

World News Roundup

CIMEIRA DOS PAÍSES DO SUL DA EUROPA
SOUTHERN EU COUNTRIES SUMMIT
LISBOA 2017

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy, French President Francois Hollande, Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa, Cypriot President Nicos Anastasiades, and Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni take part in a joint statement at Belem cultural center in Lisbon on Jan 28, during the Southern EU Countries Summit. Portuguese Prime Minister Antonio Costa meets with the leaders of six other southern European nations including France and Italy in a summit that is expected to push for action to boost flagging growth in the bloc and fight the ongoing migration crisis. (AFP)



TV presenters Anthony McPartlin (left), and Declan Donnelly (right), pose together with their medals after being appointed Officers of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) during an investiture ceremony at Buckingham Palace on Jan 27. (AFP)

Britain

Bid to preserve arrangements

US okays 'immediate' post-Brexit trade talks

LONDON, Jan 29, (AFP): US President Donald Trump has agreed to start immediate trade talks with Britain with the goal of preserving current arrangements when it leaves the European Union, Downing Street said Saturday.

The "high-level talks", agreed during Prime Minister Theresa May's visit to the White House on Friday, risk antagonising EU leaders, who have warned London cannot start negotiations with other countries until it exits the bloc.

The bilateral talks, which also include setting up joint working groups, are aimed at laying the groundwork for a new deal that can be signed as soon as possible after Brexit.

"The first step towards achieving this will be a new Trade Negotiation Agreement (TNA) which will see high-level talks between the two nations beginning immediately," a Downing Street spokesman said.

The agreement came in a working lunch with Trump in Washington, where May became the first foreign leader to meet the new US president following his inauguration.

May was keen to secure an early commitment to the UK-US "special relationship" from Trump, who has alarmed America's allies with his criticism of NATO and the EU.

Trip

She has promised to be "frank" with the president, but drew criticism at home when, during a trip to Turkey on Saturday, she refused to condemn Trump's refugee policy.

Asked three times at a press conference about the executive order suspending refugee arrivals, May replied: "The United States is responsible for the United States' policy on refugees."

She flew back home into a deepening diplomatic storm after it emerged her own MP Nadhim Zahawi would be barred under the clampdown having been born in Iraq, despite holding a British passport, raising calls for her to speak on behalf of affected British citizens. Germany and France have expressed concern about the policy, while the United Nations said it hoped it was only temporary.

Securing the promise of early trade talks was a key goal for the Washington trip, amid concerns at home of the economic impact of withdrawing from Europe's single market. Downing Street said Trump had pledged to ensure that the trade agreements Britain currently has with the US through its EU membership would continue after it leaves.

"This is the first step leading to a future trade deal with the US which could provide huge benefits to our economic muscle and will give businesses additional certainty and confidence," May said.

Immigration

'Britain doesn't agree with ban'

May criticizes Trump curb on refugees

LONDON, Jan 29, (Agencies): British Prime Minister Theresa May said Britain did not agree with US President Donald Trump's curbs on immigration after coming under criticism from lawmakers in her own party for not condemning his executive order when initially questioned.

On a visit to Turkey on Saturday, she was asked three times to comment on Trump's move to put a four-month hold on allowing refugees into the United States and to temporarily bar travellers from Syria and six other Muslim-majority countries, which he said would protect Americans from violent Islamists.

May — who had flown to Turkey the first foreign leader to meet the new US president for talks she called successful — replied that Washington was responsible for its policy on refugees.

But after the prime minister flew back to a political storm in London late on Saturday, coming under fire from within her own party, her spokesman said Britain disagreed with Trump's ban.

"Immigration policy in the United States is a matter for the government of the United States, just the same as immigration policy for this country should be set by our government," he said.

Effects

"But we do not agree with this kind of approach and it is not one we will be taking. We are studying this new executive order to see what it means and what the legal effects are, and in particular what the consequences are for UK nationals."

Britain's disapproval sharpened on Sunday when Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson said in a tweet: "Divisive and wrong to stigmatise because of nationality."

"We will protect the rights and freedoms of UK nationals home and abroad," Johnson added.

Government minister David Gauke earlier defended May's initial refusal to voice any criticism, saying she was not a "shoot from the hip" politician and wanted to take a considered view. "The important thing is we are saying that we disagree with it and we think it's wrong," he told BBC TV on Sunday.

Britain will make representations to the United States on behalf of any British nationals affected by the policy,

he said.

Trump's executive order plunged America's immigration system into chaos, with legal US residents being turned away at airports, and drew criticism from Western allies including France and Germany.

The US ban affects travellers with passports from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. According to State Department guidance, travellers with dual nationality will also be affected.

May had been enjoying a positive response at home for revitalising the "special relationship" between Britain and the United States, which could be a vital trading partner after Britain exits the European Union.

But her response while in Ankara for talks with Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan triggered criticism from her party.

