

Ball in Your Court: Britain, EU Clash over Next Brexit Move

LONDON/BRUSSELS - Britain and its European Union partners clashed on Monday over which side should make the next move to unblock Brexit talks, despite concerns they will miss a deadline for a divorce deal and that London is heading for a chaotic departure. Prime Minister Theresa May made clear in speech she was to deliver to parliament that she hoped her EU partners would make proposals at a new round of talks opening the way to the next stage of negotiations, saying "the ball is in their court".

But even before she had delivered the speech, an EU spokesman hit back in Brussels, saying "the ball is entirely



in the UK court for the rest to happen".

May is desperate to try to regain some of her authority and refocus on talks to unravel more than 40 years of union after a speech at her party conference last week, marred by a repetitive cough, a prankster and a stage malfunction, left her weaker than ever.

She has so far fought off attempts to unseat her by critics already angry over an ill-judged election when she lost her governing Conservatives' majority, but her weakness has opened the door for many in her party to challenge her Brexit strategy with just 18 months to go before Britain leaves the EU. (Reuters)

Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore are Hubs for ASEAN Migrant Workers: WB

PHNOM PENH - Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore have become hubs for migrant laborers from other ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) member states, a new World Bank report said on Monday. In its report entitled "Migrating to Opportunity," intra-regional migration in ASEAN increased significantly between 1995 and 2015, turning Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore into regional migration hubs with 6.5 million migrants - 96 percent of the total number of migrant workers in ASEAN.

Thailand had 3.75 million ASEAN migrants from Myanmar, Laos and Cambodia, while Malaysia had 1.48 million ASEAN migrants mostly from Indonesia and Myanmar, and Singapore had 1.28 million ASEAN migrants mostly from Malaysia and Indonesia. The ASEAN Economic Community has taken steps to facilitate mobility, but these regulations only cover certain skilled professions - doctors, dentists, nurses, engineers, architects, accountants, and tourism professionals - or just 5 percent of jobs in the region, it added. (Xinhua)

Russia, China Call for Restraint after Trump Comment on North Korea

MOSCOW - Russia and China called for restraint on North Korea on Monday after U.S. President Donald Trump warned over the weekend that "only one thing will work" in dealing with Pyongyang, hinting that military action was on his mind.

When asked what Russia made of Trump's comments, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told a conference call with reporters: "Moscow has called and continues to call on the

parties involved in the conflict and on those who have anything to do with this issue to exercise restraint and to avoid any steps that would only worsen the situation." Commenting on a Trump statement that the United States might withdraw from a nuclear deal with Iran, Peskov said such a move would have "negative consequences." Speaking in Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying reiterated



a call for all parties involved with the standoff in North Korea to exercise restraint, describing the situation as extremely complex and serious. China hopes all sides do nothing to irritate each other or worsen the problem and speak and act cautiously, she told a daily news briefing. (Reuters)

Ties with Russia to be Important Topic of NATO Summit in 2018: NATO Chief



BUCHAREST - The relations with Russia will be a very important topic, along with topics such as the cooperation with the European Union (EU) and the ongoing modernization of the Alliance,

said NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg on Monday. Stoltenberg made the remarks at the 63rd annual plenary session of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly taking place in Bucharest.

He said NATO doesn't want to isolate Russia and doesn't wish for a "new Cold War," despite members' concerns about Russia's military actions close to NATO's borders.

The NATO chief said in his speech that preparations have commenced for the next NATO Summit to be held in Brussels next year, and the Alliance will continue to build on the decisions made in Wales and Warsaw by increasing allied collective defense. The NATO chief noted that all these actions are meant to prevent but

not to produce conflicts, calling on Moscow to get involved in the international commitments.

The allied official voiced concern with Moscow's lack of transparency in connection with ZAPAD 2017, the Russian-Belarus military drills held in Belarus in September, which, according to him, highlights the need for a two-direction approach against Russia, combining solid defense with substantive dialogue, including within the NATO-Russia Council. (Xinhua)

Catalan Leader under Pressure to Drop Independence

BARCELONA/MADRID - Catalonia's secessionist leader came under intense pressure on Monday to abandon plans to declare independence from Spain after hundreds of thousands of unionists took to the streets at the weekend to protest against the region breaking away.

