

Gorbachev Lauds Bush for Political Abilities, Character

MOSCOW - Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev on Saturday expressed his "deep condolences" to the family of former U.S. President George H.W. Bush and all Americans following his death.

Gorbachev worked closely with Bush to bring an end to the Cold War in the late 1980s and 1990s, and lauded the former president for his abilities as a politician and his personal character.

"It was a time of great change," he told the Interfax news agency, "demanding great responsibility from everyone. The result was the end of the Cold War and nuclear arms race."

Gorbachev said that he and his wife, Raisa, "deeply appreciated the attention, kindness and simplicity typical of George and Barbara Bush, as well as the rest of



their large, friendly family." Pavel Palazhchenko, who worked as Gorbachev's translator during those years, said that a tireless search for common ground and mutual understanding paved the way for some of

the greatest achievements in the history of U.S.-Russia relations. "Bush always took a balanced approach to things," Palazhchenko told The Associated Press on Saturday. "He was not one to rush and took everything into account. He was

always very well briefed. Gorbachev was too, and together they just looked for common ground."

One thing that Palazhchenko said distinguished Bush from other U.S. presidents was his understanding of Gorbachev's political situation, and a professed desire not to put Gorbachev in a corner at a time when others in the Soviet leadership were not thrilled with rapprochement.

"He was, in many respects, very different from Ronald Reagan," Palazhchenko said. "Reagan was an intuitive politician, while Bush was analytical and in some ways more political. He understood that developments in Eastern Europe were not easy for Gorbachev." (Fox News)

Neighbor News

Iran's Oil Export Revenue to be Bartered with Imported Goods

TEHRAN - Iran has finalized a deal with South Korea to trade oil for goods as part of a larger strategy to bypass US sanctions re-imposed on the country following Washington's unilateral withdrawal from the 2105 Iranian nuclear deal.

Head of Iran-South Korea chamber of commerce said the deal was made for returning oil export revenues from South Korea.

"By the new mechanism, Iran's oil export revenue will be bartered with imported goods," Hossein Tanhayi said.

According to Tanhayi, to the end, the two sides can open a joint fund between their central banks. He didn't elaborate further on the mech-

anism. Seoul has fully complied with the US sanctions in the past few months, and totally stopped its oil imports from Iran in September for the first time in six years. The country made the decision before US sanctions against Iran take effect in November 4.

South Korean buyers, which are among major Asian buyers of Iran's crude oil, suspended Iranian oil loading from July due to the uncertainty of getting a waiver from the US government.

South Korea relies on Iran for 13 percent of its imported oil, making Tehran its third crude supplier following Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. (Press TV)

Beauty Queens from India, Pakistan Spread the Message of Peace

NEW DELHI/ISLAMABAD - In the midst of the increasing political tension between India and Pakistan, beauty queens from the two states have come forth with the message of harmony with a beautiful picture shared via social media.

India's Miss Diva Supranational 2018 Aditi Hundia and Miss Supranational Pakistan 2018 Anzhelika Tahir are currently participating in Miss Supranational 2018 pageant in Poland.

Anzhelika Tahir shared a beautiful picture on Instagram where she is posing with Aditi and both of them can be

seen holding flags Anzhelika wrote that they hope one day all wars will stop, every conflict will be solved and the world will be in peace. Aditi also wrote, "Divided by nation, united by Supra sending truckloads of love from India."

The picture surely sends a positive message across the border as the two countries and tries to bridge the gaps and come closer.

This year in November, Miss Supranational held a competition in Poland, where all the Miss Supranational queens from around the world participated. (Agencies)

Gazprombank's Subsidiary to Upgrade Shurtan GCC in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - Enter Engineering Pte Ltd, a subsidiary of Gazprombank, and Uzbekneftegaz signed an EPC contract (design, equipment purchase and construction) to expand the capacity of the Shurtan Gas Chemical Complex (GCC), the Uzbek media reported citing Deputy Chairman of Uzbekneftegaz Odil Temirov.

It is planned to commission additional capacity for the production of 280,000 tons of polyethylene and 100,000 tons of polypropylene by 2021. The project will use technologies licensed by CB&I Lummus and Chevron.

According to Temirov, Enter Engineering is developing a detailed project and considering the project financing.

The project envisages the processing of valuable raw materials - synthetic naphtha from the GTL

(gas-to-liquids) plant under construction nearby - and the development of new types of polyethylene and polypropylene. The Shurtan GCC was commissioned in 2001. The products of the complex are exported to Uzbekistan, Russia, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Turkey, China, Poland, Italy and a number of other countries.

