

UK Accused of Delaying Contested Brexit Bill

LONDON - Britain's main opposition Labour Party on Tuesday said the government was delaying debate of a landmark bill to end Britain's membership of the EU after more than 300 amendments were tabled to the draft law.

"This is further proof that the government's Brexit strategy is in paralysis," Labour's Brexit spokesman Keir Starmer said in a statement. "The negotiations are in deadlock and now a crucial piece of legislation is facing further delay," he said, adding that this cast doubt on "whether the prime minister (Theresa May) can deliver



Brexit." A Labour source told AFP that the so-called Repeal Bill, which aims to provide legal certainty after Brexit, may not pass the House of Commons until after Christmas.

"We understood the bill would return this week, then we thought next week," the source said, adding that it was not now expected to start facing detailed scrutiny by MPs "until mid-November". A number of the amendments to the bill - officially known as the European Union (Withdrawal) Bill - were proposed by members of May's own Conservative party. (AFP)

Syria, Iran Stress Ongoing Military Cooperation

DAMASCUS - Syria's Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Ali Ayoub agreed Wednesday with his Iranian counterpart Major General Mohammad Hossein Bagheri to boost military cooperation between both countries.

Meeting in Damascus, both commanders discussed the achievements made in fighting terrorist groups in Syria, according to state news agency SANA.

"We held plenary talks which included a comprehensive assessment of all the current developments, and we discussed in de-

tails the relations binding our armies and the mutual desire to enhance these relations," Ayoub said in a joint press conference following the talks. He stressed that the war against terrorism will continue till eliminating it completely and restoring security and stability to entire Syria. Ayoub, meanwhile, pointed out to the "accumulating experience" of the Syrian army and its allies that has been achieved during the battles, saying such experience will play a "key role" in the war against terror. (Xinhua)

Democratic Senators to Press Sessions on Talks with Trump

WASHINGTON - Democratic senators plan to press Attorney General Jeff Sessions about his private communications with the president when he appears before a Senate committee Wednesday to discuss his leadership of the Justice Department.

The routine oversight hearing is Sessions' first appearance before the Senate Judiciary Committee since his January confirmation, and it comes as he has worked quickly to reshape the department

with an intense focus on immigration, drugs, gangs and violent crime. He will likely face questions from lawmakers about his swift undoing of Obama-era protections for gay and transgender people and his rollback of criminal justice policies that aimed to reduce the federal prison population, among other changes he has made in nine months since taking office. He has tried to pressure so-called sanctuary cit-



ies into cooperating with federal immigration authorities by threatening to withhold grant money, and he was the public face of the Trump administration's decision to end a program benefiting hundreds of thousands of young people who entered the U.S. illegally as children. (AP)

Merkel Warns of Compromise as Talks on Coalition Start



BERLIN - A chastened Angela Merkel warned her conservatives they must compromise to forge a nationally untested alliance in Germany as

she heads into talks with other parties on Wednesday after suffering losses in last month's election. Merkel's conservatives, comprising her

own Christian Democrats (CDU) and Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU), are striving for a tie-up with the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) and the Greens. But policy differences are wide and in the last few weeks politicians from all parties have set out their stall, narrowing room for compromise in policy areas from immigration to the EU and environmental policy. A senior CSU figure even said the conservatives may yet have to talk to their former coalition partners the

Social Democrats several months down the line. Bild daily quoted Merkel, whose conservatives bled support to the far right in the Sept. 24 vote, as telling her parliamentary party on Tuesday evening: "We won't come out of this without compromises" even if they have clear goals. Merkel, chancellor for 12 years and known as a skilled negotiator, angered many voters over her open-door migrant policy and her conservatives saw their worst result since 1949. (Reuters)

