

## Chinese President Arrives in Portugal for State Visit

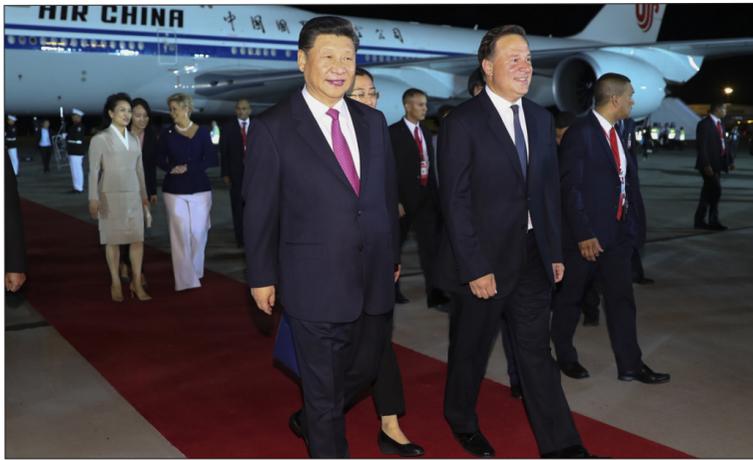
LISBON - Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Portugal on Tuesday for a two-day state visit aimed at carrying forward friendship and expanding co-operation between the two countries.

It is the first visit by a Chinese head of state to the European country in eight years.

Two Portuguese fighter jets escorted Xi's plane as it entered the country's airspace.

Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, were greeted by senior Portuguese government officials at the airport.

While delivering a written speech upon arrival, Xi praised the traditional friendship between China and Portugal, saying that the bilateral relations have withstood the test of time and international vicis-



situdes and become even stronger.

In 1999, the two countries properly resolved the question of Macao through friendly con-

sultations, setting an example for other nations to tackle issues left over from history, Xi said.

In 2005, China and Portugal established a comprehensive strategic partnership, which enabled their mutually beneficial cooperation to embark on a fast lane of development and deliver substantial benefits to the people of the two countries, Xi said.

He said that next year marks the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries, which is a new starting point in history for the bilateral relations.

Xi said that he is looking forward to meeting President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, Prime Minister Antonio Costa and other Portuguese leaders to draw up the blueprint for future bilateral cooperation. (Xinhua)

### Fresh Election Would Not Break Swedish Political Deadlock

STOCKHOLM - Swedes would deliver another hung parliament if an election were held today, a poll showed on Tuesday, heaping pressure on mainstream parties to break the deadlock that has left the country without a government for nearly two months.

The anti-immigration Sweden Democrats hold the balance of power in parliament after the Sept. 9 vote and the center-left and center-right blocs have so far been unable to choose between doing a deal with a party that

has roots in the white supremacist fringe to gain power or with each other. The center-left bloc of the Social Democrats, Greens and Left Party, are backed by 42.9 percent of voters against 40.7 in the election, the twice yearly poll by the Statistics Office showed.

The four-party, center-right Alliance opposition was supported by 37.5 percent down from 40.3 percent. The Sweden Democrats saw their support rise to 18.3 percent from 17.5 percent. (Reuters)

### France to Announce Suspension of Fuel Tax Hikes That Provoked Riots, Media Says

PARIS - French Prime Minister is expected to announce a suspension of fuel tax hikes that have provoked a protest movement that has grown violent, according to French media.

Edouard Philippe, the minister, is expected to announce the planned increase will be suspended for several months, Le Monde and France Info radio reported. Philippe is also expected to announce other measures aimed

at easing tensions. The protests, which began in mid-November, have grown increasingly violent. Over the weekend more than 130 people were injured and over 400 were arrested in the nation's capital. Officials have called it the worst in the country in decades.

The protesters say they want to level a playing field that they believe is tipped in favor of the elite and well-off city dwellers. The fuel tax "was the



spark," said Thierry Paul Valette, a Paris protest coordinator, in an interview. "If it hadn't been (that), it would have been something else."

"People want fair fiscal justice. They want social justice," he added, as well as improved purchasing power. (Fox News)

### NATO Toils to Keep Russia out of Ukraine, in Missile Treaty



BRUSSELS - Russia takes center-stage at NATO Tuesday as allied foreign ministers meet to debate ways to dissuade Moscow

from destabilizing Ukraine and encourage it to respect a landmark Cold-war era nuclear treaty. U.S. Secretary of State

Mike Pompeo and his NATO partners will hold talks with Ukrainian Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin as Kiev seeks international support for its Black Sea confrontation with Russia.

Russian border guards fired on three Ukrainian navy vessels in the Black Sea near the Russia-occupied Crimea on Nov. 25. The vessels and the crews were captured.

