

EU Exec Leader Tightlipped about May Meeting

LONDON — The President of the European Commission refused to divulge what issues he would discuss with British Prime Minister Theresa May over dinner on Monday and said to wait until "the autopsy."

EU officials said that the meeting would span much more than the struggling Brexit talks to include current trade relations with global partners, but since both will also bring their chief negotiator for the talks, the stalemate in the negotiations will be on the agenda.

EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker said: "I will see Mrs. May this even-



ing. We will have discussions and then you will have the autopsy."

British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson is urging the European Union to speed up Brexit talks and start discussing now their future relationship after the U.K leaves in 2019.

Johnson said in Luxembourg on Monday: "Let's get these conversations going and stop letting the grass grow under our feet." He said it's time for "the great ship to go down the slipway and onto the open sea and for us to start some serious conversations about the future and the new relationship." (AP)

Iran Deal Working Well, No Need to Fix it: Russia

TEHRAN - A Russian deputy foreign minister says the international nuclear deal with Iran is working "quite efficiently" and requires no amendment, dismissing calls by the United States to address "flaws" in the deal.

Sergei Ryabkov told Russian news agency TASS that there was an American saying that goes "If it's not broke, don't fix it." "That's what I would like to address to the colleagues in the United States," the Russian diplomat said.

The approach of calls

for fixing the Iran deal "seems to be a wrong way to follow as the existing documents are working quite efficiently," he said of the deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

Iran is fully compliant with the deal, while the US is not, Ryabkov said. "What is to be improved in this context is the implementation of the existing agreements by the US side," he added.

He also noted that by fully upholding their end of the bargain, the Iranians "have passed the ball to the US side." (Presstv)

N.Korea Diplomacy Continues until 1st 'Bomb Drops': Tillerson

WASHINGTON — US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said Sunday that diplomatic efforts aimed at resolving the North Korean crisis "will continue until the first bomb drops."

That statement comes despite President Donald Trump's tweets a couple of weeks ago that his chief envoy was "wasting his time" trying to negotiate with "Little Rocket Man," a mocking nickname Trump has given the nuclear-armed nation's

leader Kim Jong Un. "I think he does want to be clear with Kim Jong Un and that regime in North Korea that he has military preparations ready to go and he has those military options on the table.

And we have spent substantial time actually perfecting those," Tillerson told CNN's "State of the Union." "But be clear: The president has also made clear to me that he wants this solved diplomatically.



He's not seeking to go to war," Tillerson said. Recent mixed messaging from the top of the U.S. government has raised concerns about

the potential for miscalculation amid the increasingly bellicose exchange of words by Trump and the North Korean leader. (AP)

Qatar, U.S. Forces in 3rd Joint Military Exercises Since Gulf Crisis



DOHA - Qatar's Joint Special Forces launched training exercises with the U.S. Special Forces on Sunday, as part of the continuing military

cooperation between the two countries, Qatar News Agency (QNA) reported Monday.

The joint training exercises for 2017-18 are a

continuation of the exercise plan implemented in the beginning of the year between Qatar and the U.S., the report said.

The inauguration ceremony was attended by the Joint Special Forces Brigadier General Hamad Abdullah al-Fetais al-Marri and Col David Keesey, Military Attache at the U.S. embassy.

Al-marri said that the launching of a full year joint training exercise programme in partnership with the U.S. Special Forces will boost the depth of cooperation

and defense coordination between the two sides, besides the keenness of the Ministry of Defence to keep abreast of the modern trends in the military field of all sisterly and friendly countries.

The American officer told reporters that the relationship between the two countries is very important. "There is no security for America without the security of Qatar. Such training is part of our co-operation," Col David Keesey added. (Xinhua)

Death Toll from Somalia's Deadly Twin Attacks Rises to 276

MOGADISHU - At least 276 people have been killed and more than 300 others injured following Saturday's twin bomb attacks in the Somali capital of Mogadishu, a government official confirmed Monday.

Information Minister Abdurahman Osman, who termed the massive bomb attack as "barbaric," said some countries have already pledged support, adding that emergency services such as hospitals have been overwhelmed by people seeking medical sup-

port. "The death toll rises to 276 as of now and around 300 were injured as a result of Saturday's barbaric attack by terrorist group, Al-Shabaab, at KM5 junction in Mogadishu," Osman said in a tweet.

