

# After Millions Sign Petitions, British Lawmakers Debate Trump's State Visit

WASHINGTON - Parliament debated Monday whether or not to rescind a state visit invitation extended to President Trump a week into his presidency, after two competing petitions elevated the issue to the national conversation. The close relationship between the United States and Britain has sent presidents across the Atlantic to meet with Queen Elizabeth II for decades. But Mr. Trump's executive order on immigration and his disparaging comments about women and minorities have angered many across the UK, sparking protests and leading some to argue that an official state visit, which is marked by royal pomp and circumstance and



is considered a high honor, should not be extended to Trump. Prime Minister Theresa May invited Trump to the UK during her visit to Washington, DC. Critics argue that she acted too soon, and that the UK should wait to determine what kind of president Trump will be before extending a friendly hand to his administration. No US President has ever before been granted a state visit during his first year in office, reported CNN. Others see the event as a way to highlight the close ties between the two allies. Those conflicting views have brought two petitions to Parliament, prompting debates to begin...*(More on P4)...(16)*

## Brexit Minister Eyes Quick Pact on EU Citizens' Rights in Britain

TALLINN - Britain looks to have a quick agreement with the European Union on EU citizens' rights in Britain and vice versa, Brexit minister said here Monday. "I see no reason why we couldn't get a very, very fast answer to that question - an answer which is generous to EU citizens in Britain and generous to British citizens in the European Union," said David Davis, the British Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union. Davis arrived in Estonia

on the first leg of his Baltic tour, with his next visits scheduled to Latvia and Lithuania. He also said that Britain wanted the European Union to be strong also after his country's departure from the bloc. Britain would not pursue a policy that would contravene its national interests, Davis specified that these interests included foreign students enrolling at British universities, financiers doing business in the City of London and highly-skilled...*(More on P4)...(17)*

## Geneva Talks to Encompass Syrian Transition Process: U.N.

GENEVA - Syria peace talks due to start this week in Geneva are based on the broad mandate of a U.N. resolution that asks the U.N. mediator to hold talks on a "political transition process", an official involved in the talks said on Tuesday. Last week the United Nations appeared to back away from using the phrase "political transition", which is understood by the opposition to mean a removal of President Bashar al-Assad or at least an erosion of his powers. Michael Conté, chief of staff of Special Envoy for

Syria Staffan de Mistura, told a regular U.N. briefing that de Mistura was putting the final touches to arrangements for the talks. "The invitations as well as the substantive agenda for the negotiations are all based on the wide scope of Security Council resolutions, in particular (U.N. Security Council Resolution) 2254, which is our main guidance in this process. "The second operative paragraph of 2254 requests the special envoy to convene formal negotiations on the political transition process." (Reuters)

## IMF Agrees to Send Mission to Greece on Bailout Review

WASHINGTON - International Monetary Fund (IMF) agreed to send back a mission to Greece to complete a review of Greece's economic reforms, an IMF spokesperson said on Monday.



The announcement came after the Eurogroup meeting in Brussels, where Greece's international creditors agreed on the bailout review. "We welcome the Greek authorities progress to meet the requirements of the institutions in key areas," said the spokesperson. The review - carried out

by the European Commission, the European Central Bank, the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) and the IMF - has been on hold since last December when IMF's requirement of a

## Leader of Germany's Far-Right Party Meets Putin Allies in Moscow

BERLIN/MOSCOW - The leader of Germany's far-right party Alternative for Germany (AfD) held talks with Russian officials during a visit to Moscow at the weekend, including with an ultra-nationalist ally of President Vladimir Putin, a spokesman said on Tuesday. Frauke Petry, whose party is expected to enter parliament for the first time after a federal election on Sept. 24, discussed possible cooperation between Russian and German regional assemblies with her hosts. Her spokesman Oliver Lang said the two sides did not discuss possible financial assistance for the...*(More on P4)...(21)*

