

Putin Threatens to Further Cut U.S. Mission in Retaliation

XIAMEN, China - Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened here on Tuesday to further cut the number of U.S. diplomats in his country amid a heightened diplomatic row between Moscow and Washington. "Strictly speaking, if we talk about complete parity, there (would) not be 455 diplomats in Moscow, but 155 less. So we reserve the right to make a decision about this amount of U.S. diplomats in Moscow too," Putin told reporters after attending a summit of BRICS countries in this coastal Chinese city. "But we will not do that yet. We will see how the situa-



tion will be further developing," he added. According to Putin, Russia now has about a staff of 455 diplomats in the United States, including 155 people who work for the Russian mission to the United Nations in New York and should not be counted as Russian diplomats accredited to Washington. U.S. authorities on Saturday shut down the Russian Consulate General in San Francisco and the Trade Representation in Washington. Russian representatives were also denied access to the rented premises of the Trade Representation in New York. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

China Welcomes Switzerland to Mediate in Korean Peninsula Nuclear Crisis

BEIJING - China said on Tuesday it welcomes Switzerland to play a mediator role in resolving the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue. Swiss President Doris Leuthard said on Monday that the neutral country is prepared to act as mediator to help resolve the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue, including by hosting ministerial talks. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Geng Shuang said at a daily press briefing that China has noticed the statement made by Switzerland. "China welcomes and encourages all ideas and suggestions that are conducive to easing tensions and confrontation, boosting mutual trust, restarting dialogue at an early date and resolving the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue," said Geng. "We also welcome countries to play a constructive role in resolving the issue," he said. Geng said the mainstream opinion of the international community is for the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue to be resolved via dialogue and negotiation in a peaceful way. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Rejects BRICS' Statement on Militant Groups

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan on Tuesday rejected a statement by the five emerging-market BRICS powers that militant groups in Pakistan pose a regional security concern, with its defense minister saying no such group operates freely inside Pakistan. The minister's response follows a statement on Monday by Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa that also called for patrons of the Pakistan-based militant groups to be held to account. "These organizations, they have some of their remnants in Pakistan, which we're cleaning," Defence Minister Khurram Dastagir Khan told the Geo TV channel, without specifying which groups he was referring to. "But Pakistan, we reject this thing categorically, no terrorist organization has any complete safe havens." The foreign ministry later released a statement condemning the presence of Islamic State and the Pakistani Taliban in "ungoverned spaces" inside neighboring Afghanistan. The groups named by the BRICS include anti-India militant factions such as Jaish-e-Mohammad, which was blamed for a 2001 attack on India's parliament, and Lashkar-e-Taiba, which India blames for cross-border attacks including a 2008 assault in its financial capital Mumbai in which 166 people were killed. Another group the BRICS named was the Haqqani network, which is allied with the Afghan Taliban militants waging war on the U.S.-backed government in Kabul and foreign forces there. (Reuters)

Iran Urges Saudi Arabia's Cooperation on Regional Issues

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif expressed the hope that Saudi Arabia would cooperate on regional issues, Tasnim news agency reported on Tuesday. Saudi authorities ought to come to the conclusion that not only for Saudi Arabia, but also for all other countries in the Persian Gulf region, there is no other option than joint cooperation, Zarif was quoted as saying. For the time being, there is no clear or definite prospect for a change in Iran's relations with Saudi Arabia, but a shift in the kingdom's policies would be welcomed by Iran, he said. It was announced here on Sunday that a Saudi Arabian delegation would visit Tehran after Saudi Arabia severed ties with Iran last year. "The Saudi delegation simply comes to visit diplomatic buildings because the buildings have been empty after the two countries broke off relations. At the same time, we will visit our buildings in Saudi Arabia," Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi said on Sunday. Qasemi confirmed that the visas for the Saudis have been issued long before, but for "reasons that are related to them, they have not come yet, and their travel has likely been postponed until after (annual Muslim) Hajj ceremonies." He added that the date for the Iranian delegation's visit has not been set yet. (Xinhua)

