

Germany vows economic steps against Turkey

Berlin

Germany yesterday vowed stinging measures hitting tourism and investment in Turkey and a full "overhaul" of their troubled relations, signalling its patience had snapped after Ankara's arrests of human rights activists.

The government stepped up its travel advisory for the NATO ally as Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel warned it could no longer guarantee its citizens' safety in the face of "arbitrary" mass arrests, a step set to hit a sector crucial to Turkey's ailing economy.

A day after his ministry summoned Turkey's ambassador, Gabriel interrupted his holiday and returned to Berlin to deliver his unusually strong comments towards President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Relations between Turkey and Germany, home to three million ethnic Turks, have been badly strained, particularly since the failed coup a year ago against Erdogan.

Gabriel said Germany would review state guarantees



German Vice Chancellor and Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel addresses a press conference

for foreign investment in Turkey and urge businesses not to put their money there, and also reconsider its

support for billions in EU financial flows earmarked over coming years for the long-time aspirant to membership of the bloc.

A Social Democrat, Gabriel made clear he was speaking for the coalition government led by conservative Chancellor Angela Merkel, and her spokesman soon tweeted that the steps were indeed "necessary and indispensable".

Gabriel recalled that Turkey, having long seen itself as "a member of the European family", had levelled Nazi jibes at Germany, and accused Erdogan of worsening a crisis that Berlin had repeatedly sought to ease through dialogue. (AFP)

Relations can't be based on 'threats': Turkey

Istanbul

Turkey yesterday told Germany that their relations could not be founded on "blackmail and threats" after the German foreign minister vowed measures that would limit investment in an escalating row.

"Our relations cannot be pursued based on blackmail and threats but through internationally accepted norms and principles," the Turkish foreign ministry said in a statement, accusing German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel of

a "one-sided and distorted approach".

The Turkish foreign ministry however accused Germany of putting those "on trial and German guests, who come to our country as tourists, on the same scale."

China willing to help ease tensions in Gulf

Beijing

China is confident that Gulf countries have the wisdom to resolve divergence and is willing to play a constructive role to help ease tensions according to the will of regional parties, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Wednesday.

Wang made the remarks when meeting with visiting United Arab Emirates (UAE) Minister of State Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber.

China is a good friend of the Gulf countries, said Wang, expressing the hope that the current Gulf crisis can be properly resolved.

Wang said that China stands by the principle that the crisis should be resolved through political and diplomatic means

and all relevant parties should take due responsibility.

According to Wang, the crisis should be settled within the framework of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and outside countries should play a constructive role.

"Concerned parties should sit down for talks as soon as possible and show flexibility in dealing with each other," Wang said, adding that reaching a consensus on fighting terrorism of all forms is the first priority.

Al Jaber said that the UAE is committed to resolving the crisis through political and diplomatic means and has no intention to interfere in the domestic affairs of Qatar or other countries.

The UAE hopes that relevant parties can reach consensus on



UAE Minister of State Sultan Ahmed Al Jaber (L) and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi (R)

fighting terrorism and honour the agreements already signed and their commitments already made, he said.

"China is an influential and

responsible country," said Al Jaber, adding that the UAE appreciates China's objective and impartial position on Gulf affairs.

Saudi lets Qataris go on hajj, despite diplomatic row

Riyadh

Saudi Arabia said yesterday that Qataris wanting to perform this year's hajj will be authorised to enter the kingdom for the pilgrimage, despite a diplomatic spat between the two countries.

In a statement, the Saudi hajj ministry said Qataris and residents of the Gulf emirate could join the pilgrimage as they were already "electronically registered for the hajj" and they had the necessary permits from Riyadh and Doha.

But the ministry has imposed restrictions on Qatari pilgrims arriving by plane, saying they must use airlines in agreement with the Saudi authorities.

They also needed to get visas on arrival in Jeddah or Medina, their sole points of entry in the kingdom, the ministry added.

The hajj, a pillar of Islam that capable Muslims must perform at least once in a lifetime, is to take place this year at the beginning of September.

Israel, Palestinians brace for more unrest at holy site



Palestinian protesters shout slogans during a demonstration in Jerusalem's Old City

Jerusalem

Israel's army boosted security yesterday and braced for possible unrest on the eve of the main weekly Muslim prayers after security measures imposed at a sensitive Jerusalem site angered Palestinians.

Officials were reportedly in talks to defuse the crisis, which followed a deadly attack last Friday on police near the site that includes the Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock.

The controversy over the clampdown including the use of metal detectors at entrances to the Haram al-Sharif compound, known to Jews as the Temple Mount, also resonated beyond Israel and the Palestinian territories.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas spoke with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan by phone on Thursday on the issue.

The White House said it was "very concerned" about the tensions and called on Israel and Jordan, the holy site's custodian, to work toward a solution.

UN Middle East envoy Nickolay Mladenov also expressed concern and called on "moderate voices to speak up against those who try to fuel tensions".

Remove Jerusalem metal detectors, Erdogan tells Israel

Istanbul

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday urged his Israeli counterpart Reuven Rivlin to swiftly remove metal detectors that have outraged Muslim Palestinian worshippers at a sensitive holy site in annexed east Jerusalem.

Palestinians have been refusing to enter the Haram al-Sharif compound since Sunday, when Israel began installing metal detectors at entrances to the site following an attack that killed two police officers.

"Within the framework of freedom of religion and worship there can be no impediment for Muslims" entering the holy site, the Anadolu news agency quoted Erdogan as telling Rivlin.

"Given the importance that Haram al-Sharif carries for the whole Islamic world, the metal detectors put in place by Israel should be removed in the shortest possible time and an end put to the tension," Erdogan added.