

《奥朗德满载希望开启访华之旅》

????????????? Hollande's visit loaded with hopes



French President Francois Hollande starts a two-day visit to China on Thursday, hoping that the trappings of a state visit to the world's second strongest economic power will curb the growing criticism of his government at home.

Hollande's visit is the first by a leader of a major Western power since the new Chinese leadership led by President Xi Jinping assumed office. It is also the first visit since the Cypriot banking bailout, and Chinese leaders will seek reassurances from Hollande that the European union finally has the eurozone crisis under control.

Interestingly, the French central bank is reportedly ready to explore the possibility of using the renminbi in bilateral trade deals. This could be a ploy to increase the chances of Paris playing a role as an offshore center for the Chinese currency. It will face tough competition, however, from London and Hong Kong.

Given the economic problems facing France, Hollande will seek to push French exports, including Airbus, and welcome inward investment from China. Apart from seeking to expand financial and commercial ties, Hollande and his Chinese interlocutors will also discuss the developments on the Korean Peninsula, as well as the Syrian and Iranian issues. Hollande is likely to push Xi to influence the erratic behaviour of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Besides, France believes that a nuclear DPRK is not in China's best interest.

Although Hollande and Xi will discuss bilateral and international issues, it will be no surprise if they have a private conversation on how to deal with corruption, which was identified by Xi as one of the biggest challenges facing China in his acceptance speech after being nominated president.

Hollande defeated former president Nicolas Sarkozy in last year's election partly on the promise that he would reject austerity and lead France back to economic growth and partly because he promised that his government,