"Trump really is a sickening piece of work," tweeted lawmaker Sarah

Wollaston, a member of the ruling Conservative Party. She said Trump should be snubbed by parliament when he comes to Britain for a planned state visit this year.

"I don't care how special the relationship is, some lines just shouldn't be crossed," Conservative MP Heidi Allen tweeted. "Strong leadership means not being afraid to tell someone powerful when they're wrong. It's an ethos this country is proud of."

Another Conservative lawmaker, Nadhim Zahawi, said he would be banned from the United States as a British citizen of Iraqi origin. "A sad sad day to feel like a second-class citizen," he tweeted. "Sad day for the USA."

Jeremy Corbyn, leader of the main opposition Labour Party, said it should sicken Britain that May chose not to stand up to Trump.

He reiterated his total opposition to the ban and said Trump's planned

Hollande stressed the "economic and political consequences of a protectionist approach", adding that the principle of "acceptance of refugees" should be respected.

"Faced with an unstable and uncertain world, withdrawal into oneself is a dead-end response," Hollande was quoted as saying in an Elysee Palace statement.

Hollande had earlier told the gathering that "when he adopts protectionist measures, which could destabilise economies not just in Europe but the economies of the main countries of the world, we have to respond".

"And when he refuses the arrival of refugees, while Europe has done its duty, we have to respond."

While officially the new administration in Washington was not on the agenda, the six other European leaders who took part in the summit also alluded to Trump.

Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni said Europe was "ready, interested and willing to cooperate" with the Trump administration.

"But we are Europe, and we cherish our values," he added.

Spanish Prime Minister Mariano

Rajoy defended the EU project, saying it had helped transform Europe into the world region with the "highest level of progress, civil rights and well being".

Also meeting in Lisbon were the leaders of Malta, Cyprus, Greece and Portugal.

The summit was a follow up to a first gathering in Athens in September 2016 as part of a push by Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras to create a strong southern "axis" to counter the influence of nations in northern Europe.

The group is often referred to -- sometimes dismissively -- as "Club Med", even though one of its members, Portugal, is not on the Mediterranean.

It includes some of the nations hardest hit by the financial crisis.

Portugal and Greece both needed international bailouts worth tens of billions of euros which came with demands for tough austerity measures and economic reforms.

As in the first meeting in Greece, the mostly centre-left leaders gathered in Portugal urged Brussels to do more to boost flagging growth in the bloc.

state visit should be put on hold. "We need to find out exactly what his intentions are in the long run and how much the US parliamentary system is going to protect fundamentals of rights and freedom," he told ITV television.

Meanwhile, British athletics legend Mo Farah on Sunday slammed Donald Trump's immigration clampdown, calling it a policy of "ignorance and prejudice" that could keep him apart from his family.

Double-double Olympic champion Farah was born in Somalia but has lived in Britain since the age of eight, and was knighted by the Queen this year for his services to British sport.

"On Jan 1 this year, Her Majesty The Queen made me a Knight of the Realm. On Jan 27, US President Donald Trump seems to have made me an alien," he wrote on Facebook.

Farah and his family are based in Oregon, where his training camp is located.

Britain

Princess Diana statue eyed:

Britain's Prince William and his younger brother Harry have commissioned a statue in honour of their mother Princess Diana who died in a Paris car crash 20 years ago to be erected outside their official London home, their office said on Saturday.

Diana, the first wife of the brother's father the heir-to-the-throne Prince Charles, was killed when the limousine carrying her and her lover Dodi al-Fayed crashed in a Paris tunnel in Aug 1997.

William was 15 and Harry was 12 at the time.

"It has been 20 years since our mother's

death and the time is right to recognise her positive impact in the UK and around the world with a permanent statue," William, 34, said in a statement.



Prince William



Princess Diana

The princes have formed a committee to advise on the sculptor and to raise private funds to pay for the statue which will be located in a public garden at Kensington Palace.

Work on the statue will begin soon and it is hoped that the statue will be unveiled before the end of the year, the statement from their office said.

The first permanent memorial to her, a 210-metre (689-foot) long fountain was unveiled in Hyde Park in 2004 after years of bureaucratic wrangling and squabbling over the design.

It had to be closed down a number of times after its opening and a committee of lawmakers later said it was "ill-conceived and ill-executed". (RTRS)

'Cut subsidies after Brexit': The European Union needs to reduce subsidies as part of pending reforms to cope with an expected 3 billion euro drop in the EU's agriculture budget once Britain leaves the bloc, EU farm chief Phil Hogan was quoted as saying on Saturday.

The German magazine Der Spiegel quoted Hogan as saying that farmers who adopted sustainable farming practices should benefit the most from future subsidies.

"If farmers want to get direct subsidies, they need to contribute more to achieve common goals," he told the magazine.

Hogan said he planned to reintroduce a proposal that Germany had thus far rejected, which calls for significant reductions in subsidies to larger recipients. (RTRS)