

China Vows Quick Trade Moves as US Sends Mixed Signals

BEIJING - China vowed Wednesday to move swiftly to strike a trade consensus with the United States, even as mixed signals on the detente from self-described "Tariff Man" Donald Trump's administration upset global markets. Trump sowed more confusion as he opened the door to lengthier negotiations with China, suggesting that they could extend beyond a 90-day deadline to reach a deal to avoid a massive tariff increase. But the Chinese commerce ministry said negotiators will "actively push forward negotiations within 90 days in accordance with a clear timetable and roadmap" -- marking Beijing's first public acknowledgement of the deadline announced by the



US at the weekend. The ministry lauded Trump's talks with President Xi Jinping at the weekend as "successful" and said it

was "confident" their agreement would be implemented. The ministry vowed to start implementing "specific matters" that were

agreed -- saying "the sooner the better" -- but did not provide any details.

Trump and Xi agreed on a trade war truce on the sidelines of a G20 summit in Argentina on Saturday, holding off on new tariffs and giving negotiators three months to reach an agreement.

China pledged to buy more from the United States and the White House said the two sides would negotiate "structural changes" to thorny issues plaguing relations, but few details and no dollar amounts were disclosed. But the verbal detente was broken Wednesday as China's foreign ministry lashed out at criticism from US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. (AFP)

Yemen Government Team Heads to Sweden for Peace Talks

ADEN/STOCKHOLM - A delegation from Yemen's Saudi-backed government left for Sweden on Wednesday to attend peace talks with members of the Iran-aligned Houthis group, in a renewed U.N. push to end a war that has brought economic ruin and famine. One representative of the internationally recognized government, Abdullah al-Alimi, tweeted that the talks were "a true opportunity for peace," before his team flew out of the Saudi capital Riyadh.

Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - leaders of a Western-backed coalition battling the Houthis to restore President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi's government - want to exit a war that had dragged on for four years. Western allies, which provide arms and intelligence to the coalition, have ramped up pressure on them to find a way to end a conflict that killed tens of thousands of people and left more than 8 million facing famine. (Reuters)

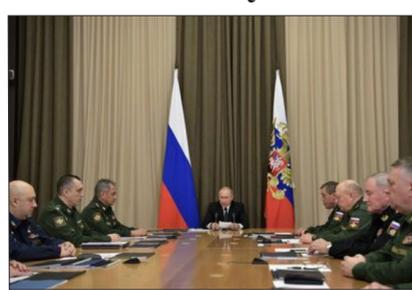
MOSCOW - Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said on Wednesday the United States had yet to provide any evidence Moscow was in breach of a landmark arms control treaty, but said it was ready to keep discussing the matter with Washington.

The United States delivered Russia a 60-day ultimatum on Tuesday to come clean about what Washington says is a violation of a 1987 nuclear arms

control treaty, saying it would be forced to start a six-month process of withdrawal if nothing changed.

Maria Zakharova, a spokeswoman for Russia's foreign ministry, told a briefing that the U.S. embassy in Moscow had handed over a note on Tuesday evening saying Washington would quit the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty unless Russia began complying with it.

"These documents



were received for further processing," said Zakharova. "In them once again there were groundless allegations about our alleged violation of this

agreement. We have repeatedly said that this is conjecture. No proof (of our alleged violation) has been presented to us." (Reuters)

Russia Says U.S. Has Shown No Evidence It Is in Breach of Nuclear Treaty

Turkey Seeks Arrest of 2 Former Aides to Saudi Crown Prince



ISTANBUL -- Turkey is seeking the arrest of two former aides to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman who

were dismissed amid the fallout from the killing of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi. The U.N.'s human rights

chief, meanwhile, said an international probe is needed into Khashoggi's death.

Turkey's official Anadolu news agency said Wednesday a court approved arrest warrants for former royal court adviser Saud al-Qahtani and former deputy intelligence chief Ahmed al-Assiri, who are believed to have overseen the team that killed and dismembered Khashoggi at the kingdom's Istanbul consulate in October. Saudi authorities say the agents who killed

Khashoggi exceeded their authority.

The Istanbul chief prosecutor's Tuesday court application says there is "strong suspicion" the two aides were involved in planning the killing. Turkey has been seeking to extradite 18 suspects, including 15 members of the alleged assassination squad. The government says a trial in Turkey would provide transparency and accountability and says Saudi authorities have not fully cooperated with the probe. (AP)

Global Shares Slide on Doubts over US-China Trade Deal

BEIJING -- Global stock prices fell Wednesday, though not as much as Wall Street the day before, amid confusion about what the U.S. and China agreed to in a tariff ceasefire.