Enter Engineering Pte Ltd. has already implemented a number of projects in Uzbekistan. The company has equipped 28 wells of a group of gas-condensate fields in the Kashkadarya region in the southern part of the country. The project also provided for the construction of a booster compressor station to maintain reservoir pressure at the fields, with further increase in production of up to 2 billion cubic meters of gas per year. (Trend)

Rehabilitated Road-Rail Bridge Reintroduced into Operation in Dushanbe

DUSHANBE - A rehabilitated road-rail bridge (a bridge shared by road and rail lines) in the bus terminal area has been reintroduced into operation in Dushanbe, news.tj reports. An official reopening ceremony of the bridge took place on November 29 and it was attended by Dushanbe Mayor Rustam Emomali.

The project has been jointly financed by the Dushanbe mayor's office and the State Uni-

tary Enterprise (SUE) Tajik Railways (Tajikistan's national railway company), an official source at the Dushanbe mayor's office told Asia-Plus in an interview. Recall, a road-rail bridge in the Dushanbe airport area was reintroduced into operation after rehabilitation in September last year. Tajik Railways has reportedly spent more than 1.4 million somoni for implementation of that project. (Trend)

Trump Remembers George H.W. Bush for Unflappable Leadership

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump and first lady Melania Trump on Saturday mourned the passing of former President George H.W. Bush, remembering him as a man of "sound judgment, common sense and unflappable leadership."

In a statement issued hours after Bush's death on Friday night, the Trumps said that Bush had "inspired generations of his fellow Americans to public service."

Bush, who served as president from 1989 to 1993, was 94.

"President Bush guided our nation and the world to a peaceful and victorious conclusion of the Cold War," the Trumps wrote. "As President, he set the stage for the decades of prosperity that have followed." "And through all that he accomplished, he remained humble, following the quiet call to service that gave him a clear sense of direction."

The statement was issued while the Trumps were in Buenos Aires, Argentina, for the Group of 20 summit of rich and developing nations. (AP)

China, UK Publish Guidelines to Make Belt & Road Construction Greener

LONDON - The Green Finance Committee (GFC) of the China Society for Finance and Banking and the City of London's Green Finance Initiative (GFI) on Friday jointly published a set of green finance guidelines for the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The Green Investment Principles were published here at the third meeting of the UK-China Green Finance Taskforce, chaired by Dr. Ma Jun, chairman of the

GFC of the China Society for Finance and Banking, who also sits on the People's Bank of China Monetary Policy Committee, and Sir Roger Gifford, chairman of the GFI.

The principles, developed on existing responsible investment initiatives and set to be published in seven languages, aim to incorporate low-carbon and sustainable development into the BRI by encouraging corporations involved in projects to sign a voluntary code of



practice. The principles, a project first proposed in the 9th China-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue (EFD), were drafted by a group of organizations led by

the GFC and the GFI, including the Belt & Road Bankers Roundtable, Green Belt and Road Investor Alliance, and World Economic Forum. (Xinhua)

MBS Mingles with G20 Leaders as Trump Fuels Summit Tensions



BUENOS AIRES - Fisheries on trade, climate change and Ukraine divided world leaders Friday as US President Don-

ald Trump came under sustained fire and Saudi Arabia's de facto ruler came in from the cold at G20 talks.

first G20 summit convened 10 years ago in the throes of financial crisis. Trump was attacked for destroying the group's

past unity on trade and climate change. But he won a breakthrough with the signing of a new trade pact for North America and, having ignited a trade war with China, touted "good signs" ahead of a dinner Saturday with President Xi Jinping.

In remarks to the summit relayed by the Xinhua news agency, Xi reaffirmed his pledges of economic reform "with increased efforts in intellectual property rights protection and more imports." (AFP)

IOC Human Rights Advisory Committee to Start with 2024 Games

TOKYO - The IOC has set up an advisory committee on human rights chaired by Zeid Ra'ad al-Husseini, the former U.N. high commissioner for human rights.

President Thomas Bach said Saturday at meetings in the Japanese capital that "human rights standards" will be included in Olympic host-city contracts, beginning with the 2024 Games in Paris.

Bach was asked if the committee would look at human rights in

China, where the ruling Communist Party has been criticized for the internment of hundreds of thousands of Muslims in western China.

Beijing is the host of the 2022 Winter Olympics, and spent \$40 billion to hold the 2008 Olympics.

