

EU to Ban Business Ties with Pyongyang over Nuclear Tests

BRUSSELS - The European Union is set to agree on Monday to ban business ties with North Korea, part of a new package of sanctions to isolate Pyongyang over its nuclear and missile programs.

The practical impact of the moves is likely to be mostly symbolic: Brussels will impose an oil embargo and a ban on EU investment, but it sells no crude to North Korea and European companies have no substantial investments there. North Korean workers in the EU, of which Brussels estimates there are about 400 mainly in Poland, will face a lower limit on the amount for money they can send home and their work visas will not



be renewed once they expire. The measures to be agreed by EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg go further than the latest round of multi-lateral sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. "The North Koreans appear to be uninterested in having the EU get involved as a peace mediator," said an EU diplomat. "The North Koreans want direct talks with the United States, but President (Donald) Trump has ruled that out," the diplomat said. The sanctions will add three more top North Korean officials and six businesses to a blacklist banning them from travel to the EU and freezing their assets. (Reuters)

Russian FM Stresses Need to Honor Iran Nuclear Deal

MOSCOW - All parties involved in the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on Iran's nuclear program should abide by it, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Thursday.

The minister held a telephone conversation with the U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the two sides discussed the current situation around the nuclear deal, according to a statement of the Foreign Ministry. "Lavrov drew attention to the fact that Tehran adheres to all its JCPOA obligations and stressed the need to observe this docu-

ment by its other co-sponsors," the statement said. The Trump administration is due to inform the Congress by Oct. 15 whether Tehran is complying with the nuclear deal. If it decides Tehran is not, it could open the way for U.S. lawmakers to reimpose sanctions against Iran. Earlier in the day, Lavrov said it was beyond his comprehension how the U.S. will quit the agreement in legal terms, given the status of the agreement including the decision on its approval by the supreme body responsible for peace and security. (Xinhua)

Trump Will Scorn but not Bolt from Iran Nuke Deal: Officials

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump will say Friday the Iran nuclear deal is no longer in U.S. national security interests, but he won't withdraw from the landmark 2015 accord or immediately reimpose sanctions against Tehran, according to U.S. officials and outside advisers to the administration. Trump's speech from the White House will outline specific faults he finds in the pact but will also focus on an array of Iran's troubling non-nuclear activities, four officials and

advisers said. Those include Tehran's ballistic missile program, support for Syrian President Bashar Assad, Lebanon's Hezbollah movement and other groups that destabilize the region, including in Yemen, human rights abuses and cyber warfare.

In his speech, Trump will notify Congress that he is "decertifying" the deal, arguing that while Iran may be complying with the letter of the agreement, the accord



itself is not sufficient to be in U.S. interests.

Under current U.S. law, Trump faces a Sunday deadline to notify Congress whether Iran is com-

plying with the accord that was negotiated over 18 months by the Obama administration and determine if it remains a national security priority. (AP)

German Party Leader Calls for G7 Diplomatic Talks with Putin



BERLIN - German Free Democratic Party (FDP) leader Christian Lindner called for the diplomatic rehabilitation of Russia during an interview with the newspaper Die

Presse on Thursday. Lindner argued that Vladimir Putin should re-join the G7 diplomatic table, down-sized from the G8 due to Russia's exclusion over the

Crimean crisis in 2014. It was "better to talk to, instead of about" the Russian president, he said. The FDP leader criticized that there was a lack of willingness to engage in dialogue amongst Western powers. While a breach of international law is "unacceptable," relations between Moscow and the remaining G7 could not be sacrificed over the singular issue of Crimea. Lindner previously made a widely-publicized appeal in Germany to accept the Russian annexation of

Crimea as a "permanent provisional solution". With regards to looming "Jamaica" coalition negotiations between the FDP, Christian Democratic Union (CDU), Christian Social Union (CSU) and Greens (Grüne), Lindner said his party had its "own concerns and red lines." The FDP would not be forced into government at any cost and would maintain its opposition to any mutualization of debt in Europe, he said. (Xinhua)