BRICS Leaders to Meet with Leaders of Egypt, Tajikistan, Mexico

DUSHANBE - The leaders of Russia, China, and other major developing countries are to meet their counterparts from five smaller developing countries on September 5 on the final day of a summit in the Chinese coastal city of Xiamen. The talks will include the leaders of Egypt, Guinea, Mexico, Tajikistan, and Thailand, who were invited by China in an effort to expand the so-called BRICS grouping, which usually includes only the five largest developing economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The BRICS altogether cover more than a quarter of the world's landmass, are home to more than 40 percent of the world's population, and produce 22.5 percent of the world's economic output, according to the International Monetary Fund. The group has positioned itself as a counterweight to the Western-dominated world order. Efforts to turn the group into a cohesive block have been difficult, however, as each country has traditionally taken different approaches on foreign-policy and economic matters. (Agencies)

Putin Opposes Tougher Sanctions against DPRK

XIAMEN, China - Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday voiced opposition to tougher sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) after Pyongyang conducted its sixth nuclear test. "Resorting to just any sanctions in this situation is useless and inefficient," Putin told reporters after attending a summit of BRICS countries in this coastal Chinese city. "All of this can lead to a global planetary catastrophe and a great number of victims," he warned. The Russian president called on relevant parties to return to the negotiation table. "It is necessary to push the issue to a dialogue between all interested parties. All participants in this process, including North Korea (the DPRK), should not have any of these considerations that are associated with the threat of destruction, but, on the contrary, all parties to the conflict should get on the path of cooperation," Putin said. (Xinhua)

BRICS Representatives Call for Freer Global Market Against Protectionism

XIAMEN, China - In the face of global uncertainties and anti-globalization sentiment, representatives at the BRICS summit on Wednesday called for concerted efforts by developing countries to promote a freer global market and a fairer economic order. "One of the main tasks for BRICS cooperation is to eliminate barriers in trading and investment and make our economy more open," Sergey Katyrin, president of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Russia, told Xinhua on the sidelines of the three-day summit held in southeast China's coastal city of Xiamen. His remarks are in line with the BRICS spirit of openness, inclusiveness and win-win cooperation reaffirmed in the BRICS Leaders Xiamen Declaration issued following the meetings of the five major emerging markets on Monday. "We emphasize the importance of an open and inclusive world economy enabling all countries and peoples to share in the benefits of globalization," the declaration said, noting that the five countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa - will "continue to firmly oppose protectionism." It also urged the world to guard against "inward-looking policies" and tendencies affecting global growth prospects and market confidence. (Xinhua)



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Trump Talks with S. Korean, German Leaders on DPRK Nuclear Issue



WASHINGTON - The White House said on Monday that U.S. President Donald Trump had talked with South Korean and German leaders

at their disposal" to maximize pressure on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). Trump and Moon underscored the grave threat that the DPRK's latest provocation poses to the entire world, said the White House in a statement. "They also pledged to strengthen joint military capabilities," said the statement, adding that Trump gave his in-principle approval to South Korea's initiative to lift restrictions on their missile payload capabilities. Trump also provided his conceptual approval for the purchase of billions of dollars' worth of military weapons and equipment from the United States by South Korea, the statement added. In a related development, Trump and German Chancellor Angela Merkel discussed the Korean Peninsula nuclear issue in a phone call and both reaffirmed the importance of "close coordination at the United Nations." (Xinhua)

World's Five Major Rising Economies Back Iran Deal

TEHRAN - The world's five major rising economies have expressed support for the 2015 nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries, urging all parties to live up to their commitments under the deal. In a joint statement issued during their latest summit in the Chinese city of Xiamen on Monday, the BRICS countries - Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa - defended the accord, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) amid attempts by the United States to undermine it. "We firmly support the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on the Iranian nuclear issue and call upon all relevant parties to comply fully with their obligations and ensure full and effective implementation of the JCPOA to promote international and regional peace and stability," part of the statement read. Mogherini, Amano discuss JCPOA implementation. (Presstv)

