

Britain Hopes for Brexit Progress; EU Leaders Cautious

LONDON — Britain and the European Union are preparing to head back to the Brexit negotiating table after a speech by Prime Minister Theresa May that received a cautious welcome from the bloc's leaders. May stressed in her Friday speech that Britain wants to keep close ties with the bloc and offered to keep paying the EU and following its rules during a two-year transition period after the U.K.'s formal departure in March 2019.

EU leaders welcomed the constructive tone of May's speech, but called for more detail. French President Emmanuel Macron said clarity still is needed on three big is-



ues: the rights of European citizens affected by Brexit, the amount Britain must pay to settle its obligations to the EU, and the status of the border between Northern Ireland and EU member Ireland.

"If those three points are not clarified, then we cannot move forward on the rest," Macron said.

Negotiators are due to start a fourth round of Brexit talks in Brussels on Monday. In a blow for May's government, credit rating agency Moody's downgraded Britain a notch to Aa2, the third-highest level, citing the country's debt burden and uncertainty about Brexit. (AP)

Turkish PM Vows Political, Economic Steps in Response to Iraq's Kurdish Referendum

ANKARA — Turkish Prime Minister Binali Yildirim warned on Saturday that Turkey's steps in response to a planned independence referendum in northern Iraq's Kurdish region will have security, diplomatic, political and economic dimensions.

Speaking to reporters in the central province of Kirsehir, he said the planned independence referendum was wrong and an "adventurist" move that put Turkey at risk, and Turkey will be in close cooperation

with Iran and Iraq to response.

When asked if a cross-border operation was among the steps, he said that possible responses to the referendum include security, economic, and political options, saying it was "a question of timing."

On Friday, Turkey's National Security Council warned northern Iraq against holding a referendum on independence would cause "grave results," and called the referendum to be completely cancelled. (Xinhua)

Election Systems of 21 States Hacked, Russia Targeted Again: US

LOS ANGELES — The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) on Friday notified the chief election officer or secretaries of state in 21 states that hackers targeted their states' election systems before last year's U.S. presidential election.

The notification came roughly a full year after ABC News reported that "more than 20" states had been targeted.

"Hackers working on behalf of the Russian government are suspected in the onslaught against more

than 20 state election systems, according to sources with knowledge of the matter," ABC News reported in September last year. The states targeted are Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia, Washington and Wisconsin, according to Fox News. "It is completely unacceptable that it has taken DHS over



a year to inform our office of Russian scanning of our systems, despite our repeated requests for information," California Secretary of State Alex Padilla said Friday in a statement.

"The practice of withholding critical information from elections officials is a detriment to the security of our elections and our democracy," Padilla said. (Xinhua)

Merkel's Conservatives See Slim Chance of Brexit Progress by October



BERLIN — British Prime Minister Theresa May's speech in Florence has failed to inject much-needed new momentum into talks on Britain's departure from the

European Union, a top politician with German Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives said on Saturday.

May set out a plan on Friday to retain full ac-

cess to the EU's single market for two years after Brexit to try to reassure business and reset the tone of stalled negotiations with Brussels.

Michael Stueben, European spokesman for the conservatives in the German parliament, said it remained unclear how Britain would meet its financial obligations under the EU budget, and that London continued to refuse Britons living in Europe access to the European Court of Justice.

"Theresa May's speech

underscores the will of London to move ahead with Brexit negotiations, but unfortunately it will not provide a new dynamism in the talks that is so urgently needed," Stueben said in a statement.

He said May also failed to address the issue of future borders, especially in Ireland. "On this basis, we can hardly expect the needed progress in the Brexit negotiations before the European Council meeting in October," he said. (Reuters)

Pyongyang Mounts Show of Support for Leader Kim

PYONGYANG — Tens of thousands of Pyongyang residents were gathered in the capital's Kim Il-Sung Square Saturday to laud leader Kim Jong-Un's denunciation of US President Donald Trump.

Such set-piece rallies, organized by the authorities, are a regular feature of political life in Pyongyang, and are intended as a physical demonstration of popular support for the leadership.

Students in white shirts and red ties held up the red flag of the ruling Workers' Party, with a

yellow ink brush representing intellectuals, a hammer for the workers, and a sickle for the peasantry. In a statement on Friday Kim responded by saying that "a frightened dog barks louder" and Trump would "pay dearly" for his comments — triggering the US head of state to describe him as a "madman".