Defeating IS in Syria's Raqqa Deals Big Blow to Terrorism

DAMASCUS - The defeat of the Islamic State (IS) group in its main stronghold in Syria's Raqqa province has dealt a strong blow to terrorism in Syria and the region, analysts said. The IS has lost its de facto capital of Raqqa to the U.S.-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) on Tuesday, the first major defeat to the terror-designated group in the heartland of its control in northern Syria since its self-styled caliphate announced in 2014 in Syria. Talal Silo, the spokesman of the SDF, told Xinhua

on Tuesday that the military operations against the IS in Raqqa have ended, adding that the city is liberated from the IS, but the SDF forces are mopping up the city in search of possible sleeper cells and mines. Finally, gone are the days of the beheading and the gruesome killings on cameras, as the IS militants are now running for their lives, whether following their downfall in Raqqa, or in the eastern province of Deir al-Zour, where the Syrian army and allied fighters are advancing. (Xinhua)

EU Unveils Measures to Tackle Low-Tech Attacks

BRUSSELS - The European Union on Wednesday unveiled new measures to help counter deadly low-tech attacks following a spate of killings in major cities by extremists driving vehicles into crowds of people.

The European Commission, which proposes and ensures compliance with EU laws, said the measures aim to better protect major gatherings like concerts or sports events.

They include additional funding and training to improve cooperation between police and private security at malls or concerts.

"Terrorists don't stand still. They change and adapt their methods. We need to be ready to adapt our response," EU Security Commissioner Julian King said.

The response, he said, is meant to "build our resilience, to limit terrorist access to the means they use to carry out attacks, and to strengthen international cooperation."

Brussels also wants to review rules for the sale of bomb-making material to make it harder for extremists to obtain the ingredients, and help investigators tackle encrypted phone or computer data. The Commission didn't explain exactly how this would be done, though King said EU countries with more experience in tackling encryption should share the know-how. To help protect public spaces and raise awareness about potential dangers at events, the Commission has earmarked a total of 118.5 million euros (\$140 million) in funding for this year and 2018. (AP)

S. Korea, U.S., Japan Hold Vice-Ministerial Meeting on DPRK

SEOUL - Senior diplomats of South Korea, the United States and Japan held a vice-ministerial meeting on Wednesday to discuss issues concerning the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Vice Foreign Minister Lim Sung-nam of South Korea met with visiting U.S. Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan and his Japanese counterpart Shinsuke Sugiyama. It was the first such trilateral meeting since January in Washington.

After the meeting, the three diplomats held a



joint press conference, saying they shared the view over the urgency to stably manage situations on the Korean Peninsula while continuing pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to resolve its

nuclear program. They shared evaluations on current situations on the Korean Peninsula, while confirming a common goal of the complete dismantlement of the DPRK's nuclear program in peaceful ways. (Xinhua)

Qatari Emir Calls for Dialogue to End Gulf Crisis

DOHA - Qatari Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, on Wednesday called for dialogue to resolve the ongoing crisis in the Gulf. Al-Thani told reporters after talks with Indonesian President Joko Widodo at the state palace in Bogor, south of Jakarta, capital of Indonesia, Qatar News Agency (QNA) reported. "We conveyed ... that Qatar is ready to conduct a dialogue to solve the problem as we already know that no one will win," Al-Thani said, "We are all brothers who are suffering because of this crisis," he Qatari Emir led a delegation of 40 businessmen who also accompa-

nied him to Malaysia and Singapore. His Asian tour came more than four months into a Saudi-led blockade against the Gulf emirate. The Saudi Arabia-led Arab quartet, which also includes the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt, cut diplomatic ties with Qatar on June 5 and has imposed an air, sea and land embargo against the tiny gas-rich Gulf state, citing Doha's support to terrorism and extremists.

Qatar has strongly denied these charges and has been seeking diplomatic and economic support from Turkey and Iran, which is Saudi's arch rival, to break the blockade. (Xinhua)

British Gov't Seeks New Powers to Block Foreign Company Mergers on Security Grounds

LONDON - New powers to enable British government intervention to block company mergers where national security concerns are an issue were outlined Tuesday.

The measures, outlined by Greg Clark, Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, will be targeted mainly at key areas, specifically companies that design or manufacture military and dual use products, and parts of the advanced technology sector.

Currently the British government intervention can only intervene in mergers involving companies with a turnover in Britain of more than 70 million pounds (93 million U.S. dollars), or where the share of British supply increases to 25 percent or over.