A massive car bomb was detonated outside the entrance to a hotel in the city's KM5 junction, the home to government offices, hotels and restaurants.

Later in the day, a second bombing was reported in the city's Madina district. (Xinhua)

Bulgarian President Calls for Modernization of Army, Military

SOFIA - Bulgarian President Rumen Radev here on Monday said the country's armed forces and military industry needed modernization amid their serious technological backwardness.

"Bulgaria must overcome the definite lag in the process of modernization of its armed forces and the technological gap with our allies," said Radev, while addressing a conference on the role of Bulgaria in the common European defense.

"I can guarantee that at the moment we cannot significantly contribute to generating capabilities in the common European defense because we cannot communicate with the others," said Radev, who until August 2016 was commander of the Bulgarian Air Force.

As "the most elementary example," Radev pointed out that even the modern Bulgarian transport helicopters could not participate in a transport mission in Afghanistan because they did not have a secure voice communication capability.

Meanwhile, the state leadership faced the "huge problem" of how to allocate defense spending, said Radev, who is also the commander-in-chief of the country's armed forces.

The armed forces needed to continue their combat training, but this meant that investment was needed in the repair of armament, which has not been maintained for decades, Radev said.

On the other hand, if Bulgaria profoundly invested in the repair of weapons, there would be no resources left for the acquisition of new armament that would actually provide compatibility and new capabilities, Radev said. (Xinhua)

German FM Warns Against Military Escalation over Iranian Nuclear Accord Dispute

BERLIN - German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel (SPD) has warned on Monday against a military escalation as a consequence of the U.S. withdrawal from the Iranian nuclear accord.

Europeans were "very concerned" that the decision of U.S. President Donald Trump to de-certify Tehran's compliance with the accord could lead to a "military confrontation" in the region, Gabriel said. The German foreign minister announced that he would



hold discussions with his colleagues in Europe and beyond on how to save the Iranian nuclear accord. Trump recently adopted a more aggressive stance towards Iran by refusing to certify the

country's compliance with the 2015 program. The move was widely-condemned in European capitals, leading Gabriel to express fears over the future of the transatlantic alliance. (Xinhua)

Most French Not Satisfied with Macron's First TV Interview: Poll

PARIS - Most of the French said they were not satisfied with President Emmanuel Macron's first TV interview where he defended a controversial labor reform criticized by the discontent as favoring the rich, according to a poll released Monday.

"I'm the president of all the French," Macron told TF1 television in response to growing critics over his pro-liberal road-map, in his first TV interview since he took office on May 7.

A Harris Interactive poll for RMC radio showed that 61 percent of the 856 respondents did not appreciate Ma-

ron's performance.

According to the online poll conducted Sunday, half of the people said they are satisfied with the president's foreign policy and four out of 10 said they support his economic proposals.

In the 70-minute interview, the 39-year head of state also said, "We're taking care of the France where things aren't going well."

"I'm doing what I said I would do during the election campaign ... There will always be resistances, comments ... I am not here to manage or reform, but to transform," he said. (Xinhua)

ASEAN Moving Closer to Creating Common Market: Philippine Financial Chief

MANILA - The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is making substantial progress in creating a common market, a press release from the Philippine finance ministry quoted its chief as saying on Monday.

Finance Secretary Carlos Dominguez voiced optimism that ASEAN, one of the world's major growth drivers, will meet its timetable on economic integration as spelled out in the ASEAN Economic Blueprint 2025.

ASEAN officially became a single economic bloc in 2015, but members' varying levels of development have hampered efforts towards greater integration. "The ASEAN has moved dramatically in its effort to build a region-wide policy framework to enhance trade, economic cooperation and financial flows among the ASEAN member countries," said Dominguez.

He added ASEAN is "moving close towards achieving the strategic goal of a common regional market." Dominguez is in Washington to attend the International Monetary Fund (IMF) managing directors roundtable meeting with ASEAN finance ministers and central governors.