On one side of the square a giant poster depicted innumerable red missiles plunging towards a collapsing US Capitol, with the slogan "Korea's Answer". (AFP)

Chinese FM Meets Syrian Deputy Prime Minister

UNITED NATIONS — Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Friday met with Syrian Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Walid Muallem.

Muallem briefed Wang on the situation in Syria, saying that progress has been made in cease-fire and the end of violence on the ground and in the fight against terrorism. The situation is beginning to stabilize, said Muallem. Syria appreciates China's impartial stance on the Syria issue and commends China's constructive role in pushing for peace and stability in Syria and in mitigating the humanitarian situation, he said.

Muallem said he expected China's participation in Syria's post-war reconstruction. Syria treasures its friendship with China, welcomes and supports the Belt and Road Initiative and is willing to participate in it to pursue more practical results from bilateral cooperation, he said. Wang said China has always held that the Syria issue should be solved by political means following the principle of Syrian leadership and Syrian ownership. With the positive development in the situation in Syria emerges opportunities for the settlement of the issue, said Wang. He expressed the hope that the Syrian government and various factions can accelerate the process of political settlement under the auspices of the United Nations and work for the early restoration of stability. Wang said that Syria is an important node in the ancient Silk Road and that the Belt and Road Initiative can serve as an important vehicle for bilateral cooperation. China welcomes Syria's participation in Belt and Road projects and is willing to carry out cooperation with Syria within the framework of the initiative for the sake of common development. (Xinhua)

New Zealand PM Wins Most Votes but Needs Help to Form Gov't

AUCKLAND, New Zealand — Prime Minister Bill English's National Party won the most votes in New Zealand's general election on Saturday but not enough to form a government without help from other political parties.

That means New Zealanders may need to wait for days or even weeks to confirm whether English will retain the top job as the various parties try to negotiate with each other to form a coalition.

There remained a remote chance that Eng-



lish's main challenger, Jacinda Ardern, could take the role.

The results were welcomed by the National Party, which is seeking a fourth consecutive term in office. And they offer some redemption

for English, who led his party to its worst-ever defeat in 2002. "The voters have spoken and now we have the responsibility of working to give New Zealand a strong and stable government," he said. (AP)

Turkey-Syria Border Wall to be Completed by End of September

ANKARA — The 828-kilometer-long security wall along Turkish-Syrian border is expected to finish construction by the end of September, state-run Anadolu Agency reported.

A total of 731 km of the border wall has already been built, and the remaining 97 km would be completed by the end of this month, an anonymous Turkish official was cited as saying.

The wall includes physical, electronic and advanced technological layers. The two-meter-wide and three-meter-high physical layer is mainly made up of modular concrete blocks, topped

with one-meter-high razor wire. It also includes patrol routes, passenger tracks and watchtower. The electronic layer consists of close-up surveillance systems, thermal cameras, land surveillance radar, remote-controlled weapons systems, command-and-control centers, line-length imaging systems and seismic and acoustic sensors.

The advanced technological layer includes wide area surveillance, laser destructive fiber-optic detection, surveillance radar for drone detection, jammers and sensor-triggered short distance lighting systems. (Xinhua)

Island States Voice Concern about Climate Change at UNGA

UNITED NATIONS — Both small and large island states among some 40 speakers listed on the fourth day of the annual General Debate of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly had one common denominator in their remarks — climate change.

Prime Minister Allen Michael Chastanet of Saint Lucia, in the eastern Caribbean, appeared to speak for many islands, expressing sadness over the devastation wrought on the Caribbean by recent hurricanes and dismay over the "silence of many and the weak acknowledgement" of others on the crisis. "For small island states like my own in the Caribbean region, the promise of the United Nations is being tested today more than ever," he said. "The world is experiencing extraordinary change at a breathtaking pace — change that is reshaping the way we live, the way we work, our planet and the very nature of peace and security."

