

Spanish Gov't Officially Takes Control of Catalonia's Regional Gov't

MADRID - The Spanish government has officially taken control of Catalonia's regional government, Generalitat, with Spain's Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy taking control of the functions of the president of Generalitat.

Rajoy has delegated these duties on Spain's Deputy Prime Minister, Soraya Saenz de Santamaria, who is also in charge of the Catalan vice-presidency. The Spanish ministries take control of the different departments of the Generalitat. The Spanish government has also sacked



the Chief of the Mossos d'Esquadra (Catalan police), Josep Lluís Trapero, who accepted the decision, and Ferran Lopez was appointed as the new chief.

Also on Saturday, former president of Generalitat, Carles Puigdemont, asked Catalan citizens to be patient, refuse violence and go on working in order to "build a free country".

Meanwhile, thousands of people gathered in Plaza Colon in Spanish capital Madrid to defend the unity of the country and the Spanish constitution. (Xinhua)

Unity March in Heart of 'Independent' Catalonia

BARCELONA - Defenders of Spanish unity massed in the streets of Catalonia's capital Barcelona Sunday, waving national and European flags and chanting "Viva Espana" two days after regional lawmakers voted to sever the region from Spain. Protesters flocked in their tens of thousands through Barcelona's streets, in a sea of red-and-yellow Spanish flags, brandishing placards reading "De Todos" (It belongs to all of us). The stand-off has plunged Spain into its worst political crisis in decades, and

raised alarm in Europe. "We are all Catalonia," proclaimed a massive banner as the crowd chanted "Prison for Puigdemont", and "Long live Spain". Secessionist leader Carles Puigdemont and his regional executive was axed by the central government on Saturday, a day after Catalan lawmakers voted to declare the region of 7.5 million people a republic. Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy also dissolved the regional parliament, and called December 21 elections for a new one. (AFP)

Climate, Migration Disputes Cloud German Coalition Talks

BERLIN - Disputes about climate and immigration policy dominated German media ahead of resumed talks among Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives, the pro-business Free Democrats (FDP) and the environmental Greens about forming a coalition government. Officials from all three political groups traded barbs and insults in a series of media interviews, dimming hopes that next week's talks could result in progress for a so-called Jamaica coalition - a name chosen because the parties'

black, yellow and green colors mirror those of the Jamaican flag. Simone Peter, co-leader of the Greens, told Reuters the FDP must agree to honor existing carbon dioxide reduction promises before her party would continue coalition talks. She said her party viewed conservative's insistence on a migrant cap as a "no go". FDP Leader Christian Lindner shot back in an interview with the Bild am Sonntag newspaper: "If the Greens don't budge in future talks, Jamaica will



remain a castle in the air." Merkel, whose conservative alliance suffered its worst result in September elections since 1949, is trying to forge a tricky three-way coalition that is untested at a national level. The exploratory talks are to continue Monday after the three sides failed to reach agreement on immigration and climate issues during an 11-hour session on Thursday. (Reuters)

Christians can Promote Political Dialogue in Europe: Pope



VATICAN CITY - Pope Francis on Saturday said Christians can play a role in shaping Europe's future by promoting political dialogue "especially where it is threatened and where conflict seems

to prevail." Francis addressed European political and church leaders at a moment of broad political crises in Europe. It came a day after the regional parliament in Catalonia made a unilateral declaration of independence from Spain, and as Britain negotiates its exit from the European Union after four decades. Francis' fifth foreign policy speech on Europe, titled "To be the soul of Europe," was made to a forum on Europe organized by the Commission of the Bishops' Conferences of the European Community. Pointedly, Francis said politics, rather than promoting dialogue as it should, "is becoming instead a forum for clashes between opposing forces. The voice of dialogue is replaced by shouted claims

and demands." "Extremist and populist groups are finding fertile ground in many countries; they make protest the heart of their political message, without offering the alternative of a constructive political project," the pope said. The pontiff said that political leaders must promote Europe as "an inclusive community," where differences are "valued and viewed as a shared source of enrichment. Seen in this way, migrants are more a resource than a burden." (AP)

from the Kurds, part of a crisis sparked by last month's Kurdish vote for independence. Federal forces have sought to regain control of the country's borders from forces loyal to the Kurdish regional government. The Fishkhabur crossing is the only gateway for residents, aid workers and journalists to enter northeastern Syria. A nearby crossing, used for commercial traffic, was closed on Thursday due to fighting in Iraq, and has yet to reopen. (AP)