Bach said the IOC would not question China because it "has not the mandate nor the authority to solve the human rights problems" that are clearly "political issues." (AP)

Employees of India's IL&FS Held Hostage by Ethiopian Staff Fear for Safety

NEW DELHI - Employees of Indian company Infrastructure Leasing & Financial Services (IL&FS) taken hostage by local staff in Ethiopia fear for their safety, with some being confined to a company campus north of the African nation's capital Addis Ababa. India has asked Ethiopian authorities to investigate and help the seven IL&FS employees who say they are being held by local staff due to non-payment of salaries by the debt-laden firm, an Indian government official said on Saturday.

A group of four employees has not been allowed to leave an IL&FS campus in Bure town, 400 km (250 miles) north from Addis Ababa, since Nov. 24, said store manager Nagaraju Bishnu, one of the employees held hostage. (Reuters)

French Police Clash with 'Yellow Vest' Protesters in Paris, 122 Arrested

PARIS - Police fired tear gas, stun grenades and water cannon in battles with "yellow vest" protesters around the Champs Elysees in Paris on Saturday, marking the third weekend of demonstrations across France against high living costs. Police said 122 people had been arrested amid concerns that violent far-right and far-left groups were infiltrating the "yellow vests" movement, a spontaneous grassroots rebellion over the struggle of many in France to make ends meet. For more than two weeks, the "gilets jaunes" (yellow vests) have blocked roads in protests across France, posing one of the largest and most sustained challenges Emmanuel Macron has faced in his 18-month-old presidency. (Reuters)

Snubbed by Trump, Putin Charms Other Players at G20

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina - Russia is putting on a brave face after U.S. President Donald Trump abruptly junked a summit with Russian President Vladimir Putin. It's all about internal U.S. politics and "anti-Russian hysteria," Russian officials shrug. But Trump's snub was a clear kick to Putin just as he arrived at a Group of 20 summit where Western leaders banded together to denounce Russia's actions in Ukraine.

So Putin turned elsewhere for attention. He snubbed Turkey's president for the time slot he had reserved for Trump, and sought



to strengthen his alliance with China and other non-Western economies. And he cozied up at Friday's round-table talks to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, somewhat of a fellow outcast at the G-20 over his suspected role in the killing of a dissident Saudi journalist.

Putin and Trump "said hi to each other," according to the Russian leader's spokesman - but didn't shake hands or otherwise interchange, even during the "family photo" when leaders rub elbows as they get into place and usually exchange small talk. (Fox News)

Mexico Leftist Takes Power Torn Between Principles and Pragmatism

MEXICO CITY - Veteran leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador assumes the Mexican presidency on Saturday vowing to champion the poor and contain business elites he says have conspired with politicians for years to fuel corruption and lawlessness.

After a busy five-month transition that has spooked financial markets, Lopez Obrador will take responsibility for fixing escalating gang violence, chronic poverty and widespread discontent with the political class in Mexico.

To do that, the anti-establishment former Mexico City mayor plans to increase pensions, create a militarized Guardia Nacional nationwide police force, change the penal code to amnesty lesser criminals, and hold referendums to back his policies. An admirer of Mexican President Lazaro Cardenas, who nationalized Mexico's oil industry in 1938, Lopez Obrador will be the first leftist to run the country since it began moving from one-party rule towards democracy in the 1980s. (Reuters)

Yemen on Brink of 'Major Catastrophe': UN Aid Chief

ADEN - UN aid chief Mark Lowcock warned Saturday that Yemen was "on the brink of a major catastrophe", as the world body pushes for peace talks in the impoverished and war-ravaged country.

His comments came after renewed deadly clashes between Huthi rebels and pro-government forces in the Red Sea port city of Hodeida, vital for the flow of humanitarian aid.

"Yemen is on the brink of a major catastrophe," Lowcock said, as he wrapped up a visit to the country.

He said conditions had deteriorated alarmingly since his last visit in October 2017 to Yemen, which the United Nations has termed the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

"In Aden, I met emaciated children so malnourished they could barely open their eyes," Lowcock said in a statement.

"Humanitarian assistance helps many of these children recover. But I also heard heartbreaking stories of children relapsing again and again because their families simply can't afford food or proper medical care," he said. Lowcock reiterated the UN's readiness to play a role to ensure that the rebel-held Hodeida port, a key entry point for imports and aid, can remain open.

Under heavy international pressure, Saudi-backed pro-government forces have largely suspended an offensive launched in June to take the port city. Sporadic clashes have however continued since a fragile truce began on November 13. (AFP)