Spain fears the Catalan parliament will vote for independence on Tuesday, when Catalan leader Carles Puigdemont is due to address the assembly in the wake of a banned Oct. 1 referendum in which

Catalan officials say people voted overwhelmingly for secession.

Under Catalonia's referendum law, deemed unconstitutional by Madrid, a vote for independence on Tuesday would start a six-month process that would envisage divorce talks with Spain before regional elections and a final act of separation.

But the Spanish government, buoyed by Sunday's protests in Barcelona, the Catalan capital, made it clear on Monday it would respond immediately to any such vote. (Reuters)

China, Britain Reaffirm "Golden Era" of Bilateral Ties

BEIJING - China and Britain on Monday reaffirmed their commitment to a "golden era" of bilateral ties.

Chinese State Councilor Yang Jiechi and Mark Sedwill, national security advisor to the British prime minister made the remarks during their meeting in Beijing. Yang said the upcoming 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) will inject new impetus into relations with other countries. The international community will pay close attention to the 19th CPC National Congress, Sedwill said, and expressed his good wishes. The two exchanged views on the situation on the Korean Peninsula. (Xinhua)

EU May Shun Myanmar Generals in New Sanctions - Draft

BRUSSELS - The European Union proposes cutting back contacts with Myanmar's top generals in a first step to increase sanctions over an army offensive that has driven Rohingya Muslims out of the country, according to a draft document seen by Reuters.

The bloc "will suspend invitations to the commander-in-chief of the Myanmar/Burma armed forces and other senior military officers", read the draft for agreement by EU foreign ministers meeting next Monday.

The document, to be discussed further by envoys from the 28 EU states on Tuesday, said the EU "may consider further measures" depending on developments on the ground "but also stands ready to respond accordingly to positive developments". (Reuters)

Russia Agrees to Supply Saudi Arabia with Weapons

MOSCOW - Russia has agreed to supply Saudi Arabia with a range of sophisticated modern weapons including S-400 anti-aircraft missile systems, the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation said Monday.

"An agreement has been reached with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on the supply of S-400 air defense systems," spokeswoman Maria Vorobyova was quoted as saying by the RIA Novosti news agency.

Russia will also supply Saudi Arabia with Kornet-EM anti-tank missile systems, Buratino TOS-1 heavy flamethrower systems, AGS-30 automatic grenade launchers and



Kalashnikov AK-103 assault rifles, Vorobyova said.

She did not provide the volume or the value of the possible deals.

During the visit of Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud to Russia last week, deals worth at least 2.1 billion U.S. dollars were signed, according to a Kremlin statement.

Russia's Rosoboronexport

state arms exporter and the Saudi Military Industries Corporation signed a contract for the licensed production of Kalashnikov AK-103 and cartridges in Saudi Arabia, as well as a memorandum on the purchase of Russian military products and localization of their production. No details about the two deals were disclosed. (Xinhua)

Talks for Germany's New Government to Start Next Week: Merkel

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel said Monday that the exploratory talks for a government coalition will start next Wednesday (Oct. 18) with the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Greens.

Merkel made the announcement at a press conference Monday noon with Horst Seehofer, chairman of Christian Social Union (CSU), the sister party of the Christian Democratic Union

(CDU). Merkel said she has invited FDP and Greens to exploratory talks separately next Wednesday.

On the following Friday (October 20) a joint meeting of the Union, the FDP and Greens was planned, said the German chancellor.

The talks were given way by an agreement between CDU and CSU on a ceiling of the number of refugees Germany accepts every year. (Xinhua)

Trump Lists Demands on Immigration in Exchange for DACA

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump has told congressional leaders that his hard-line immigration priorities must be enacted in exchange for extending protection from deportation to hundreds of thousands of young immigrants, many of whom were brought to the U.S. illegally as children.

Trump's list of demands included overhauling the country's green-card system, a crackdown on unaccompanied minors entering the country, and building his promised wall along the southern border. Many were policies Democrats have said explicitly are off the table and threaten to derail ongoing negotiations over legislation protecting young immigrants known as "Dreamers." They had been given a reprieve from deportation and the ability to work legally in the country under President Barack Obama's Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or DACA, program, which Trump ended last month.