Iraq Fighting Threatens Access to Syria: Aid Group

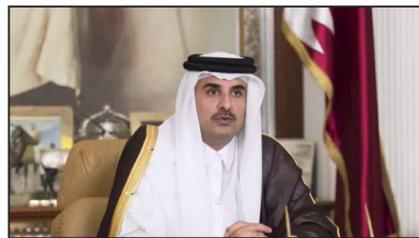
BEIRUT - Doctors Without Borders said Sunday that fighting between Iraqi forces and Kurdish fighters near the border threatens the delivery of humanitarian aid to half a million newly displaced civilians in northeastern Syria. The medical charity, also known as MSF, said it is "extremely concerned" because the fighting threatens its only cross-border supply routes between the two countries. Scattered clashes have erupted in recent weeks as Iraqi forces have retaken disputed territory

Iraqi Govt. Forces, Kurdish Peshmerga Fighters begin Fresh Talks

BAGHDAD - Iraqi government forces and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters have launched a second round of negotiations in a bid to resolve a conflict about the control of border crossings in the country's semi-autonomous Kurdistan region two days after the two sides reached an agreement to stop fighting. "The second round of talks about deploying federal troops in the disputed areas has started," the state-run al-Iraqiya television network reported on Sunday. The report did not provide any further details. Iraqi forces and Kurdish Peshmerga fighters held the first round of talks on Friday and Saturday. On Friday, Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi ordered a 24-hour suspension to military operations against Kurdish forces. Abadi said the talks are meant to pave the way for the peaceful deployment of Iraqi troops at the border crossings of Kurdistan region. Tensions are simmering between Iraq's Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) and the Baghdad government in the wake of last month's Kurdish independence referendum and a dire "threat of civil war" there. The referendum on secession of the Kurdistan region was held on September 25 despite strong opposition from Iraqi authorities, the international community, and Iraq's neighboring countries, especially Turkey and Iran. Following the vote, Baghdad imposed a ban on direct international flights to the Kurdish region and called for a halt to its independent crude oil sales. (Presstv)

Qatar's Emir Warns Against Military Action in Gulf Dispute

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates - Qatar's emir has warned against any military confrontation over the ongoing diplomatic dispute between his country and four other Arab nations, saying it would only plunge the region into chaos. Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani said U.S. President Donald Trump has offered to host a meeting between Qatar and its opponents - Bahrain, Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - to end the crisis between the American allies. Speaking to the American television network CBS's "60 Minutes" news program, Sheikh Tamim said so far, however, there's been no response from the boycotting nations. "It was supposed to be very soon, this meeting," he said. The threat of a military confrontation between the countries loomed in the initial days following the start of boycotting on June 5. Arabic language media in the boy-



cottling nations suggested the need for a "Peninsula Shield" operation, which is the military arm of the Gulf Cooperation Council, though government officials downplayed the idea at the time. Saudi and UAE forces attached to Peninsula Shield previously deployed into Bahrain to put down its 2011 Arab Spring protests. (AP)

US Pressure Delays Israel's 'Greater Jerusalem' Bill: Legislator

JERUSALEM - U.S. pressure delayed an Israeli ministerial vote on Sunday on a proposed bill that Washington fears entails annexation of Jewish settlements near Jerusalem, an Israeli lawmaker said. The "Greater Jerusalem" legislation would put some settlements in the occupied West Bank, built on land Palestinians seek for a future state and viewed as illegal by most countries, under the jurisdiction of Jerusalem's municipality. The bill, proposed by a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party, was to have been submitted for approval on Sunday to a ministerial committee on legislation, a first step before a series of ratification votes in parliament. But Likud lawmaker David Bitan, chairman of Netanyahu's coalition in parliament, said a vote by the cabinet committee would be delayed because Washington told Israel the bill's passage could impede U.S. efforts to revive peace talks that collapsed in 2014. "There is American pressure that claims this is about annexation and that this could interfere with the peace process," Bitan told Army Radio. "The prime minister doesn't think this is about annexation. I don't think so either. We have to take the time to clarify matters to the Americans. Therefore, if the bill passes in a week, or in a month, it's less problematic," he said. Proponents of the legislation say it falls short of formal land annexation to Israel but will enable some 150,000 settlers to vote in Jerusalem city elections. (Reuters)

Iran Committed to Implementation of Nuclear Deal: IAEA Chief

TEHRAN - The head of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Yukiya Amano said here Sunday that Iran is living up to its commitments under the 2015 international nuclear deal, Tehran Times daily reported. Since January 2016, the IAEA has monitored Iran's nuclear commitments under the nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), and conducted verification checks, said Amano. "The agency believes that the JCPOA is an important

achievement for verification. The agency could stipulate that Iran's nuclear commitments under the JCPOA are being implemented," he was also quoted as saying by Press TV on Sunday. Amano made the remarks in a press conference with Iran's nuclear chief Ali Akbar Salehi. The IAEA is in charge of monitoring restrictions on Iran's nuclear program under the nuclear agreement. So far the agency has released eight reports each time confirming Iran's adherence to the international nuclear pact. (Xinhua)

Nieghbor News

China Aims to Set up State Anti-Corruption Unit Next Year

BEIJING - China aims to pass a national supervision law and set up a new commission next year to oversee an expansion of President Xi Jinping's campaign to fight corruption in the ruling Communist Party and government, the party said on Sunday.