KEEPING SCORE: In Europe, London's FTSE 100 index fell 1.0 percent to 6,950 and Germany's DAX lost 0.8 percent to 11,240. France's CAC 40 retreated 0.9 percent to 4,966. U.S. stock trading was due to remain closed to mourn the death of former President George H.W. Bush. ASIA'S DAY: Hong Kong's Hang Seng index fell 1.6 percent to 26,819.58 and the Shanghai Composite Index declined 0.6 percent to 2,649.81. Tokyo's Nikkei 225 lost 0.5 percent to 21,919.33 and Sydney's S&P-ASX 200 shed 0.8 percent to 5,668.40. Seoul's Kospi gave up 0.8 percent to 2,101.31 and India's Sensex was 0.6 percent lower at 35,902.74. TRADE QUESTIONS: Investor confidence in the U.S.-China agreement faltered after confusing and conflicting comments from President Donald Trump and some senior officials. (AP)

Israel Gave No Proof of Border Tunnels, Says Lebanon's Berri

BEIRUT - Israel provided no evidence of cross-border attack tunnels in a meeting with U.N. peacekeepers on Wednesday, Lebanon's Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri said.

The Israeli military launched an operation on Tuesday on its side of the border to "expose and thwart" tunnels into its territory, which it said originated from Lebanon.

Israel accused Lebanon's Hezbollah movement of digging across the common frontier, saying they did not function yet but posed "an imminent threat".

There was no comment from Iran-backed Hezbollah.

"The Israelis did not present any information," at the meeting with the Lebanese army and the UNIFIL peacekeeping force, a statement from Berri's office said, adding that geographic coordinates had been demanded but not received. (Reuters)

Europe Continues Mafia Crackdown, Arrests 90 in Continent-Wide Raids

About 90 alleged Italian mafia members were arrested Wednesday in a Europe-wide operation spanning across four countries, just a day after the new boss of the Cosa Nostra and 45 other top mobsters were rounded up.

Authorities said they conducted raids in Germany, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands in a crackdown on the 'Ndrangheta, a southern Italy-based organized crime group.

The arrests came following an investigation dubbed Pollino that was launched in 2016 against the Italian mafia over allegations of cocaine trafficking, money laundering, bribery and violence. (Fox News)

Germany's Top Human Rights Official Says Barred from Xinjiang

BEIJING - Germany's top human rights official said she has been denied entry to China's Xinjiang region, where the UN estimates that up to one million Muslims are being held in detention camps.

Reports have leaked out this year of gross human rights violations targeting the Uighur ethnic minority in the restive region in China's northwest.

Barbel Kofler, who is visiting China for a human rights dialogue between the two countries, said Tuesday she was "shocked by reports of the treatment" of the Uighurs.

"I am deeply concerned about the human rights situation in China. It has become even more seri-



ous in recent years," Kofler said in a statement. Kofler's visit to China began Tuesday, and comes after Beijing cancelled last year's bilateral dialogue, the German Foreign Office said in the statement. "Unfortunately, my request to travel to Xinjiang in the context of the Dialogue was refused," said Kofler.

China's foreign ministry regularly claims it welcomes visits to the region from foreign journalists and officials. But foreign journalists travelling to the region are frequently detained and followed by police to prevent and obstruct reporting on the internment camps and treatment of Uighurs. (AFP)

May Accused of Misleading Mps over Brexit Deal

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May was accused on Wednesday of misleading MPs over her Brexit deal as her government published legal advice likely to increase opposition to the agreement ahead of a crucial vote next week.

Scottish National Party (SNP) lawmaker Ian Blackford was twice reprimanded by the House of Commons speaker for suggesting May had misled MPs "inadvertently or

otherwise", before withdrawing the claim.

May replied that she had always been clear about the implications of the deal's provisions on Northern Ireland, which risk keeping Britain tied to the EU's economic rules for years after leaving next March.

But she emphasised neither side wanted this to happen, and repeated that the withdrawal agreement struck with Brussels last month was the only viable option. (AFP)

Cuba, DPRK Move to Deepen Ties

HAVANA - Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) called for strengthening bilateral ties here on Tuesday.

The appeal was made during a meeting between Raul Castro, first secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and Kim Yong Nam, president of the Presidium of the Supreme People's Assembly of the DPRK.

According to a statement released by the Cuban government, "both leaders expressed mutual satisfaction for the progresses made in bilateral relations."