## EU More Keen on Trump's Deeds than Pence's Words

BRUSSELS - U.S. Vice President Mike Pence in his first diplomatic foray to Brussels tried to allay the doubts of the European Union over the new U.S. administration's stance toward it. However, whether the EU would buy it remains unclear. European Council President Donald Tusk said he raised "three key matters," namely international order, security and the attitude of the new U.S. administration toward the EU, during his meeting with Pence, and got all positive answers. However, as new U.S. President Donald Trump has dubbed the EU as a "vehicle for Germany," hailed Brexit as a great thing and branded NATO as "obsolete,"

## Britain will Not Bribe its Way to Brexit: Minister

RIGA - Britain's "Brexit" minister responsible for managing its departure from the European Union on Tuesday denied reports his government was planning to pay eastern EU states to support it during negotiations with Brussels. David Davis described as "implausible" recent British media reports that money would be diverted from development projects in Africa and Asia to the Baltic states and other eastern EU countries.

"I didn't recognise the story I saw in the papers the other day. It seemed to me to be wholly implausible. We have not started the negotiation yet but that is not the way I think it's going to go," Davis told reporters after talks with Latvian Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkēvics in Riga. "It's not a divorce, it's a new relationship... it's very modern in that respect," Davis added. Davis also assured Rinkēvics that Britain wanted to preserve equal rights



for EU citizens living there following Brexit. "We want to see Latvian citizens in the UK have all the rights they have now continuing into the future. "That's not just resident rights, that's public services, healthcare, all the normal right we would give...*(More on P4)...(18)*

## Trump Names Gen. Herbert McMaster as New National Security Adviser

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump on Monday named Lieutenant General Herbert McMaster as his new national security adviser. "He is a man of tremendous talent and tremendous experience...he is respected by everybody in the military, we are very honored to have him," Trump said in his Florida residence Mar-a-Lago. For his part, McMaster said he looked forward to advancing and protecting the interest of the American people. The appointment came

days after former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn resigned after it was revealed that he had misled Vice President Mike Pence about his telephone conversation with the Russian Ambassador to the United States, in which he made comments about U.S. sanction on Russia. McMaster, 54, is consid-



ered a military strategist among the U.S. top brass, he has written extensively on the U.S. military failures in the Vietnam War, and has contributed to a shift in tactics in the military campaign in Iraq. (Xinhua)

## U.S. Vice President Reaffirms Strong Commitment to EU

BRUSSELS - U.S. Vice President Mike Pence on Monday reaffirmed "strong commitment" to the European Union (EU), in a bid to allay the bloc's doubts on the new U.S. administration's stance towards it. "Today it is my privilege to be on behalf of President (Donald) Trump, to express strong commitment of the United States to continued cooperation and partnership with the EU," Pence said at a joint press conference with European Council President Donald Tusk after their meeting in Brussels.

He stressed that despite differences between the United States and the EU, the two sides "share the same heritage, the same values, above all the same purpose to promote peace, prosperity, freedom, and rule of law." With regard to the Ukraine crisis, Pence vowed...*(More on P4)...(20)*

## Laos, ASEAN Countries to Benefit from Intellectual Property Rights Fund

VIENTIANE - Laos and other ASEAN countries will benefit from the ASEAN Intellectual Property Rights fund, which is supported by the European Union (EU), following a substantial increase in funding. The EU's Intellectual Property Office last week confirmed that it will increase the size of the fund from 3.8 million euros (over 4.03 million U.S. dollars) to 5.5 million euros (nearly 5.84 million U.S. dollars), according to information at a press conference held Monday in Lao capital Vientiane to announce the funding. Any of the 10 member countries of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) can submit proposals to request funding to support their research activities in the EU's intellectual property protection sector.