"I arrived in New York earlier this week after a tour of the devastation wrought by Hurricane Irma on islands in the Caribbean and for the entire week I have been engaged in discussions focused on the region's recovery efforts," Chastanet said. "I have also watched from afar and with a heavy heart, further destruction to my region — with Hurricane Maria's crushing blow to the sister Isle of Dominica — there claiming over 15 lives so far, and saddling that country with hundreds of millions in damage and in the case of Puerto Rico, leaving that island diminished," he said. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

China Hopes U.S. Cautious on Trade Restrictions

BEIJING — China's Ministry of Commerce (MOC) said Saturday that it hoped the United States would be cautious with the use of restrictive trade measures after a U.S. trade agency claimed that imported solar products could hurt domestic manufacturers.

The U.S. International Trade Commission (ITC) said Friday that it had determined that increasing crystalline silicon photovoltaic cell imports could threaten the domestic industry, and its investigation would move to a remedy phase. Wang Hejun, head of the MOC's trade remedy and investigation bureau, said the decision was made in spite of strong opposition from inside and outside the United States and regardless of the fact that

several trade remedy measures had already been made to provide sufficient protection for the domestic solar industry. The ITC claim will do nothing to facilitate the sound and balanced development of the U.S. solar industry, but only increase uncertainties on global solar products trading, Wang said.

"The free circulation of solar products helps with reduction of green house gas emissions and improves the global climate. Protecting free trade in this field is a shared responsibility of all countries and is in the common interests of all parties," he said.

Wang expressed his hope that U.S. investigators would abide by World Trade Organization rules and use restrictive trade measures cautiously. (Xinhua)

Iran "Successfully"

Launches Ballistic Missile

TEHRAN — Iran has "successfully" launched a ballistic missile with a range of 2,000 km, Press TV reported on Saturday. The state TV broadcast a footage of "the successful test-launch of the country's new ballistic missile, Khorramshahr, a few hours after it was unveiled during a military parade in the capital city of Tehran on Friday."

The report said the missile was launched late Friday, without providing further details.

Iran's defense minister said Saturday that Khorramshahr is a strategic missile and is a symbol of Iranian scientists' capability, official IRNA news agency reported. "Khorramshahr with an effective range and

unique qualities features an agile missile," Brigadier General Amir Hatami was quoted as saying. The strategic missile can cross the enemy's air defense systems and can be guided from the launch time to the moment when it hits the enemy's target, he said.

The missile was unveiled on Friday morning during a military parade in Tehran attended by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani and senior military officials. With a range of 2,000 km, it is capable of carrying multiple warheads, said Brigadier General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, a senior commander of the Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Aerospace Division. (Xinhua)

Mamnoon Urges Corporate Sector to Help Uplift Education Sector to Modern Trends

ISLAMABAD — Pakistani President Mamnoon Hussain emphasized the corporate sector to strive for bringing the education sector at par with modern trends by exploiting its experiences and observations besides urging the universities to focus on the applied research to achieve real progress.

The president said this addressing a dinner reception hosted in honor of the Institute of Business Administration (IBA) Alumni of Islamabad chapter here held at the Presidency.

Governor Sindh, also the patron of IBA Muhammad Zubair, Dean and Director Institute of Business Administration

Dr Farrukh Iqbal and Member Board of Governors Shahid Shafiq also addressed the reception and shared their experiences and goals. The president, also the alumni of the very renowned educational institute, viewed that the corporate sector usually remained linked with the world as part of their professional engagements.

He hoped that the said sector would set a tradition of creating awareness among their alma mater as well as other educational institutes taking the advantage of their experiences and knowledge to train the young generation. (Monitoring Desk)

Uzbekistan, US Mull Prospects for Deepening Co-Op

TASHKENT — Uzbekistan and the US discussed prospects for deepening cooperation in the political, trade and economic, investment, cultural and humanitarian, as well as other fields, the Uzbek Foreign Ministry said in a message posted on its website. Uzbek Foreign Minister Abdulaziz Kamilov, who visited New York Sept. 22, met Alice Wells, acting assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian affairs and acting special representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. The sides confirmed that

they attach importance to the further development of multifaceted dialogue between Uzbekistan and the US. In this context, they expressed confidence that the fruitful meetings and talks of Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev in New York Sept. 19 with representatives of leading US firms and companies, the successful outcome of the Uzbek-US business forum held Sept. 20 will give a new impetus to building mutually beneficial ties between the business circles of the two countries. (Trend)