

## Top Houthi Negotiator Calls for Main Yemen Port to be Neutral Zone

RIMBO, Sweden - Yemen's main port city should be declared a "neutral zone" and the United Nations could play a role in Sanaa airport, the Iran-aligned Houthis' main negotiator said on Saturday on the sidelines of talks aimed at ending the Yemeni war.

The Houthis control major population centers in Yemen, including the capital Sanaa and the Red Sea port of Hodeidah, a lifeline for millions of people that is now a focus of the war after the coalition launched a campaign to capture it this year. Special envoy Martin Griffiths is trying to avert a full-scale assault on Hodeidah, the entry point for most of Yemen's commercial goods and vital aid.

"It (Hodeidah) should be a neutral zone apart from the conflict,



and the military brigades that came from outside Hodeidah province should leave," Houthi negotiator, Mohammed Abdulalam, told Reuters in Rimbo on the sidelines of peace talks with the Saudi-backed government. The U.N.-sponsored talks, the first in more

than two years, are focused on confidence-building steps, including reopening Sanaa airport and a truce in Hodeidah that could lead to a broader ceasefire in the nearly four-year-old conflict that has pushed Yemen to the verge of starvation. Asked if Houthi forces would then withdraw from Hodeidah, Abdulalam said: "There will be no need for military presence there if battles stop ... Hodeidah is an economic hub and it should stay that way for the sake of all Yemenis." "We have proposed to the U.N. to oversee the port and supervise its logistics... inspections, revenues and all the technical issues," he said.

He declined to say who will control the city if both forces leave. (Reuters)

## Neighbor News

### International Conference Lapis Lazuli Wraps Up in Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - The International Conference of Ministers of Transport of the States-Parties to the Agreement on Transit and Transport Cooperation (Lapis Lazuli) continued its work in the format of plenary sessions in the National tourist zone "Avaza" on Nov.28, 2018, Trend reports citing Turkmenistan's embassy in Baku. During the speeches at the meeting, participants touched on the role of international cooperation in the development of transport and transit corridors, multimodal transport and their prospects in the transport corridor of Lapis-Lazuli and international transit corridors, as well as the importance of logistics

companies in the development of transport corridors.

Following the results of the conference, the heads of the delegations adopted the Final Declaration of the International Conference of Ministers of Transport of the States Parties to the Agreement on Transit and Transport Cooperation (Lapis Lazuli).

Also participants of the International Conference of Ministers of Transport left for the International Sea Port of Turkmenbashi, where a program was organized to familiarize them with the capabilities of this new port, and a presentation of the International Sea Port was held. (Trend)

### Election of New GBAO Governor Postponed Until February Next Year in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - The 17th session of the local council (Majlis) of the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region (GBAO) of Tajikistan was adjourned on December 5 until December 11, Trend reports referring to news.tj.

An official source at the GBAO regional administration says the session will discuss issues related to early termination of powers of some members of the GBAO legislature, including ex-governor of GBAO Shodikhon Jamshed.

The session will also set the date of by-elections to fill vacancies in the GBAO Majlis.

Acting GBAO governor Yodgor Fayzov will be nominated to

the regional legislature, the source at the GBAO regional administration said.

After Yodgor Fayzov is elected to the regional legislature, the next session of the GBAO Majlis that will take place in February next year will consider the issue of approval of president's decree on appointing him the governor of the region, the source added.

The governor of the Gorno Badakhshan Autonomous Region and heads of other provinces, cities and districts of Tajikistan are appointed and dismissed by the president and presented to their respective councils for approval. (Trend)

### Uzbekistan Opens Reservoirs for Development of Ecotourism

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan has opened its 18 reservoirs for the development of ecotourism, a government decree read, Trend reports referring to Uzbek media.

Reportedly, the decision was made in order to develop ecotourism in the territories of reservoirs and active use of water resources for recreation and guests of the population and guests of the country.

Business entities and investors will now be able to organize tours to the reservoirs, build their facilities there. This matter will be a

subject for the special provision on organization of tourism and on procedure for the allocation of land plots within water bodies for business activities.

In particular, land plots near the reservoirs will be provided to businesses and individuals for long-term lease through an electronic auction.