But it is unclear what more NATO would do beyond the sea patrols and air policing it already does in the region. Noting that

Ukraine isn't a member of the alliance, NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the allies already "provide strong political support and strong practical support."

NATO allies have helped modernize Ukraine's armed forces and boosted their presence in the Black Sea over the last year, with more ships deployed in the region and more air policing. Three NATO allies on the Black Sea - Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey - are also taking individual measures. (Fox News)

### China to Punish IP Infringers after US Trade Truce

BEIJING - China announced Tuesday stiffer punishments for serious infringers of intellectual property -- including barring them from buying real estate or going on expensive holidays -- as Washington clamours for action on the issue following a trade war truce.

The National Development and Reform Commission, China's state planner, along with 37 government departments, released a joint policy to deal with serial IP infringers, who will face a raft of tough

punishments and restrictions if blacklisted. The crackdown comes days after US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping agreed at a summit in Argentina to hold off on new tariffs while negotiators seek a deal.

Trump has imposed levies on billions of dollars worth of Chinese imports, in part as punishment over alleged IP theft, which the US says costs its companies as much as \$600 billion a year -- which China has denied. (AFP)

### Indonesia Says Papua Separatists Suspected of Killing at Least 24 Workers

JAKARTA - Security forces in Indonesia's easternmost province of Papua are hunting for a separatist group suspected of killing at least 24 construction workers building a bridge in a remote district, a military spokesman said on Tuesday.

Papua has suffered a simmering separatist conflict since it was incorporated into Indonesia after a widely criticized U.N.-backed referendum in 1969 and remains one of its poorest regions. Colonel Muhammad Aidi said security forces were trying to reach the scene of the alleged attack in Yigidi district after a priest had said that 24 men from the construction company PT Istaka Karya had been "sadistically slaughtered" by an armed criminal separatist group. (Reuters)

### Israelis Protest Violence Against Women, Demanding Response

JERUSALEM - Israelis across the country are protesting what they see as the government's inadequate response to violence against women.

Protesters blocked main intersections and staged graphic demonstrations drawing attention to their cause. In Jerusalem, protesters splattered red paint on a street littered with signs bearing the names of dozens of women killed. Activists filled a Tel Aviv square with some 200 dyed-red shoes meant to symbolize violence against women. A central protest will be held later Tuesday.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has called for more to be done. (AP)

### Italy PM Says New Budget Proposal 'In Coming Hours'

MILAN - Italian Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said Tuesday that a revised draft budget to avoid penalties from Brussels would be ready "in the coming hours".

"My objective is to avoid Italy being penalised in a way that hurts our country and risks also hurting Europe," Conte told Italian daily Avvenire. "I'm finalising a proposal that the European Union will have to take into consideration. It will be ready in the coming hours." The draft "does not compromise Italians' interests or the promised reforms" of the populist government.

"I have some projections on the economic impact



of the '100-quota' (pension reform) and citizens' income. This can give me room to manoeuvre to spend and use in negotiations" with the Commission, Conte said.

The European Commission in October rejected the big-spending budget submitted for approval by the coalition government of the far-right

League and the anti-establishment Five Star Movement.

The budget includes giving a state pension to anyone whose age plus number of years worked equals 100.

It also provides for a universal basic income of 780 euros for the least well-off to help them get back into the job market. (AFP)

### South Korean President Says Visit from North Korea's Kim 'A Possibility'

WELLINGTON - South Korean President Moon Jae-in said on Tuesday a visit to Seoul by North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was "a possibility" and that such a trip would help to improve Pyongyang's relationship with the United States.

Moon made the comment when asked by reporters during a state visit to New Zealand about the likely timing of a possible trip to Seoul by Kim, who held summits with Moon and U.S.

President Donald Trump this year. "This will be the first time that a North Korean leader will visit South Korea so, although there is no time frame set for that, still that's very meaningful," Moon said.

He said such a visit would "accelerate the denuclearization in the Korean peninsula" and result in a "greater stride in relations improvement" between the North and the United States. (Reuters)

### Shi'ite Rivalry Paralyzes Iraq's Government

BAGHDAD - A growing rivalry between two powerful Shi'ite Muslim factions has paralyzed efforts to form a government in Iraq six months after an election aimed at steering the country toward recovery from years of war.

The two largest parliamentary groupings to emerge after the vote in May - one led by populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr and the other by Iranian-backed militia leader Hadi al-Amiri - formed a tacit alliance in October when they picked a president and approved 14 out of 22 cabinet ministers.

