in Iran, the South Korean ambassador to Tehran, Kim Seung-ho, was quoted as saying by Financial Tribune daily on Saturday. "Trade is like gluing two things but investment is rather a chemical reaction. When two materials react chemically, it is almost impossible to detach them. So the Korean government urges Korean companies to invest more in Iran," Kim said.

The Iranian and Korean companies should apply their common projects to Korea's Eximbank. Then the bank reviews if the project is really profitable or not, the ambassador explained. Iran signed its biggest credit line deal in recent years with South Korea's Eximbank in August 2017. The deal envisages as much as 8 billion euros (9.54 billion U.S. dollars) in loans provided by South Korean companies to finance various projects in Iran. Referring to hurdles in the way of foreign investment in Iran, the Korean ambassador said the Islamic Republic needs to improve its business environment to help foreign investors gain a foothold in the country. Bilateral trade reached the highest level of 6.33 billion U.S. dollars over the past 10 years. (Xinhua)