S. Korea, U.S. to Conduct Joint Maritime Drills, U.S. Aircraft Carrier to be Mobilized

SEOUL - South Korea and the United States will conduct joint maritime drills next week in waters near the Korean Peninsula, with a U.S. aircraft carrier to be mobilized. The South Korean navy was quoted by local media outlets as saying the joint exercise with the U.S. navy would be staged from next Monday to Friday in the eastern and western waters of South Korea. Joining the drill from the U.S. military would be USS Ronald Reagan nuclear-powered aircraft

carrier under the U.S. 7th Fleet. The super-carrier is accompanied by Aegis destroyers, guided missile cruisers, combat support ships and a nuclear-powered submarine. The drill, called Maritime Counter Special Operations Exercise, is aimed at defending the infiltration of enemy special forces, according to the navy. From the South Korean side, the Sejong the Great Aegis destroyer will participate in the joint drill. Other battleships and submarines would be mobilized. (Xinhua)

EU's Top Executive Demands that UK Pay Brexit Bill

BRUSSELS - The leader of the European Union's executive complained Friday that talks on Britain's departure from the bloc will take longer than expected and demanded that Prime Minister Theresa May's government pay its divorce bill. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said the EU's British partners "are discovering, as we are day after day, new problems," and he added that "this process will take longer than initially thought." A day after the EU's Brexit negotiator said talks on the divorce bill were deadlocked, Juncker insisted in Luxembourg that "they have to pay. They have to pay." "If you are sitting in a bar and if you are ordering 28 beers and then suddenly some of your colleagues is leaving and is not paying - that's not feasible," he said in English. He insisted that the EU is not seeking outrageous sums, saying Britain's bill does not have to be settled "in an impossible way. I'm not in a revenge mood."

Various EU estimates suggest the bill could amount to 60-100 billion euros (\$70-120 billion). The British government has rejected such numbers. Juncker's comments came as EU leaders, without May, prepare next week to launch preliminary talks on the outline of the future EU-UK relationship once Britain leaves on March 29, 2019.

In a draft summit statement seen Friday by The Associated Press, the leaders order EU ministers and Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier "to start internal preparatory discussions" on future ties.

This would allow the EU to move quickly on elements like trade relations if negotiators make "sufficient progress" by December on the terms of the EU-U.K. divorce agreement. (AP)

Red Cross Calls for More Mental Health Care in Middle East

GENEVA - Syria and neighboring countries in the Middle East face a critical need for more mental health care for victims of the humanitarian crisis, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said Thursday. Marking World Mental Health Day, Robert Mardini, regional director at ICRC, said he grew up in Lebanon during the time of its civil war. "When I grew up in Lebanon during the civil war, I recalled it was a time people had great difficulties to speak of suffering psychological challenges and to share their invisible scars from the war. People



just had to cope and to move on," said Mardini. He said colleagues in Syria have countless similar stories and he cited the family of 13 who had fled from recent fighting, only to lose 10 of them along the way to explosions, airstrikes and sniper fire. "Let us think of the invis-

ible scars of the survivors of this family," said Mardini. He said that over the past five years, the Middle East has seen close to half a million people killed, 1.5 million injured, 56 million dependent on humanitarian aid, and 28 million people who had to flee because of fighting. (Xinhua)

536,000 Rohingya Refugees Flee From Myanmar to Bangladesh: UN

UNITED NATIONS - The number of Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar's northern Rakhine State for Bangladesh has reached 536,000, with 14,000 having crossed the border in the last two days, a UN spokesman said on Thursday.

The spokesman, Farhan Haq, also said UN Undersecretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman will be in Myanmar from Friday to Tuesday for discussions with Myanmar officials. Haq said the trip is being made follow-

ing repeated calls by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres "for an end to the military operation and violence in northern Rakhine State, unfettered access for humanitarian support and the safe, voluntary and dignified sustainable return of refugees to their areas of origin."

UN humanitarian agencies reported that as of Wednesday "the number of refugees who fled Myanmar for Bangladesh since late August has reached 536,000 with 14,000 having crossed the border in the last two days," he said. (Xinhua)

Concerns Grow for Syrian Civilians Caught in Intense Al Raqqa and Deir Ez-Zor Fighting: UNHCR