But since then there has been stalemate, mainly over the empty interior ministry post dominated for years by allies of Amiri, who are backing the former head of a paramilitary force supported by Tehran. Sadr meanwhile says no one with a political affiliation should get the post.

A vote in parliament to fill the vacant ministries in Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi's cabinet has been repeatedly put back.

Iraq's return to deadlocked parliamentary politics, now involving Shi'ite sectarianism that followed the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, prompted a plea last week from Iraq's most senior Shi'ite cleric for politicians to work together.

That now looks all but impossible. As Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani made his remarks, the two sides broke off talks, lawmakers said. "We reached a dead end," Hanin Qaddo, a member of the bloc led by Amiri, told Reuters on Friday. (Reuters)

## Neighbor News

### Emomali Rahmon Will Attend CIS Informal Summit in St Petersburg

DUSHANBE - Tajik leader Emomali Rahmon will attend an informal summit of the CIS heads of state that will take place in St Petersburg on December 6, news.tj reports.

The CIS heads of state will review the results of the past year's work and determine priorities of activities for the next year, a source in the Tajik government told Asia-Plus in an interview.

While in St Petersburg, Rahmon will also participate in a summit of the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). Russian media reports say the CSTO heads of state will take decision on election of a new Secretary-General of the Organization.

Established on December 8, 1991 after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) is a regional organization. It now consists of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Ukraine. Georgia pulled out of the organization in 2009.

Although Ukraine was one of the founding countries and ratified the Creation Agreement in December 1991, Ukraine chose not to ratify the CIS Charter as it disagrees with Russia being the only legal successor state to the Soviet Union. (Trend)

### Uzbekistan to Build First Solar Power Plant with Private Investments

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan invites investors to participate in a project to build a solar power plant with a capacity of 100 megawatts in the Navoi region, the State Investment Committee of Uzbekistan announced.

On Nov. 20, a conference was held in Tashkent for potential investors on the construction of the first solar power plant in the form of a public-private partnership (PPP). The event was organized by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the State Investment Committee of Uzbekistan and Uzbekenergo.

Representatives of the 22 largest energy

companies and international financial organizations arrived in Uzbekistan to familiarize themselves with the technical features of this project and about the planned dates for the competitive selection.

Investors will be selected through a transparent and competitive tender, will have the opportunity to conclude a land lease agreement, a concession agreement and exploit and use the main assets of the power plant. In May 2018, IFC signed an agreement with the Government of Uzbekistan to attract private sector investment in renewable energy in Uzbekistan. (Trend)

### Pakistan, Iran Agree to Enhance Trade Relations

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan and Iran on Tuesday agreed to enhance their trade relations and improve rail connectivity to achieve a target of \$5 billion annual bilateral trade, foreign office said.

The decision was made at a bilateral political consultation meeting attended by Pakistan's Foreign Secretary Tehmina

Janjua and Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Syed Abbas Araghchi in Pakistan capital's Islamabad.

"Pakistan and Iran have agreed to enhance bilateral trade to achieve the annual target of \$5 billion through facilitation of business communities and scaling down all trade barriers," Mohammad Faisal, Foreign Ministry spokesman, said in a statement.

Both countries also agreed that their Joint Economic Commission should meet early next year.

During the meeting, both sides discussed the situation in Afghanistan and reiterated their full support for an Afghan-owned, Afghan-led peace and reconciliation process. "Pakistan and Iran have been affected adversely by the 40-year conflict and instability in Afghanistan, which has resulted in serious challenges including millions of Afghan refugees, the narcotics trade, illegal migration, and the rise of new terrorist outfits like Daesh in the war-ridden country," Faisal added. (Agencies)

### Iran Wants to Expand Missile Range Despite U.S. Ire

GENEVA - Iran wants to increase its missiles' range, a senior military official was quoted as saying on Tuesday, a move that would irk the United States which views Tehran's weapons program as a regional security threat.

U.S. President Donald Trump pulled out of an international nuclear agreement in May and reimposed sanctions on the Islamic Republic, criticizing the deal for not including curbs on Iran's development of ballistic missiles.

"One of our most important programs is increasing the range of missiles and ammunition," Iranian air force head, Brigadier General Aziz Nasirzadeh, said, according

to the semi-official Fars news agency.

"We don't see any limitations for ourselves in this field."

Iran's military has cited 2,000 km (1,240 miles) as the current missile range, and said U.S. bases in Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar, plus U.S. aircraft carriers in the Gulf, were within range.

Nasirzadeh did not give details on how far Iran would like to increase that range, according to the Fars report.

Tehran insists its missile program is purely defensive but has threatened to disrupt oil shipments through the Strait of Hormuz in the Gulf, if Washington tries to strangle its exports. (Reuters)