Britain's Labour Says Cannot Vote for EU Withdrawal Bill Unless Amended

LONDON - Britain's main opposition Labour Party said on Tuesday it could not vote for the government's legislation to sever ties with the European Union unless it was amended to prevent ministers from grabbing powers from parliament. Parliament will begin debating the EU withdrawal bill on Thursday and there will be a vote on Monday, testing Prime Minister Theresa May's deal to shore up her majority with the support of a small Northern Irish party. "Labour fully respects the democratic decision to leave the European Union ... and backs a jobs-first Brexit with full tariff-free access to the European single market," Labour said in a statement. (Reuters)

Trump to Phase out Program for Young Immigrants

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Iran, Russia Discuss Syria Ahead of Astana Meeting

TEHRAN - The Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, Ali Shamkhani, and Russia's envoy on Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev, met here on Tuesday to discuss the latest developments in the Arab state, Tasnim news agency reported. The meeting between the Iranian and Russian officials came ahead of the next round of Syria peace talks in Kazakhstan's capital city of Astana, slated for mid-September.



In the meeting, Shamkhani hailed recent advances of the Syrian army and allied forces against foreign-backed terrorists in the Syrian Deir ez-Zor and said that strategic cooperation among Iran, Russia, Syria and the resistance front in the "real campaign against terrorism" is constantly yielding valuable results.

He urged respect for Syria's national sovereignty, saying that all parties' commitment to an inter-Syria talks and its people's self-determination right will pave the ground for ending the crisis. (Xinhua)

Merkel Praises Economy, Cites Challenges Ahead of Election

BERLIN - Chancellor Angela Merkel highlighted her government's economic achievements in a speech to parliament Tuesday, positioning herself as the leader who can cope with rapidly changing technology as she seeks election to a fourth term later this month. Merkel, whose conservative Christian Democratic Party is currently leading in polls ahead of the national election on Sept. 24, listed a strong economy, low unemployment, and the introduction of a mandatory minimum wage as some of her administration's achievements. But she stressed that Germany

is "at a crossroads now" especially in digital development and technological progress. "We don't want Germany to end in the museum of technology," she told lawmakers, referring to the Berlin museum housing historical artifacts. The rest of the world "doesn't sleep" when it comes to digitalization, she warned. Pitching herself as the one who can deal with future challenges, she promised that if re-elected as chancellor, she would invest more money into research so that Germany won't fall behind on technological development. (AP)

Spanish PM to "Make Sure the Law is Obeyed" over Catalan Independence Vote

MADRID - Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez had a phone conversation in an attempt to resolve the issue of the Catalan independence referendum, Spanish media reported on Tuesday. The pair discussed opening a commission to evaluate updating and modernizing Spain's system of autonomous regions, which Rajoy is reported to have valued "positively".

This news came after Rajoy repeated on Monday that he will "make sure that the law is fulfilled" in regard to the Catalan independence referendum, which is scheduled to be held on Oct. 1. The Catalan regional assembly is expected to pass the motion to set up the mechanism to hold the referendum, which goes against the Spanish Constitution of 1977 which says that any such measure has to be approved by the Spanish Congress.

According to Spanish media, Rajoy also insisted that the Catalan pro-independence movement "did not want to negotiate...that is the truth". "They knew that I was not going to authorize it (the referendum) because I was neither able to, nor did I want to, but they didn't care about that," Rajoy said. "Everyone is looking at each other, and they don't have confidence in each other, but there is nobody (in Catalonia) able to show leadership and ask 'what are we doing?' when it seems that the most logical thing to do at this moment is to rectify," continued Rajoy. (Xinhua)