The moves will be made during the country's annual meeting of parliament early next year, the Central Commission for Discipline Inspection (CCDI), the party's anti-graft watchdog, said in its report to a five-yearly party congress last week. The report, issued by the official Xinhua news agency, had not been previously released, and gave few other details on

the commission. "All provinces, regions and cities must closely connect regional practices, integrate reform pilot scheme experience, implement the overall plan according to the decision of the party's Central Committee, and promote organizational integration," the report said. The new National Supervision Commission will take over from the CCDI and merge multiple anti-graft units, according to an announcement last year. It will also expand the purview of Xi's anti-graft campaign to include employees at state-backed institutions who are not necessarily party members. (Reuters)

Iran Will Continue to Produce Missiles: Rouhani

DUBAI - Iran will continue to produce missiles for its defense and does not consider that a violation of international accords, President Hassan Rouhani said on Sunday in a speech broadcast on state television.

Rouhani spoke days after the U.S. House of Representatives voted for new sanctions on Iran's ballistic missile program, part of an effort to clamp down on Tehran without immediately moving to undermine an international nuclear agreement. "We have built, are building and will continue to build missiles, and this violates no international

agreements," Rouhani said in a speech in parliament. "We will produce any weapons of any kind that we need and stockpile it and use it at anytime to defend ourselves," Rouhani said. The United States has already imposed unilateral sanctions on Iran, saying its missile tests violate a U.N. resolution, which calls on Tehran not to undertake activities related to missiles capable of delivering nuclear weapons. Iran denies seeking nuclear weapons and says it has no plans to build nuclear-capable missiles. (Reuters)

Iran-Pakistan Trade Balance Hits \$230mln

TEHRAN - Head of the Iran-Pakistan Chamber of Commerce Mohammad Vali said on Saturday that the annual trade exchanges between the two countries have hit \$230 million. "A sum of \$186 million of the above-mentioned figure is related to Iran's exports, with the remaining \$44 million related to Pakistan's exports to Iran," Vali said.

He noted that Iran's exports to Pakistan include \$58 million worth of mineral fuels and oil, \$21 million of iron and steel, \$13 million animal hide and \$9 million of electronic equipment. Vali also said that the Pakistani exports to Iran include \$23 million worth of paper, \$5 million of cereals, \$5 million of meat, \$1 million of machinery, \$1 million of plastic material and \$1 million of sugar. In relevant remarks

in mid-April, Iranian Interior Minister Abdolreza Rahmani Fazli underlined that Tehran and Islamabad are resolved to considerably broaden their trade relations. "The value of Iran-Pakistan trade balance is predicted to hit \$5 billion," Rahmani Fazli said, addressing the meeting of the 20th Iran-Pakistan joint Economic commission in Tehran. He underlined that free trade was one of the pivotal issues of the meeting. Rahmani Fazli also expressed the hope that the rise in economic cooperation would lead to longer strides on the path of economic development of Iran and Pakistan. The leaders of Iran and Pakistan have vowed to enhance the values of trade exchanges between the two countries to the level of \$5 billion. (Fars News)

HRW Says Uzbek President is Making Positive Changes in Human Rights Situation

TASHKENT - The Uzbek government during President Shavkat Mirziyoyev's first year in office has taken some positive steps to improve the human rights situation, but should now transform them into institutional change and sustainable improvements, Human Rights Watch said today. The findings are based on Human Rights Watch's first in-country research in seven years, including meetings and interviews with government officials, civil society activists, former political prisoners, and ordinary citizens. Human Rights Watch also issued a video on recent developments in Uz-

bekistan. It includes comments by Muhammed Bekjanov, a former political prisoner who was one of the world's longest-held journalists, imprisoned for nearly 18 years, until his release in February 2017. "At this moment of hope for the country, the Uzbek government should transform the modest steps already taken in the right direction into lasting human rights protection for all of Uzbekistan's citizens," said Steve Swerdlow, Central Asia researcher at Human Rights Watch. "The test for Tashkent is to turn positive moves into enduring structural improvements." (AKI)