The Philippines chairs ASEAN this year as the bloc celebrates its 50th anniversary. Dominguez spoke on behalf of his fellow ASEAN ministers during the meeting at the IMF headquarters.

Dominguez reported that average growth this year among the ASEAN countries is expected at 5 percent, driven by strong domestic consumption in their respective economies. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

U.S., China Both Benefit from Energy Efficiency Cooperation: U.S. Expert

DENVER, the United States - With top government energy officials and industry leaders from China and the United States filling a downtown Denver convention hall, Jon Creyts felt quite at home.

At the 8th Annual U.S.-China Energy Efficiency Forum held here on Friday, the managing director at the Rocky Mountain Institute (RMI), a non-profit U.S. organization, headed a closing panel that addressed future trends in China's energy revolution.

"Regarding cooperation between the U.S. and China -- there is no area we should agree on more than the benefits of energy efficiency," Creyts told Xinhua, noting that the two countries produce 43 percent of the world's harmful carbon dioxide

emissions and a stunning 38 percent of all global energy use. In an exclusive interview with Xinhua Saturday, Creyts reiterated the inevitability of a global transfer to renewable energies in the near future. "We are going to flip from predominantly carbon-based energy to renewables -- and that means using a minimum amount of petroleum and fuel in the future," he said, emphasizing that China had become a leader in this field.

"China is undoubtedly on the top of the leaders in energy efficiency. It is growing its clean energy base faster than anyone in the world and pursuing energy alternatives faster than anyone in the world," said the recognized global expert on China's vast and complex energy sector. (Xinhua)

EU Defends Iran Deal despite Trump, Appeals to U.S. Congress

LUXEMBOURG - The European Union on Monday reaffirmed its support for a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers despite sharp criticism of the accord by President Donald Trump, and it urged U.S. lawmakers not to reimpose sanctions on Tehran. Trump defied both U.S. allies and adversaries on Friday by refusing to formally certify that Tehran is complying with the accord, even though international inspectors say it is, and said he might ultimately terminate the agreement.

EU foreign ministers meeting in Luxembourg said a failure to uphold an international agreement backed by the U.N.

Security Council could have serious consequences for regional peace, and also undermine efforts to check North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

"As Europeans together, we are very worried that the decision of the U.S. president could lead us back into military confrontation with Iran," German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel told reporters.

After a closed-door meeting chaired by EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini on how best to proceed on the Iran issue, the ministers issued a joint statement saying the 2015 deal was key to preventing the global spread of nuclear weapons. (Reuters)

Abbas for Early Operationalisation of TAPI

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi Monday reiterated Pakistan's strong commitment to the early operationalization of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline project as it holds a huge potential for meeting Pakistan's energy needs.

He was talking to Ambassador of Turkmenistan to Pakistan Atadjan Nurlyevich Movlamov who paid a courtesy call on him here at the PM Office.

The Prime Minister said Pakistan and Turkmenistan traditionally enjoy close, cordial relations marked by trust and un-

derstanding and pointed that bilateral collaboration in different sectors was growing steadily.

The Prime Minister said there was room for attaining optimum level of economic cooperation between Pakistan and Turkmenistan. He said both the countries should set the goal for increased engagement in trade, investment and other areas.

It was also noted that the two countries were focused on measures for enhanced connectivity including air and land linkages to promote trade, travel, tourism and people-to-people contacts. (Monitoring Desk)

Turkmenistan to Build TAPI Gas Compressor Station Using Own Resources

ASHGABAT - Construction of a gas compressor station for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline on the Malai field will be completed in 2024, said a source in Turkmenistan's fuel and energy complex.

"This will be done using our own resources," the source said.

As previously reported, it is planned to hold an international tender for procurement of pipes, materials and equipment necessary for implementing the TAPI project in 2018 and launch the pipeline in 2019.

Besides, work is underway to prepare projects of gas compressor station and other related facilities. TAPI will make it possible to deliver gas from Turkmenistan, which ranks fourth in the world for its gas reserves, to large and promising markets of South and Southeast Asia.

The pipeline will run from Galkynysh - the largest gas field in Turkmenistan - through the Afghan cities of Herat and Kandahar, and finally reach the Fazilka settlement located near the India-Pakistan border. (Trend)