In a letter to House and Senate leaders released by the White House Sunday, Trump said the priorities were the product of a "bottom-up review of all immigration policies" that he had ordered "to determine what legislative reforms are essential for America's economic and national security. "These findings outline reforms that must be included as part of any legislation addressing the status of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients," he wrote, adding that "Without these reforms, illegal immigration and chain migration, which severely and unfairly burden American workers and taxpayers, will continue without end." (AP)

Neighbor News

Xi Urges Solid Efforts to Win Battle Against Poverty

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping called for enhanced and solid efforts to win the battle against poverty Monday. Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, gave the instruction ahead of the fourth National Poverty Relief Day, which falls on Oct. 17.

All-out effort should be put towards poverty relief, as it is the toughest of all battles, said Xi. Remarkable progress has been made since the CPC Central Committee made a solemn promise to lift all rural people out of poverty by 2020, the president added.

Xi praised outstanding figures in China's battle with poverty, saying that their fighting spirit needs to be celebrated and spread nationwide to en-

courage concerted efforts in poverty reduction.

Xi's remarks came as a meeting was held in Beijing Monday to honor people who have made great contributions to poverty relief.

Premier Li Keqiang also congratulated them for their achievements and asked authorities to support their work and gather more strength from all of society for the goal of building a moderately prosperous society by 2020.

In a written instruction, Li said that China's battle against poverty has entered the final stage, and authorities at all levels should make greater efforts to break development bottlenecks and strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of poverty-reduction work. (Xinhua)

IAEA Chief Confirms Iran Complying with Nuclear Deal

ROME - The UN atomic agency chief on Monday affirmed Iran's commitment to a 2015 nuclear deal, in a statement that came as US President Donald Trump said Tehran was not living up to the "spirit" of the agreement.

"I can state that the nuclear-related commitments undertaken by Iran under the (nuclear agreement) are being implemented," International Atomic Energy Agency chief Yukiya Amano said in prepared remarks during a conference in Rome.

An IAEA report released last month had also affirmed Iran's compliance with the programme, which froze some of Tehran's nuclear activities. Iran's stock of low-enriched uranium - used for peaceful purposes, but when further processed

for a weapon - did not exceed the agreed limit of 300 kilos (661 pounds), the report said.

It added that Iran "has not pursued the construction of the Arak... reactor" - which could give it weapons-grade plutonium - and has not enriched uranium above low purity levels.

The landmark deal was signed in July 2015 by Iran and five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States) plus Germany - establishing controls to prevent Tehran from developing an atomic bomb.

The EU's diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini said Iran's compliance with the accord had been verified on at least eight separate occasions. (AFP)

CPEC - A Masterpiece of Pak-China Relations: Ahsan

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan's Minister for Planning and Development Ahsan Iqbal Monday said that China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a masterpiece of ties between the two countries, was meant to connect the regional nations.

"The CPEC is not against any country but is aimed at promoting regional trade, development and prosperity," he said while addressing a luncheon ceremony held here in honour of outgoing Ambassador of China to Pakistan Sun Weidong. Ahsan Iqbal, who is also Minister for Interior, said those, who were opposing the CPEC, wanted Pakistan as a fragile economy.

He said the CPEC was playing a key role in overcoming energy crisis in Pakistan, besides investment and new tech-

nologies were coming to the country because of it. The minister said the CPEC would end sense of deprivation in Balochistan while the Gwadar port would play a key role in the development and prosperity not only of Pakistan but also of the region.

He said during the tenure of Ambassador Weidong in Pakistan, the CPEC project became a reality. Pakistan and China would foil all the attempts being made by the opponents of the project, who were criticizing it without realizing its importance for the region as well as the world.

The minister said it was quite encouraging that all the projects under the CPEC, which would help meet energy and infrastructure challenges being faced by Pakistan, were nearing completion. (Monitoring Desk)

Turkmenistan Preparing Political Reform

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan's President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov announced the decision to transform and rename the Council of Elders to People's Council, said the Turkmen government in a message Monday.

A meeting of the Council of Elders of Turkmenistan was held in the Akbugday district of the country's Ahal region on Oct. 9. According to

the Turkmen president, these changes will ensure greater involvement of Turkmen citizens in the country's political life.

Until today, the Council meeting was held annually only to discuss issues of state scale. It should be reminded that in the period from 1992 to 2008, the People's Council was the highest representative body of Turkmenistan. (Trend)