

# At Odds over Brexit, UK Nations Discuss How to Cooperate on Terms

LONDON - The leaders of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales met British Prime Minister Theresa May on Monday to discuss what part the three nations will play in the Brexit process, a thorny issue that risks triggering a constitutional crisis.

May proposes setting up a new committee to give the three devolved governments, which have varying degrees of autonomy from London, a formal avenue to express views on how Britain's future relationship with the European Union should work.

"The country is facing a negotiation of tremendous



importance and it is imperative that the devolved ad-

ministrations play their part in making it work,"

May said in a statement her office released before

the meeting. At stake is the three-centu-

ry union between England, where a majority voted to leave the EU, and Scotland, where a majority voted to stay. Scottish First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said on Monday she was seeking "meaningful input" into the decision-making structure and wants each of the United Kingdom's four assemblies to get a vote on the proposed negotiating package. Sturgeon has said her government is preparing for all possibilities, including independence from the UK, after Britain leaves the EU. In Northern Ireland, which also voted to keep EU ... (More on P4)...(21)

## Nieghbor News

### China Holds Anti-Terror Exercises on Afghanistan-Tajikistan Border

BEIJING - China has conducted its first-ever joint bilateral military exercises in Tajikistan, a sign of Beijing's increasing concern about instability in Afghanistan and the capacity of other regional countries to contain it. The exercise took place in Gorno Badakhshan, the remote eastern end of Tajikistan that borders both Afghanistan and China. Tajikistan's Ministry of Defense reported that the exercise involved 10,000 troops, but that the Chinese contingent was only a "mobile company." A company usually contains 100-200 soldiers, so the Chinese presence was not overwhelming. The exercise reportedly involved armored vehicles, aircraft, and artillery,

though it wasn't specified if any of those were Chinese.

Still, the exercise represented yet another step in China's growing military presence in Central Asia. This is the first time that China and Tajikistan have held drills bilaterally in Tajikistan. (Chinese troops did conduct exercises in Tajikistan in 2012, but those were under the auspices of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and also included other troops from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Russia.)

"The exercise has shown that servicemen of the two countries are ready to provide support to each other in the fight against international terrorism in ... (More on P4)...(30)

### Germany to Cooperate with Iran on Transportation Projects

TEHRAN - Iran and Germany signed six documents on cooperation in Iranian transportation projects, semi-official Fars news agency reported on Monday. The agreements, signed on Sunday by the Iranian minister of roads and urban development and the German transportation minister, envisage cooperation in marine, road and railway transportation areas.

The two sides agreed to promote ties in ports and navigation and to cooperate in relevant educational fields.

On Sunday, Germany's Siemens company and Thales Group also inked documents with the Ira-

nian Railway Company to develop the country's center-to-south and Tehran-to-Tabriz railway lines.

Earlier, Siemens signed a memorandum of understanding with National Iranian Gas Company and Iran's Oil Turbo Compressor Co. on cooperation in the energy sector, according to Petro Energy Information Network.

Repairing and maintaining the existing machinery by Siemens and import of modern equipment needed for Iranian gas industry were the main parts of the cooperation agreement between Siemens and the Iranian sides. (Xinhua)

### Pakistan out of Economic Crisis: IMF's Lagarde

ISLAMABAD - International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director (MD) Christine Lagarde in a meeting with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in Islamabad on Monday maintained Pakistan is now "certainly out of economic crisis", a PM Office statement said.

In the first such visit by an IMF head in several years, Lagarde lauded the prime minister on successfully completing the IMF programme and achieving macroeconomic stability during a short period of time.

Lagarde's two-day visit comes around two months after the international lender cleared payment to Pakistan of a final \$102 million tranche

in a \$6.4 billion three-year programme.

"It is a fantastic step in your journey that you have achieved a better and solid economic position in a brief period of two years," she said, as quoted by the statement. Completion of the IMF programme reflects very positively on Pakistan, she said.