At the first stage, reservoirs located in the Andijan, Jizzakh, Kashkadarya, Namangan, Samarkand, Surkhandarya, Tashkent and Fergana regions have been opened for ecotourism. (Trend)

### Iran, Pakistan Vow Cooperation in Fight Against Terror

TEHRAN/ISLAMABAD - Tehran and Islamabad have pledged to reinforce cooperation in fighting terrorism given that both have been victims of terrorist attacks over the past years.

In a meeting with Pakistan's National Assembly Speaker Asad Qaiser in Tehran on Friday, Iran's Parliament Speaker Ali Larijani said that terrorist groups had caused damage to many countries in the region and should therefore be countered through a joint action by all.

Larijani also called for boosting parliamentary, economic, trade, tourism and counter-terrorism ties between Iran and Pakistan. Qaiser, who has trav-

elled to Iran to attend the second conference of parliament speakers from Afghanistan, China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia and Turkey on the challenge of terrorism and inter-regional connectivity, thanked Iran for hosting the event and voiced regret about the Chabahar terrorist attack.

Pakistan feels honored to have brotherly relations with Iran, he said, expressing Islamabad's resolve to develop trade ties with Tehran.

Qaiser also underscored the need for developing relations between the two nations, saying Pakistan wants the eradication of terrorism which requires enhanced cooperation. (Press TV)

### Huawei Exec Faces US Fraud Charges Linked to Iran

VANCOUVER - Chinese telecom giant Huawei's chief financial officer faces US fraud charges related to sanctions-breaking business dealings with Iran, a Canadian court heard Friday, a week after she was detained on an American extradition request.

Meng Wanzhou, 46, was arrested in Canada's Pacific coast city of Vancouver on December 1 while changing planes during a trip from Hong Kong to Mexico - ratcheting up tensions between the United

States and China just as the countries' leaders agreed to a truce in their trade war.

A day-long hearing was adjourned until Monday, when the judge is expected to render a decision on bail. Until then, she will remain in custody.

Canadian government lawyer John Gibb-Carsley asked for bail to be denied, saying Meng has been accused of "conspiracy to defraud multiple financial institutions" and if convicted faces more than 30 years in prison. (AFP)

### Malaysian Muslims Stage Rally to Uphold Malay Privileges

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia - Tens of thousands of Malaysian Muslims rallied Saturday in Kuala Lumpur against any attempt to strip the ethnic Malay majority of its privileges, in the first massive street gathering since Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's alliance won a historic vote in May.

The rally, backed by the country's two largest opposition Malay parties, was initially aimed at protesting a government plan to ratify a U.N. treaty against racial discrimi-

nation that critics allege will end Malay privileges under a decades-old affirmative action policy. The plan was eventually abandoned, but organizers decided to proceed with what they called a "thanksgiving" rally.

Mahathir said the government allowed the rally as part of democracy, but warned against any chaos. The rally was held under tight police security, but ended peacefully after rain started to fall. Former Prime Minister Najib Razak, who has been charged with multi-



ple counts of corruption, was among opposition lawmakers at the rally. Police said there were at least 55,000 people on the streets. Many wore white T-shirts and headbands

with the words "Reject ICERD," referring to the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. (Fox News)

### Twitter Takes on Merkel Over Gift to Mark End of Her CDU Party Reign



BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel was presented with a gift, immediately branded as tactless, as she stepped down from more than 18 years

as the leader of Germany's CDU party. At the CDU party conference in Hamburg, which saw Merkel-protégé Annegret Kramp-Karrenbau-

er elected as the new party leader, the chancellor was presented with a framed music baton. It was the one used by Kent Nagano to conduct a Beethoven concert at Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie concert hall during last year's G20 summit. While the gift was intended to represent the fact that Merkel is a lover of classical music and that she has been a "most important conductor of world politics," it didn't quite come across that way. The Hamburg G20 gathering was hardly a high point in Merkel's long leadership of the

party. In fact, while world leaders were sitting inside the concert hall enjoying "Ode to Joy," tear gas and water cannons were being deployed to disperse violent protesters just outside. One person joked that it was actually quite a "fitting" gift, since the construction of the Elbphilharmonie concert hall took "about as long as Merkel's party chairmanship and chancellorship" - a reference to the fact that the venue opened seven years behind schedule and ten times over-budget. (Russia Today)

### Japan's Military Sees Record Spending, aims to Buy More U.S. Arms: Nikkei

TOKYO - Japan's military looks to raise spending over the next five years in response to security challenges and to narrow Japan's trade surplus with the United States by buying U.S. equipment, the Nikkei business daily reported on Saturday.

