

## World Shares Drift Lower Ahead of Trump-Xi Meeting at G-20

LONDON — Global stock markets drifted lower Friday ahead of a meeting between Presidents Donald Trump and Xi Jinping at the Group of 20 summit this weekend.

**KEEPING SCORE:** In Europe, Germany's DAX fell 0.6 percent to 11,233 while France's CAC40 was down 0.5 percent at 4,981. Britain's FTSE 100 was 0.7 percent lower at 6,987. Wall Street was poised to open lower too with Dow futures and the broader S&P 500 futures down 0.5 percent.

**G-20 SUMMIT:** Much of the attention at the summit in Buenos Aires will be a meeting between Trump and Xi and whether it yields an easing in trade tensions. Both have imposed punitive tariffs on each other's exports. Analysts are not optimistic about prospects for improvement a month before U.S.



tariffs on Chinese goods are due to ramp up. **ANALYST TAKE:** "Equities are under heavy pressure, hurt by fears of an intensification of trade war tensions between the U.S. and China," Chris Beauchamp, chief market analyst at IG.

**CHINESE MANUFACTURING:** A measure of China's factory activity slipped to its lowest level in more than two years in November, adding to pressure on Beijing amid the tariff battle with Trump. The China Federation of Logistics & Pur-

chasing said Friday its monthly purchasing managers' index declined to 50 from October's 50.2 on a 100-point scale on which numbers above 50 indicate activity is increasing. It blamed weak domestic demand for the latest decline. But investors often see such news as a signal more market-boosting stimulus may be coming.

**KOREAN RATE HIKE:** South Korea's central bank lifted its benchmark rate by a quarter of a percent to 1.75 percent despite a sluggish job market and tepid growth. The Bank of Korea's governor, Lee Ju-yeol, said the rate increase would help stabilize financial markets amid government efforts to contain surging housing prices in capital Seoul and rising consumer debt levels. (AP)

### Israel in First Syria Strikes Since Air Defence Upgrade

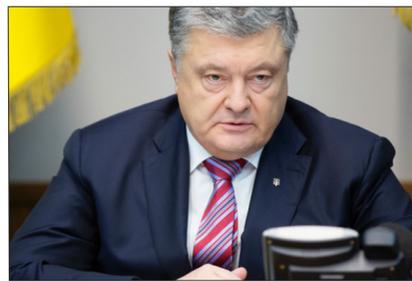
BEIRUT - Israel struck several positions south of Damascus, a war monitor said Friday, in the first strikes since Syrian air defences were upgraded following the accidental downing of a Russian plane in September. Damascus claimed its air defence systems shot down all "hostile targets" late Thursday. Israel did not confirm carrying out raids but denied any losses. According to the Syria Observatory for Human Rights, the strikes hit two positions in the south of Damascus province, including an area believed

to be an Iranian weapons depot near the capital. "Israeli forces bombarded for an hour," Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said. Two missiles hit "weapons depots belonging to the Lebanese Hezbollah (militant group) as well as Iranian forces" in Kisweh. Another missile hit the area of Harfa, where there is a Syrian military base, the Britain-based monitor said. In Kisweh, "the depots that were targeted are used to temporarily store rockets until they are taken somewhere else," Abdel Rahman said. (AFP)

### Ukraine Bars Entry to Russian Males, Upping Ante in Conflict

KIEV, Ukraine - Ukrainian officials on Friday upped the ante in the growing confrontation with Russia, announcing a travel ban for most Russian males and searching the home of an influential cleric of the Russian Orthodox Church. The long-simmering conflict bubbled over Sunday when Russian border guards rammed into and opened fired on three Ukrainian vessels near the Crimean Peninsula, which Moscow annexed in 2014. The vessels were trying to pass through the Kerch

Strait on their way to the Sea of Azov. The Russians then captured the ships and 24 crew members. The Ukrainian parliament on Monday adopted the president's motion to impose martial law in the country for 30 days in the wake of the standoff. There has been growing hostility between Ukraine and Russia since Moscow's annexation of the Crimean Peninsula from Ukraine in 2014. Russia has also supported separatists in Ukraine's east with clandestine dispatches of troops and weapons.



Fighting there has killed at least 10,000 people since 2014 but eased somewhat after a 2015 truce.