The IMF MD said that economic growth has gradually increased, and the fiscal deficit has reduced while inflation has continuously declined in Pakistan. She also appreciated the country's strengthened social safety nets and tax policy and administration reforms, according to PM Office. (Monitoring Desk)

### Bank Deposits in Turkmenistan Now Safe: Gov't

ASHGABAT - The law "On compulsory guarantee of deposits of individuals" has entered force in Turkmenistan. This law defines the legal, economic and organizational bases of guaranteeing deposits of the individuals in banks of Turkmenistan, participation of banks in the system of compulsory guarantee of deposits. The aim of the compulsory deposit guarantee system is to promote the attraction of savings of the population, protect the interests of depositors, strengthen confidence in the banking system of Turkmenistan by paying

guarantee compensation in case if a member bank is compulsory liquidated. The main principles of the system of compulsory guarantee of deposits are mandatory participation of banks, which accept deposits of individuals, transparency of the compulsory deposit guarantee system, the cumulative nature of the formation of the fund for compulsory deposit guarantee. The subjects of the mandatory deposit guarantee system are investors, the Central Bank of Turkmenistan and the participating banks. (Trend)

## Pentagon Chief Urges 'Isolation Operation' for IS-Held Raqqa

ARBIL, IRAQ - US defence chief Ashton Carter said Sunday that an operation to isolate the Islamic State group in Syria's Raqqa should begin in conjunction with the assault on the jihadists' Iraqi bastion Mosul.

"We want to see an isolation operation begin around Raqqa as soon as possible," Carter said during a visit to Iraq's autonomous region of Kurdistan to review an ongoing offensive to retake Mosul from IS.

"We are working with our

partners there (in Syria) to do that," the US secretary of defence said, adding: "There will be some simultaneity to these two operations."

Iraqi forces launched a huge operation last week to retake Mosul, the last major city in Iraq under IS control.

The United States leads a 60-nation coalition that has



provided key support in the form of thousands of air strikes, training to Iraqi forces and advisers on the

ground. The loss of Mosul would leave Raqqa - the de facto capital of the jihadists' ... (More on P4)...(22)

## Saudi Arabia Says Drop in Oil Prices Negatively Affects Petroleum Investments

RIYADH - Saudi Arabia on Sunday expressed its concern over the negative effects of the drop in oil prices on the petroleum investment, local media reported.

Saudi Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources Khalid al-Falih voiced the concern during a meeting of the Gulf countries' energy ministers in Riyadh, according to Al Eqtisadia news website.

He warned the reduction of oil-related investments may reduce future oil sup-

plies that will have high implications on the world economy.

The member states of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) have been involved in negotiations to bring back the stability to the oil market, the minister said.

The meetings came as the Gulf countries are adopting extreme cost-cutting measures to deal with the dropping oil prices, as the prices have declined to 30 U.S. dollars per barrel in ... (More on P4)...(23)

## S. Korean President Offers to Revise Constitution

SEOUL - South Korean President Park Geun-hye on Monday offered to revise the country's constitution that has been maintained for nearly 30 years.

Park said in her parliamentary speech for the 2017 budget plan that she will set up a body inside the administration for a constitutional revision with an aim of completing it within her term in office that ends in February 2018.

The chief executive said she anticipates a future-oriented constitution for a new "2017 regime",

asking the National Assembly to form a special committee to garner public opinion and discuss the range and content of the proposed amendment.

The so-called "1987 regime" was launched in 1987 by rewriting constitution to adopt the current single, five-year presidential term under a direct election system. Previously, the country's president had been elected indirectly under military dictatorships.

Park's proposal was a surprise reversal in her ... (More on P4)...(24)

## Russia Rules out Early Renewal of Aleppo Ceasefire

MOSCOW - Russia, blaming failures by the US-led coalition and meagre hopes for diplomacy, on Monday ruled out early moves to renew its ceasefire in Aleppo after a brief truce ended at the weekend.

