

# U.S., Russian High Level Diplomatic Officials to Meet in Helsinki

HELSINKI - Finnish officials on Saturday confirmed that U.S. Undersecretary of State Thomas Shannon and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov will meet in Helsinki Monday and Tuesday next week.

They will also meet Finnish President Sauli Niinisto, the Finnish presidential office confirmed to local media. The agenda of the meeting has not been reported. The U.S. State Department noted that the two ministers will address "areas of bilateral concern and cooperation."

Russian newsagency RIA Nowosti also reported the



upcoming meeting on Saturday, quoting Russian diplomatic sources. Teija Tiilikainen, director of the Finnish Institute for International Affairs, told newspaper Helsingin Sanomat that in the current international political situation the meeting has a greater importance than usual. Although the agenda has not been released, Tiilikainen said it could be long. She mentioned the issues such as the situation in Syria, the Baltic Sea and the North Korea. U.S. and Soviet politicians and diplomats used to meet in Helsinki especially during the 1980s. (Xinhua)

## ASEAN, China, Japan, South Korea Eye Building Broader Community

MANILA - The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its three East Asian dialogue partners China, Japan and South Korea reaffirmed on Sunday to further intensify economic cooperation to build a stronger ASEAN Plus Three (APT) community.

Philippine Trade Undersecretary Ceferino Rodolfo told a news briefing that APT ministers reaffirmed further cooperation efforts with the development of the renewed APT Economic

Work Plan that will set broader goals of building a stronger APT community in the long-run. The development of the work plan can further assist the Philippines in its pursuit towards greater connectivity to Plus Three countries, Rodolfo said referring to China, Japan and South Korea.

He said the ministers showed their expectation as well towards APT cooperation in facilitating e-commerce development, Lopez said. (Xinhua)

## Russia, Saudi Discuss Establishment of De-Escalation Zones in Syria

RIYADH - Russia and Saudi Arabia discussed on Sunday their support to the establishment of de-escalation zones in Syria, Al Arabiya local news reported.

This was revealed during a press conference by Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov on the sideline of his visit to Riyadh and his Saudi counterpart Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir.

The Russian official highlighted that these zones will contribute to solving the crisis through the elimination of terrorism

risks to pursue comprehensive political operations. He said that his country supports the Saudi efforts to unify the Syrian oppositions to one group while stressing that Syrians are the one who will decide the destiny of their country. Meanwhile, Al-Jubeir highlighted that the two sides discuss counter-



terrorism coordination while hailing the stand of Russia about the Yemeni crisis. He said that Saudi Arabia and Russia share the same stands about regional issues. (Xinhua)

## Merkel Offers Diplomatic Initiative for DPRK Nuclear Issue: Report



BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel is ready to intervene directly in a diplomatic initiative to end the nuclear and missile pro-

gram of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), a German newspaper reported Sunday.

"If our participation in

talks is desired, I will say yes," Merkel said in an interview with the Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung.

The German Chancellor drew attention to the negotiations on the Iranian nuclear program, in which Germany had participated alongside the five veto-voters in the UN Security Council. It was a "long but important period of diplomacy", which had come to a "good end" last year.

Merkel said she could also imagine such a format for the settlement of the DPRK issue. Europe and in particular Germany should be ready to contribute a very active part.

After the DPRK announced the success of its first hydrogen bomb test earlier this month, Merkel issued a statement strongly condemning DPRK's nuclear test, calling for further and stricter sanctions against Pyongyang and seeking a peaceful solution with negotiation. (Xinhua)

## Russia Urges Dialogue to Solve Gulf Crisis

JEDDAH - Arab countries and Qatar should enter into direct talks to solve a diplomatic dispute, Russia's foreign minister said on a trip to Saudi Arabia on Sunday, urging all parties to restore regional unity.

Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt severed ties with Qatar on June 5, accusing it of supporting terrorist groups - a charge it denies. "We have confirmed our position (that we are) in favor of settling the disagreements by means of negotiations, by directly expressing concerns and achieving solutions which

would take into account the concerns and the interests of all parties," the minister, Sergei Lavrov, told a news conference in Jeddah. "We are interested in all those mediatory efforts that are currently being made producing results and the unity of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) being restored," he added. Kuwait and the United States have been mediating to reach a breakthrough in the three-month long crisis that has put the whole region on edge, and prompted Turkey to send troops to the wealthy Gulf state in a sign of support. (Reuters)

## Stoltenberg Says North Korea's 'Reckless Behavior' Requires Global Response

LONDON - North Korea's "reckless behavior" is a global threat and requires a global response, the head of the NATO military alliance said on Sunday.

NATO has not been directly involved in the crisis, which saw Pyongyang carry out its sixth and most powerful nuclear test a week ago, but has repeatedly called on North Korea to abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programs. "The reckless behavior of North Korea is a global threat and requires a global response and that of course also includes NATO," NATO head Jens Stoltenberg said in an interview with BBC television.

Asked whether an attack on the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam would trigger NATO's Article 5, which requires each member of the alliance to come to the defense of any other, Stoltenberg said: "I will not speculate about whether Article 5 will be applied in such a situation."

"We are now totally focused on how can we contribute to a peaceful solution of the conflict," he said.

"There is no easy way out of this difficult situation, but at the same time we have to ... continue to work for political solution, continue to press also the economic sanctions." The United States and its allies had been bracing for another long-range missile launch in time for the 69th anniversary of North Korea's founding on Saturday, but no fresh provocations were spotted while the North held numerous events to mark the holiday. (Reuters)

## Saudi Keeps Pressuring Qatar to Meet Arab-Bloc Demands

RIYADH - Saudi Arabia said Sunday it would keep pressuring Qatar until demands by a bloc of Arab states are met, Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said.

The bloc's 13 demands include Doha ending its alleged support for Islamist extremist groups, closing a Turkish military base in the emirate and downgrading diplomatic ties with Tehran.

Qatar "must respond to these requests in order to open a new page," Jubeir said.

The Saudi move came



just two days after U.S. President Donald Trump spoke with the leaders of Saudi Arabia and Qatar in a bid to mediate.

The Saudi and Qatari rulers spoke by phone on Saturday, raising

hope for talks. But Riyadh later suspended the dialogue, accusing Doha of distorting facts by wrongly implying that Saudi Arabia had initiated the outreach. (Xinhua)

## Chinese, Japanese, Koreans Co-Write New History Textbook

NANJING - A joint editorial committee of scholars from China, Japan and the Republic of Korea is writing a new history textbook to resist efforts to whitewash Japan's militaristic past.

The committee has published two books: The Contemporary and Modern History of Three East Asian Countries in 2005 and A Modern History of East Asia Beyond The Boundaries in 2012.

Committee members attending a history seminar in Nanjing, east China's Jiangsu Province, told Xinhua Sunday that work on a third book has begun and is expected to be completed in 2020. Li Xizhu, a fellow of the Institute of

Modern History, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said scholars from the three countries have reached consensus on the focus of the book.

"It is to address the differences in how we, the three countries, see history and to respond to the current debate on historical issues," Li said.

Ueyama Yurika, a Japanese member, said the committee will create contents in line with education practice in each country's context so that the textbooks can be used more widely.

Scholars agree that a correct perception of history is the foundation for reconciliation in East Asia. (Xinhua)

## Neighbor News

### China, Uzbekistan Agree to Strengthen Cooperation

TASHKENT - China and Uzbekistan have agreed to strengthen alignment of their development strategies and comprehensively deepen cooperation in various fields.

The agreement was reached when Meng Jizhu, member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and head of the Commission for Political and Legal Affairs of the CPC Central Committee, met with Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev here on Saturday.

At the meeting, Meng recalled that the Chinese and Uzbek presidents met in May and unanimously decided to deepen the two countries' comprehensive strategic partnership featuring sincerity, mutual trust, mutual benefits and win-win cooperation, opening a new chapter for bilateral relations.