Petro Tsygalko, chief of the Ukrainian Border Guard Service, announced at a

security meeting on Friday that all Russian males between 16 and 60 will be barred from traveling to the country while martial law is in place. (Fox News)

### Japanese Prince Wants Royals to Fund Shinto Rite, Not Public



TOKYO - Japan's Prince Akishino said that a highly religious ritual that is part of next year's succession ceremonies should be

covered privately by the imperial family, questioning the government's decision to use public money. Emperor Akishino's

younger son spoke on the contentious issue in a news conference that was recorded for his 53rd birthday Friday. Akishino plans to abdicate next year and will be succeeded by Crown Prince Naruhito. Akishino would then become first in line of succession. Akishino said that using public funds on the Daijosa, a first communion the new emperor performs with Shinto gods, is questionable since Japan's Constitution separates religion and state. The ritual is expected in

mid-November next year, and the government has announced that it would cover the cost, following the precedent set at the time of Akishino's succession 30 years ago. The cost for that rite alone was 2.25 billion yen (\$20 million), though the government is expected to spend slightly less next year. "It's a royal family event, and it is highly religious," Akishino told reporters. "The question is if it is appropriate to use the government funds to cover the cost of such a highly religious event." (Fox News)

### Indian Farmers March Seeking Better Prices for Produce

NEW DELHI - Thousands of farmers marched to India's Parliament on Friday demanding higher prices for their produce and a government waiver on their farm loans to alleviate hardships. Waving red, yellow and green flags and banners representing their organizations, the protesters also called for lower prices for diesel fuel and fertilizer and blamed the Hindu nationalist government for hardships caused by years of declining earnings in the agriculture sector.

Several farmers carried human skulls they said were of farmers who had killed themselves due to deep debt. Their widows also joined the march. A handful of angry farmers took off their clothes and lay naked on the road before they were persuaded by their leaders to put their clothes back on. The farmers demanded a special session of Parliament to discuss their demands. Police stopped them at Jantar Mantar, the main area for protests close to Parliament in New Delhi. (AP)

### Brussels Police Water-Cannon 'Yellow Vest' Protesters

BRUSSELS - Belgian police fired water-cannon in central Brussels on Friday to drive back protesters inspired by France's "yellow vest" anti-tax movement who hurled rocks and firecrackers near the prime minister's office. For nearly three hours, crowds of people complaining about fuel prices and a squeeze on living standards had disrupted traffic and walked the streets in an unauthorized demonstration that lacked clear leadership, largely promoted via social media. Police said about 60 were arrested before the violence, mostly for blocking roads or carrying large fireworks. (Reuters)

### China Rejects U.S. Academic Report Calling for Retaliatory Action

BEIJING - Chinese media on Friday hit back at a U.S. academic report which urged the United States to engage in "tit-for-tat" retaliation to counter what it said was China's widening campaign for influence which threatened to undermine democratic values.

The 213-page report, published by the U.S. think tank Hoover Institution on Thursday, said China's ruling Communist Party had in recent years "significantly accelerated" both the investment and intensity of its global influence-seeking efforts. The report was penned by a group of more than 30 prominent Western experts, such as Orville Schell, director of the Center on U.S.-China Relations at the Asia Society in New York, many whom had long advocated for closer engagement with China. (Reuters)

### 'Recipe for Disaster': Divisions Make United EU Seat at UN Security Council Nearly Impossible

NEW YORK CITY - France strongly rebuffed a German idea to share its powerful veto-wielding status at the UN Security Council (UNSC) with other EU nations. Deep rifts within the union render the proposal "a recipe for disaster," RT has been told. The suggestion for France to transform its UNSC membership into a joint EU seat came from Germany's Finance Minister Olaf Scholz. "This will take some convincing in Paris," he said on Wednesday, "but it would be a bold and smart goal." In exchange for con-



verting its UN Security Council seat into a collective EU seat, France will get to choose "the EU representative to the UN," the German official added. Alongside the US, Russia, China and the UK, France is a permanent

UNSC member nation with veto power. It is not entirely clear how serious Olaf Scholz, who also serves as vice chancellor, was about his proposal, but his words caused a stir in the French media. (Russia Today)

### As G-20 Summit Opens, Contentious Issues Loom On Sidelines

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina - Heads of state from the world's leading economies were invited to the Group of 20 summit to discuss issues like development, infrastructure and investment. As the gathering officially kicks off Friday, those themes seem like afterthoughts, overshadowed by contentious matters from the U.S.-China trade dispute to the conflict over Ukraine. Also expected to loom large amid dozens of bilateral meetings in Argentina's capital: the tensions between longtime

allies the United States and Europe, the gruesome slaying of a dissident Saudi journalist in the country's Istanbul consulate and how the Saudi crown prince who is alleged to have ordered the killing is received by world leaders. The United States, Canada and Mexico also are supposed to sign a trade deal replacing the North American Free Trade Agreement that was struck following months of tough negotiations that analysts say left a bitter taste among the partners. (AP)

## Neighbor News

### Iran, Pakistan Discuss Expanding Military Cooperation

TEHRAN - Iranian Army Deputy Commander Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, in two separate bilateral meetings with high-ranking military officials of Pakistan, exchanged views on ways to broaden military and defense cooperation between the two neighboring countries.

Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari, in his Thursday meetings in Islamabad, held talks with Pakistan's Chairman Joint Chief of Staff Committee General Zubair Mahmood Hayat and Pakistan Air Force Chief Marshal Mujahid Anwar Khan on the sidelines of the 10th edition of International Defense Exhibition and Seminar (IDEAS).

In the meeting with Hayat, Sayyari highlighted the need for boosting bilateral cooperation in manufacturing defense-related equipment. The officials also conferred on ways to enhance military cooperation between the two countries.

In the next meeting between Anwar Khan and Sayyari, the two officials stressed the need for further enhancing cooperation between Air Forces of the two nations. The two countries have the mechanisms and capacity for ensuring the security of the region and they will not allow foreigners to interfere and sow discord between them at all, said Sayyari. (FNA)

### Pakistan Rupee Hits Record Low, No News on IMF Lifeline

KARACHI - Pakistan's rupee plunged almost five percent to a record low Friday after what appeared to be a sixth devaluation by the central bank in the past year as the country struggles with an acute balance of payment crisis.

The unit sank to 143 rupees against the dollar just a day after Prime Minister Imran Khan's government celebrated 100 days in office with a televised conference boasting of its achievements.

The State Bank of Pakistan has indirectly devalued the state-managed unit several times already as it tries to narrow a huge balance of payments deficit.

But traders are growing concerned that neither Khan nor his Finance Minister Asad Umar laid out a comprehensive plan to address the country's economic woes more than a week after negotiations with the International Monetary Fund ended without a much-needed bailout agreement.

The former cricketer has launched a highly publicized austerity drive since being sworn in, including auctioning off government-owned luxury vehicles and buffaloes, in addition to seeking loans from "friendly countries" and making overtures to the IMF. (Monitoring Desk)

### Japan's Government Supports Enhancement of Health Sector in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - Mr. Hajime Kitaoka, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Japan to Tajikistan, attended a handover ceremony to commemorate the successful completion of the project, Rehabilitation of the Branch of the Dushanbe Prosthetic Limbs Manufacturing and Physiotherapy Center in Kulob, news.tj reports. According to Japan's Embassy in Dushanbe, the project was realized under the framework of Japan's "Grant Assistance for Grassroots Human Security Projects (GGP)". The Government of Japan provided the total

grant amount of 81,752 U.S. dollars to the branch of Prosthetic Limbs Manufacturing and Physiotherapy Center in Kulob to increase the capacity of the center and improve the quality of the rehabilitation services for people with disabilities in Khatlon province.

Prior to the project implementation, the people with disabilities in Khatlon region reportedly had to spend more money and time in order to visit Prosthetic Limbs Manufacturing and Physiotherapy Center located in Dushanbe to get treatment and fix the prosthetic limbs. (Trend)

### Tajikistan Government Reviews Prognosis of Main Macroeconomic Indicators for 2020 And Main Parameters for 2021-2022

DUSHANBE - A government session, presided over by President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon, took place on November 29, news.tj reports.

According to the Tajik president's official website, the Minister of Economic Development and Trade, Nematullo Hikmatullozoda, reported on measures taken to work out the prognosis of the main macroeconomic indicators of Tajikistan for 2020 and the main parameters for 2021-2022. The government members endorsed amendments proposed to the country's laws on parental responsibility and food security and sent them for consideration to the parliament.

The session reportedly also discussed the program of statistical works designed for 2019 and the plan of actions on coordinating the implementation of the macroeconomic policy and preventing impact of possible risks on the country's economy.

The meeting participants also discussed the Charter of the Ismoili Somoni Award for young scientists. Speaking at the session, the president ordered all ministries and agencies to intensify work on launching children's musical schools, constructing more sports and children's grounds and laying parks and squares in all cities and districts of the country. (Trend)