"The question of renewing the humanitarian pause is not relevant now," deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov told Interfax news agency, in Moscow's first official comment on why it did not extend the ceasefire further.

Heavy fighting resumed in the devastated Syrian city

on Saturday after Russia, a government ally, ended its three-day cessation of hostilities.

In order to renew the pause, "our opponents must ensure appropriate behaviour by the anti-government groups that in particular sabotaged the medical evacuation that was intended during the humanitarian pause," Ryabkov said.



He chastised the US-led coalition, saying that it was criticising Damascus and Moscow instead of "really exerting influence on the

opposition, the rebels." "Over the last three days, what was needed did not happen," he said. ... (More on P4)...(25)

## Iraq Says No Turkish Troops Participated in Mosul Battle

BAGHDAD - The Iraqi Joint Operations Command (JOC) said on Monday that no Turkish troops participated in the battles against Islamic State (IS) militants in Mosul. "The Iraqi Joint Operations Command denies the participation of Turkish troops in any form in the battle to liberate Mosul," the JOC spokesperson, Brig. Gen. Yahya Rasoul, said in a statement.

The JOC statement came in response to comments by Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim on Sunday that Turkish artillery provided shelling for Kurdish Peshmerga forces near Bashiqa, where Kurds were fighting the IS group in northern Iraq. "The Peshmerga have mobilized to cleanse the Bashiqa region of ... (More on P4)...(26)

## American Hacker Warns Russia to Stop Interfering with U.S. Election

WASHINGTON - The American vigilante hacker known as Jester (whose signature graphic is shown above) took a swipe at Russia for hacking U.S. sites. The self-described "gray hat" hacker who calls himself "Jester" hacked the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs website Friday night. His message: "Stop attacking Americans," according to CNNMoney.

Anyone who visited the Ministry website after the hack first heard the intentionally loud, annoying, attention-demanding dial tone sound that plays just before American emergency broadcast civil alert messages. Jester's letter to the Ministry displayed in full on the site's homepage. The letter, which no longer appears on the site but was still visible Saturday, went into detail about the ... (More on P4)...(28)

## Iraq Says Kills 74 IS Militants in Kirkuk

KIRKUK, Iraq - The security authority of Kirkuk province in northern Iraq said on Monday that 74 Islamic State (IS) militants were killed on Friday when dozens of IS militants attacked the provincial capital city of Kirkuk. A statement issued by the provincial security committee said that the security forces and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters foiled the attacks of some 100 IS militants.

"The security forces also detained a number of IS militants, including the leader of the attacks, who is an Iraqi national," the statement said. The IS militants, many wearing explosive vests,



attacked the police compound, a building of Kurdish security, known as Asaysh, and some government buildings and mosques inside Kirkuk, some 250 km north of the Iraqi capital of Baghdad. Local Kurdish security forces, backed by Kurdish

reinforcement troops from the neighboring provinces of Sulaimaniyah and Arbil, surrounded the IS-held buildings inside the city and killed the attackers after fierce clashes. IS militants also attacked al-Debis power plant, some ... (More on P4)...(27)

## Russia May Sustain Suspension of Plutonium Deal with U.S.: Russian Minister

MOSCOW - Russia may continue the suspension of an already halted deal with the United States on disposal of plutonium from decommissioned nuclear warheads amid escalating tensions between the two powers, a senior Russian diplomat said Monday.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the suspension of the deal earlier this month, citing the "threat to strategic stability posed by the hostile actions of the United States against Russia."

"It is obvious that the current U.S. admin-

istration will not agree to ... lift sanctions, nor to reduce the U.S. military presence in Europe," said Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov. "In this case, its suspension would have an indefinite nature."

The treaty, signed in 2000 and updated in 2010, required the two countries to dispose of 34 tons of weapons-grade plutonium from decommissioned nuclear warheads, which is enough to make approximately 17,000 nuclear weapons. Russia has suspended a number of agreements with the United States in ... (More on P4)...(29)