Mirziyoyev said that

he highly appreciates China's efforts to implement the agreements reached by the two leaders, and that Uzbekistan attaches great significance to the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries.

Uzbekistan is ready to seize the opportunity of the joint construction of the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road to push for more concrete achievements in bilateral cooperation to benefit the two peoples, he said.

Also on Saturday, Meng met with Uzbek Prime Minister Abdulla Aripov. They co-chaired the fourth meeting of the committee for China-Uzbekistan intergovernmental cooperation. Both sides agreed to strengthen cooperation in the fields of trade, energy, transportation, agriculture, science and technology, people-to-people exchange and security. (Xinhua)

### Mamnoon Calls for Unity in Muslim World at OIC Summit in Astana

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain, in his first-ever visit to Kazakhstan, urged the Muslim world to work collectively for the development of science and technology in order to meet the challenges of modern times, Radio Pakistan reported on Sunday.

Hussain is heading a Pakistani delegation at the two-day Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit on Science and Technology in Astana, the Kazakh capital, where heads of state and government from over 20 Muslim countries have gathered.

The president is participating as the chairman of the OIC Standing Committee on Science and Technology, according to a Foreign Of-

fice (FO) handout.

At the summit, Hussain emphasised the need for leaders of the Muslim world to improve agricultural production and develop the agricultural technology sector. He was of the view that it would be possible to focus on higher education and research in emerging areas of science and technology once there is a solid foundation of educated, skilled and healthy manpower.

President Hussain regretted that the Muslim world had failed to pay attention to the education sector for the past several centuries and highlighted the need for the Muslim bloc to be self-sufficient in the political and socio-economic sectors. (Monitoring Desk)

### Muslims Unity Key to Permanent Global Peace: Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iran's President Hassan Rouhani has underlined the need for unity and cooperation among Muslim countries as the key to rid the world of violence and reach permanent peace.

Rouhani made the remarks in an address to the first Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) summit on science and technology in the Kazakh capital, Astana, on Sunday.

"We have all reached a consensus that the Muslim world is a crucial and effective part of the system of the universe, and its capability, progress and stability leads to global capability, progress and stability."

Rouhani said weakness, backwardness and disunity among Muslim countries would make sustainable peace, inclusive development and effective conversion impossible to reach.

"Therefore, consensus, concord and cooperation among members of

the great Islamic world in order to enter the developed world is in fact a joint effort to build a world free of ignorance, poverty, war and violence," he added.

He also stressed that cooperation in the field of science and technology has strategic political and social importance.

Today, he said, the Muslim world feels the need for solidarity and unity more than ever as it is grappling with multiple crises, such as Israeli crimes against the Palestinians, atrocities by Buddhist extremists against Rohingya in Myanmar, humanitarian catastrophes created by extremist groups in Syria and Iraq and the continuation of the Saudi war on Yemen.

Elsewhere in his address, the Iranian president said the OIC summit had the potential to be turned into a milestone in the history of scientific cooperation in the Muslim world. (Presstv)

### Greece Warns Ending EU Talks with Turkey a Mistake

THESSALONIKI, Greece - Halting accession talks with Turkey would be a strategic mistake by the EU, Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras said Sunday as a war of words raged between Berlin and Ankara.

During a recent election debate both Germany's Chancellor Angela Merkel and her Social Democratic rival Martin Schulz endorsed ending Turkey's EU accession talks.

Ties between the two nations have become strained since last year's attempted overthrow of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Germany's strong criticism of an ensuing crackdown which saw more than 50,000 people arrested.

Relations further deteriorated after the detention of several German citizens including Deniz Yucel, a correspondent for the Die Welt newspaper.

But Tsipras said "ending Turkey's accession talks would be a strategic mistake that would maybe benefit only for Erdogan."

Turkey is an important regional power and should remain engaged, added Tsipras, but also called on Turkey to respect international law and stop provocations.

While Greece and Turkey have long had difficult relations, ties between Athens and Berlin have frayed in recent years over the terms of Greece's international bailouts as Germany has insisted on spending cuts and tax hikes and objected to providing any considerable debt relief. (AFP)