The Ministry of Defence looks to spend at least 27 trillion yen (\$240 billion) between April 2019 and March 2024, with the spending rising an average 1.1 percent per year, exceeding the 0.8 percent average during the five years ending next March,

the report said without identifying its sources. Currently, payments on equipment and personnel expenses account for 80 percent of defense spending, Nikkei said. Under the plan, funds for new equipment purchases will be separated from these expenses, making it easier to buy equipment from the United States, it added. Japan aims to have cabinet approval for the spending in mid-December, it said. The Ministry of Defence could not be reached immediately for comment. (Reuters)

### Mexico's New Government Takes aim at Drug Cartel Finances

MEXICO CITY - Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador is taking aim at the finances of the powerful Jalisco cartel in what a top anti-money laundering official said was an opening salvo in the fight to stop criminal gangs from flourishing with impunity.

Santiago Nieto, new head of the finance ministry's Financial Intelligence Unit, told Reuters on Thursday he had filed a complaint against three businesses and seven people linked to the Jalisco New Generation Cartel. On Wednesday, the finance ministry had said Nieto's unit filed its first complaint with prosecutors, but provided no details. (Reuters)

### French Police Clash with 'Yellow Vest' Protesters in Paris

PARIS - French riot police fired tear gas and clashed with "yellow vest" protesters in central Paris on Saturday during the latest in a wave of demonstrations against the high cost of living that have shaken President Emmanuel Macron's authority.

Authorities said 575 people had been searched and briefly arrested and 361 people of them remained in custody after police found potential weapons such as hammers, baseball bats and metal petanque balls on them.

Hundreds of protesters were milling around the Arc de Triomphe monument, which was defaced with anti-Macron graffiti last Saturday, when rioters also torched dozens of cars and looted shops in the worst rioting in Paris since May 1968.

A police spokeswoman told reporters there were about 1,500 protesters on the Champs Elysees boulevard. (Reuters)

### Stocks Drop 4 Percent in Rocky Week on Trade, Growth Worries

WALL STREET - Wall Street capped a turbulent week of trading Friday with the biggest weekly loss since March as traders fret over rising trade tensions between Washington and Beijing and signals of slower economic growth.

The latest wave of selling erased more than 550 points from the Dow Jones Industrial Average, bringing its three-day loss to more than 1,400. For the week, major indexes are down more than 4 percent.

Worries that the testy U.S.-China trade dispute and higher interest rates will slow the



economy have made investors uneasy, leading to volatile swings in the market from one day to the next.

On Monday, news that the U.S. and China had agreed to a 90-day truce in their escalating trade conflict drove stocks sharply higher, adding to strong gains the week

before. The next day, as doubts mounted over the likelihood of a swift resolution to the trade dispute, stocks sank.

That sell-off extended to Thursday, when U.S. stock markets reopened for trading after a national day of mourning for former President George H.W. Bush. (AP)

### Ex-Colombian President Belisario Betancur Dies at 95

BOGOTA, Colombia - Former Colombian President Belisario Betancur, whose bold efforts to reach a peace deal with leftist rebels in the 1980s were undone by drug-fueled bloodletting and an explosion of violence backed by state security forces, died on Friday. He was 95.

Betancur's death was confirmed by President Ivan Duque, who said on his Twitter account that the ex-president's legacy in Colombian politics, history and culture would be "an example for

future generations." Betancur, who governed from 1982-1986, died in a Bogota clinic after suffering kidney problems. Uniquely in Colombia's elite-dominated political landscape, Betancur wasn't the son of patriarchs but instead rose to the pinnacle of power from a Spartan start as the son of a poor farmer in western Antioquia state. With the aid of scholarships he earned a law degree and throughout his political career held his own as a journalist, economist and poet. (Fox News)