GENEVA - The UN refugee agency UNHCR, said Friday it is deeply concerned for the safety and well-being of the civilian population of Al Raqqa city, where around 8,000 people are trapped by ongoing fighting. Those who manage to escape fighting from Al Raqqa speak of deteriorating conditions inside the city, said UNHCR spokesperson Andrej Mahecic at a UN media briefing. "Food, water, medicine and electricity are scarce. UNHCR reiterates our call that trapped civilians be allowed safe passage to reach safety, shelter, and protection," said the UNHCR spokesperson. Those civilians face "the bleak choice" of staying in the city engulfed by conflict or fleeing through the fighting and with either choice risking death, said Mahecic. Nearly 270,000 people have fled their homes in Al Raqqa governorate since the beginning of April, said UNHCR as forces seek to oust Islamic State members. Most of those who fled, some 209,000, remain displaced within the governorate, while up to 40,000 have found shelter in Aleppo, 13,000 in Idleb, 6,600 in Deir ez-Zor and 1,400 in Hama. "In the neighboring Deir ez-Zor governorate, we are equally alarmed by the ongoing fighting and the consequences for civilians," said Mahecic. In the first week of October alone, an estimated 95,000 men, women and children were reportedly displaced by fighting to 60 locations across the governorate, as well as the nearby governorates of Al-Hasakeh, Al Raqqa and Aleppo. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

European Bank Welcomes Cooperation with China's B&R

LONDON - The president of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) believes that China's Belt and Road Initiative will be a transformative benefit in areas where the development bank has worked for many years.

The core values of China's Belt and Road Initiative are shared by the EBRD, its president Suma Chakrabarti told Xinhua on Thursday, saying, "There is very much an overlap between what we do and the Belt and Road Initiative." The vision for the initiative was a framework for cooperation and development across nations and continents

which the EBRD supported, Chakrabarti said. He noted that such values as integration, green development, and inclusiveness were repeatedly mentioned during the Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation held in Beijing in May this year, which are also part of the core values of the EBRD. Chakrabarti said this before delivering a strong message of support for the initiative at the annual meeting of the Center for Global Development (CGD) in Washington, which looks at both opportunities and challenges of the Belt and Road Initiative. He is also a co-host of the CGD event. (Xinhua)

Mamnoon Stresses Effective National Security Strategy to Address Internal, External Threats

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain on Friday said that region's situation had cast deep impact on the country's political, social and economic matters and called for devising effective strategies on national security to address internal and external threats. Addressing at the certificate distribution ceremony of National Security War Course-19 here at the National Defence University (NDU), the President said in current scenario, the concepts of national security had changed and serious efforts were required to counter the anti-state narrative. The five-week programme gathered 69 participants including four Senators, 10 Members of National Assembly, 11 Members of Provincial Assemblies,

two members each from Legislative Assemblies of Azad Kashmir and Gilgit Baltistan, four army personnel and 30 members of civil society. President Mamnoon said that Pakistan suffered great loss at the hands of militancy and paid tributes to the government and armed forces for rendering immense sacrifices in this regard. He mentioned that the situation in Kashmir, India, Afghanistan, Iran and Middle East had direct impact on Pakistan. He said swift steps were required for the effective implementation of National Action Plan (NAP). Terming Pakistanis a great nation, the President expressed confidence that it would play a significant role in bringing peace at global front. (Monitoring Desk)

EU, Russia, China Rally behind Iran Deal Ahead of Trump Speech

The EU, Russia and China have called on the US to maintain its commitment to the Iranian nuclear deal, which President Donald Trump is expected to declare no longer in America's interest. "We believe this deal is important to ensuring the international nuclear nonproliferation regime and regional peace and stability. We hope all parties can continue to preserve and implement this deal," China's Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said Friday.

EU foreign policy director Federica Mogherini and German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel held phone talks with

Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif, saying Europe will respect its side of the deal as long as Tehran honors its obligations. Both Mogherini and Gabriel acknowledged that Iran had fully lived up to its commitments under the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) as the nuclear accord is called, the state news agency IRNA reported. They also said Iran should be allowed to benefit from the economic dividends of the deal reached with the US, the UK, France, Russia, China and Germany under which sanctions were lifted against Tehran. (Presstv)

Russia, Uzbekistan Should Jointly Resist International Terrorism

TASHKENT - Russia and Uzbekistan are keen to further develop military cooperation between the two countries.

Russia and Uzbekistan should jointly resist the challenges of international terrorism in Central Asia, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said, RIA Novosti reported.

"Uzbekistan is Russia's strategic partner in the Central Asian region. Our states successfully cooperate in many areas, including the security sphere.

Today we must consolidate our efforts to confront challenges and threats, especially from

international terrorism," he said at a meeting with the Uzbek Defense Minister, Major-General Abdusalom Azizov on October 12. Shoigu noted that over the past year it has become possible to significantly improve the level of cooperation between the defense ministries of Russia and Uzbekistan. Now this level should be maintained and strengthened, the minister believes. "First of all, this concerns joint measures to ensure military security, strengthen the combat potential of the armed forces and train military personnel," he said. (Trend)