New proposals will enable greater scrutiny of foreign investment in a changing market, allowing the government to intervene in mergers that raise national security concerns, even when they involve smaller businesses. The Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (DBEIS) said lowering the threshold will enable government ministers to scrutinize investment to businesses with a million-pound turnover, and remove the requirement for a merger to increase a business's share of supply of, or over, 25 percent.

A spokesman for DBEIS said the government will also consult on longer-term proposals to allow for better scrutiny of transactions that may raise national security concerns. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

Xi Vows to Deepen Reforms, Make China a 'Leading Global Power'

BEIJING - Chinese President Xi Jinping pledged to deepen reforms to make China a "leading global power" by 2050, but warned of severe challenges ahead.

"Right now, both China and the world are in the midst of profound and complex changes," Xi told delegates at the opening of the 19th Communist Party Congress on Wednesday. "China is still in an important period of strategic opportunity for development. The prospects are bright, but the challenges are severe."

Xi outlined his vision for the country in the next five years, spending three and a half hours delivering his report as the party's general secretary. "The country will stand

proudly among the nations of the world and become a leading global power by 2050," he said. With China's GDP growing to 80 trillion yuan (US\$12.08 trillion) from 54 trillion yuan five years ago, he stressed that the government would aim for growth that is sustainable and of higher quality.

Xi said China would continue opening its doors to foreign businesses. "The China that has opened up will not close, but will open wider and wider," he said. He also said the nation will push ahead with market-oriented reforms of its foreign exchange rate as well as its financial system, and let the market play a decisive role in the allocation of resources. (Agencies)

Iran to Honor Nuclear Deal as Long as U.S. Respects it: Khamenei

TEHRAN - Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei said Wednesday that Iran will cut 2015 international nuclear deal into shreds if the United States chooses to tear it up, Press TV reported.

Khamenei welcomed the European governments' opposition to the U.S. President Donald Trump's refusal to certify Iran's compliance with the nuclear deal, officially called the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA). "But this is not enough for them (EU) to say that he (Trump) should not tear up the JCPOA," he said, adding that "the JCPOA serves their interests." "As long as the other party has not torn

up the JCPOA, we will not tear it up ... Iran will rip the deal into shreds if the other side decides to tear it up," he said.

Besides, Europeans need to take practical measures in the face of Washington's threats to the deal, and refuse to join voices with the U.S. in its opposition to Iran's regional role and defense program, he stressed. Khamenei also dismissed Western criticisms of Iran's conventional missile program, noting, "Why do you, yourself, have missiles? Why do you have atomic bombs?" Europe, should "avoid meddling with our defense issues," Khamenei pointed out. (Xinhua)

Political Stability Imperative for Sustained Economic Development: Mamnoon

BANNU - Pakistan's President Mamnoon Hussain said here Wednesday that political stability was prerequisite for sustainable economic progress, development, prosperity and promotion of quality education especially of science and technology was vital, in order to take the country to the new heights of glory.

The Pakistani President was addressing students, parents and faculty members of the 2nd Convocation of the University of Science and Technology (WUST), Students Startup Business Centre (SSBC) of University of Science and Technology and Human Resource Development Centre (HRDC).

(Monitoring Desk)

Tajikistan, Russia Emergencies Departments Sign Cooperation Plan 2018-2019

DUSHANBE - Russian Emergencies Minister Vladimir Puchkov and Chairman of the Committee for Emergencies and Civil Defense at Tajikistan's government Rustam Nazarzoda have signed a joint action plan between the two ministries for 2018-2019. "The signing of the plan makes it possible to cooperate on a regular basis and provide participation of Russian and Tajik experts in joint events held both in the bilateral and unilateral formats," Tass cited Puchkov as saying. He highlighted that the Russian Emergencies Ministry supports

implementation of the joint project of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Russia on strengthening of Tajikistan's emergency response capabilities with involvement of the Russian Emergencies Ministry's experts.

"We fully support implementation of the given project. We are ready to further help in the solution of the issue on extension of the given project until 2020," Puchkov said. Nazarzoda, for his part, highly valued Russian methods of staff training for emergency prevention and response. (AKI)