Laos and other ASEAN member countries can submit proposals for intellectual property rights projects to request support from the fund, to be provided to the applicant country's Ministry of Science and Technology. Increasing numbers of applicants from ASEAN been registering each year, although only a small number have come from Laos, according to Lao state-run media Vientiane Times. Head of Cooperation at the EU Delegation to Thailand Jerom Pons told the press conference in Vientiane that the new project on the intellectual property rights will run from 2017 to 2021 focusing on the protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights in Laos and all ASEAN countries. (Xinhua)

## Nieghbor News

### China Leadership Pledges Stability, Progress in Key Reform Areas

BEIJING - China's top leadership on Tuesday pledged to stick to the basic tone of "seeking progress while maintaining stability" in 2017, aiming for more progress from supply-side structural reform. The pledge came from a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, during which attendees discussed the draft government work report, scheduled to be submitted to the upcoming fifth session of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC). The meeting was chaired by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the

CPC Central Committee. The meeting highlighted the significance of 2017 as the 19th CPC National Congress will convene. Acknowledging that China has scored a strong start for the 2016-2020 period, the meeting called for further efforts to balance multiple economic tasks in 2017, including stabilizing growth, advancing reforms, pushing restructuring, improving people's livelihood and preventing risks. At the macro level, China will continue to implement proactive fiscal policies and prudent monetary policies, according to a statement released after the...*(More on P4)...(23)*

### Pakistani PM to Visit Turkey for Strategic Cooperation Council

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will pay a three-day visit to Turkey from Feb. 22 for the fifth session of the Pakistan-Turkey High Level Strategic Cooperation Council (HILSCC) to be held in Ankara on Feb. 23, according to the Foreign Ministry here Tuesday. A high-level delegation, consisting of ministers and senior officials, will accompany the prime minister during the visit. Sharif is expected to have wide-ranging consultations with the Turkish leadership on bilateral, regional and international

issues, the ministry said in a statement. Together with his Turkish counterpart Binali Yildirim, Sharif would co-chair the HILSCC, a framework for consultations at the highest political level between the two sides which focuses on trade, energy, banking and finance, Communications and railways, education, culture and tourism. The bilateral HILSCC was established in 2009 and the last session was held in Islamabad in 2015. During the visit, Sharif also plans to meet with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. (Xinhua)

### Leadership of Tajikistan's Somon Air Dismissed Due to Fail of Dushanbe-Tashkent Flight

DUSHANBEH - Somon air Director General of Tajikistan's Somon Air Alisher Rustamov and some other leadership of the national airline of the country have been removed from posts today after the failed Dushanbe-Tashkent flight, reports Ozodi with reference to the company's press release. The long-awaited Dushanbe-Tashkent flight was scheduled for February 20, however, the company Somon Air claimed that the Uzbek side has not give a permission for the Tajik plane to perform the flight and land

in the International Tashkent Airport. The Tajik side laid the blame on Uzbek colleagues. But then the Somon-Air reported that the leadership of the company after examination of the situation found out that, in fact, the Tajik side failed to provide a package of documents to the Uzbek side on time, which made the Tashkent airport refuse to accept the flight from Dushanbe. As a result, all responsible leadership of the Somon Air for the flight has been punished and released from the posts. (AKI)

### Turkmenistan, Palestine Mull Co-Op Prospects

ASHGABAT - Ashgabat hosted a meeting with Palestine's Deputy Foreign Minister Mazen Shamiyah, the Turkmen Foreign Ministry said in a message. During the talks, the sides exchanged views on cooperation in trade, economy, as well as in the political and cultural spheres. They also noted that it is important to continue the established

dialogue for further diversification of the bilateral cooperation. Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas paid an official visit to Turkmenistan on November 13-15, 2016. Turkmenistan and Palestine signed an agreement on economic cooperation and memorandums of understanding on cooperation in higher education and tourism. (Trend)

### Uzbekistan to Issue High-Denomination Banknotes

TASHKENT - The Central Bank of Uzbekistan will print 10,000 sum notes, reports Gazeta.uz. The information has been confirmed by a number of sources in the Central Bank and the Government, said the report. The copies of the resolution of the Senate of the Parliament on introduction of the new bank-

notes appeared on social media on February 21. "The document was actually signed," noted the sources. The exact date of issuance of the high-denomination banknotes has not been yet reported. To date, the largest denomination banknotes of the national currency is 5,000 sums issued on July 1, 2013. (AKI)