The statement said Kim's official visit is part of "fluid and intense" bilateral exchanges due to the friendly and historical relations between the socialist countries.

The visit to the Caribbean nation comes just weeks after Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel traveled to Pyongyang and met with DPRK top leader Kim Jong Un.

During a meeting with Kim Yong Nam last week, Diaz-Canel said both sides expressed a willingness to deepen bilateral relations and agreed on the importance of maintaining high-level dialogues.

Kim Yong Nam began a Latin American tour last week to strengthen political and cooperative ties with different nations. Cuba is the second leg of his three-nation tour. Havana and Pyongyang have maintained sound political and economic relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1960. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

Iran Says OPEC Meeting to Discuss Saudi Arabia's Oil Oversupply

TEHRAN - The upcoming meeting of the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) will discuss the crude oversupply by Saudi Arabia, Iran's oil minister said Wednesday.

"The issue of Saudi oversupply is among the topics that would be discussed in the forthcoming OPEC meeting," Bijan Namdar Zanganeh was quoted Iran's PetroEnergy Information Network as saying.

The OPEC member states should probe into the reasons behind Qatar's withdrawal from the cartel, as some oil producers have created

problems for Qatar, Zanganeh added.

The Iranian minister also ruled out the possibility of discussing the quota of Iran's oil output in the next OPEC meeting.

"As long as Iran is facing the (U.S.) sanctions (on oil sales), the discussion on the quota of Iran's output is out of the question," he noted.

Hossein Kazempour Ardebili, Iran's OPEC governor, said earlier that Qatar's decision to quit the OPEC shows frustration of small crude producers with the dominant role of Saudi Arabia in the oil club. (Xinhua)

Pakistan Intends to Export Electric Power to Tajikistan in Winter Through CASA-1000

DUSHANBE - Pakistan has decided to export electricity to Tajikistan in winter season through CASA-1000 project as in the power purchase agreement (PPA), a reverse flow of electricity clause was included and to this effect the authorities in Power Division would soon engage their counterparts in Tajikistan, news.tj reports citing a senior official of Power Division.

Under the agreement, the official said, once the CASA-1000 project is completed, Pakistan will import 1,000MW electricity from Tajikistan at 9 cents per unit in summer season for 5 months from May to September, but

now authorities in Islamabad have made up their mind to export 1,000MW electricity to Tajikistan through the same project in winter as hydro generation in Tajikistan turns zero.

The official said Pakistan has now gained the capacity to generate electricity close to 30,000MW and in winter the demand in Pakistan hovers around 11,000-13,000MW at the maximum and the country is in a position to export the surplus electricity up to 1,000MW to Tajikistan at affordable prices, as CASA transmission line possesses the capacity to transmit electric power up to 1,000MW only. (Trend)

Date for Opening Tajikistan's First Islamic Bank Revealed

DUSHANBE - The first Islamic bank in Tajikistan to be opened in April 2019, a source in the financial market of Tajikistan told Trend.

According to the information, in 2018, the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (ICD) Regional office in the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) Group Hub in Almaty, Kazakhstan was approached by Sohikborbank, a mid-sized bank in Tajikistan.

"Sohikborbank sought to get technical guidance to achieve their strategic ambition of transforming from a conventional bank into the 1st Islamic bank in Tajikistan by 2019," the source noted.

He added that the ICD team is currently guiding the bank through its journey of transformation, spanning Sharia (Islamic religious law) governance and product development, legal support, human resources, IT solutions, accounting, treasury, risk management, and marketing and communications support.

The project, reportedly, achieved significant progress in all spheres and is approaching launch of the new Islamic bank in Tajikistan.

Islamic banking or Islamic finance is banking or financing activity that complies with Sharia and its practical application through the development of Islamic economics. (Trend)

Turkmenistan Developing Concept of Transition to Digital Economy

ASHGABAT - Turkmen Communications Ministry is developing an internal concept of transition to a digital economy, the implementation of which will significantly improve the quality of life of the population, including agriculture and the national economy, said the Minister of Communications Bairamgeli Ovezov, Trend reported.

He made the remarks at the 54th meeting of the Council of Heads of Communications Administrations of the Regional Communication Commonwealth, held in Baku.

Ovezov said that on December 1, the president

of Turkmenistan signed a decree approving the concept of developing the country's digital economy for 2019-2025.

"The current trend of the world economy development is closely related to the increasing role of information technology and knowledge of economic life of society. The economy is changing, becoming more innovative and based on the use of high-speed internet," the minister said, adding that the countries that are able to constantly improve with technological innovations in economic management are the most competitive today. (Trend)