

Ivanka Trump Meets with South Korean President, Briefly Discusses North Korea

SEOUL — Few expect any diplomatic breakthroughs from Ivanka Trump's visit to South Korea to lead the U.S. delegation at the closing ceremonies of the Pyeongchang Winter Olympic Games.

The daughter of U.S. President Donald Trump paid a visit to South Korean President Moon Jae-in Friday at the presidential residence known as the Blue House, in Seoul, where she congratulated the president for hosting the Olympic Games and thanked him and the first lady for their hospitality.

Ivanka Trump delivered a personal message to Moon from her father, President Trump, about his announcement on



sanctions for North Korea, a set of restrictions he called "the largest ever" for North Korea, imposing what the White House calls "maximum pressure" on the reclusive nation and its practice of illegal shipping and trade designed to evade United Nations sanctions targeting its nuclear and ballistic missile programs.

Ivanka Trump and Moon discussed the U.S. and South Korean efforts to apply "joint maximum pressure" on Pyongyang.

The American delegation also joined the president and first lady, along with a South Korean delegation, for dinner and a musical performance at the Blue House. (VOA)

Merkel's Bavarian Allies Warn SPD to Stick to Deal on Migrants

BERLIN — Top officials in the Bavarian sister party of Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives on Saturday warned the center-left Social Democrats (SPD) that failure to stick to agreements on migrants could cause the collapse of the potential new German government. SPD members, who have the final say on the coalition agreement for Europe's largest economy, must vote by March 2 in a postal ballot, with results to be made public on March 4. Bavarian premier Horst Seehofer, who heads Bavaria's CSU, told the Augsburg

Allgemeine newspaper that new legislation was planned to make it easier to return failed asylum seekers to Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria, and to set up migrant centers in border areas until asylum applications could be processed. If the SPD refused to support these laws after agreeing to a coalition, "that would be the end of the government", Seehofer told the newspaper. He said it would be unacceptable if the SPD did not stick to the agreements made with conservatives. (Reuters)

WASHINGTON — As leaders and representatives of countries involved in the Turkmenistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan and India (TAPI) gas pipeline celebrated the project's inauguration, Afghan Taliban, in a rare announcement, vowed to support and protect the pipeline in areas under its control. In a statement emailed to media outlets, Qari Mohammad Yusuf Ahmadi, a purported Taliban spokesperson,



claimed credit for the project, implying that it was initially planned during the Taliban regime, and said the group will ensure its security in areas under its control.

"The Islamic Emirate views this project as an important element of the country's economic infrastructure and believes its proper implementation will benefit

the Afghan people. We announce our cooperation in providing security for the project in areas under our control," the Taliban statement said. (VOA)

Taliban Vows to Protect TAPI Gas Pipeline Project

UN Security Council Fails to Agree on Syria Ceasefire after Second Day of Talks



UN — The UN security council failed to agree after a second day of intensive talks on a proposed 30-day ceasefire across Syria to allow for emergency humanitarian

evacuations. Backroom negotiations continued throughout the day on Friday. One deadline passed after another, as other council members

tried to persuade Russia to agree to a resolution. The talks at the UN headquarters in New York followed an appeal by French and German leaders to Vladimir Putin, asking for Russia to stop blocking the measure's passage, pointing to the dire situation of the trapped civilian population in the rebel enclave of eastern Ghouta, a suburb of Damascus. The draft resolution calls

for a nationwide truce to come into force within 72 hours of its adoption, but it is not clear how forces in Syria would respond even if it was passed. Eastern Ghouta has come under particularly intense regime bombardment in recent days as the government of Bashar al-Assad seeks to crush the resistance in the district, home to an estimated 400,000 people. Reports from the area said that more than 400 civilians had been killed there this week, and that hospitals and clinics had been directed targeted. (The Guardian)

Trump Announces 'Largest Ever' Sanctions on North Korea

WHITE HOUSE — After announcing what he called the "largest ever" set of sanctions against North Korea, U.S. President Donald Trump on Friday threatened a "phase two" if the measures aren't effective. "If the sanctions don't work, we'll have to go to phase two, and phase two may be a very rough thing," Trump said, speaking alongside visiting Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull at the White House. Trump did not specify what he meant by "phase two," but sug-

gested it would be "very, very unfortunate for the world," adding: "Only time will tell." Earlier Friday, Trump announced the "heaviest sanctions ever imposed" against North Korea, part of what the White House bills as a "maximum pressure" campaign against the North. The sanctions target 56 entities — 27 shipping and trade companies, 28 vessels, and one individual — around the world, from North Korea to China to Tanzania, according to senior U.S. administration officials. (VOA)

Chileans Lose Faith as Vatican Scrambles to Contain Sex Abuse Scandal

SANTIAGO — To understand why Chile, one of Latin America's most socially conservative nations, is losing faith in the Roman Catholic Church, visit Providencia, a middle-class area of Santiago coming to terms with a decades-old clergy sex abuse scandal. Providencia is home to El Bosque, the former parish of priest Fernando Karadima, who was found guilty in a Vatican investigation in 2011 of abusing teenage boys over many years, spurring a chain of events leading to this week's visit by a Vatican investigator.

A Chilean judge in the same year determined the Vatican's canonical sentence was valid but Karadima was not prosecuted by the civil justice system because the statute of limitations had expired. (Reuters)

Female Nobel Laureates in Bangladesh to Meet Rohingya Women

DHAKA, Bangladesh — Three female Nobel Peace laureates have begun a week-long trip to Bangladesh to meet Rohingya women who were tortured and raped by Myanmar soldiers before fleeing the country.

During the trip that began Saturday, Iran's ShirinEbadi, Yemen's Tawakkol Karman and Northern Ireland's Mairead Maguire will assess the Rohingya refugees' situation and the violence against the Rohingya women, according to the Nobel Women's Initiative, a platform of six female peace laureates established in 2006.

In an email to The Associated Press, Karman said Saturday that they were standing "in solidarity with displaced Rohingya women and calling for Rohingya women's voices to be heard." (AP)

EU Opens Door for Balkan States, But Hurdles Remain

BELGRADE — The European Union has offered some of the six Balkan states who hope to join the bloc the prospect of becoming new members by 2025, but warned them they still have many obstacles to overcome.

The European Commission's roadmap for the region unveiled earlier this month said the countries must root out problems with corruption and the rule of law, and, especially, settle a series of simmering territorial disputes. "The EU door is open to further accessions



when, and only when, the individual countries have met the criteria," the plan said. European Commission head Jean-Claude Juncker will start a tour of the region on Sunday to discuss the new strategy, which stresses "implementing fundamental re-

forms and good neighbourly relations". Montenegro and Serbia are the frontrunners to join, with Albania, Bosnia, Kosovo and Macedonia lagging behind, but all are getting impatient after the EU put expansion on hold four years ago. (AFP)

Trump, Turnbull Put on Show of 'Mateship' at the White House

WASHINGTON — US President Donald Trump and Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull traded compliments and declarations of enduring "mateship" at the White House Friday, striving to put an ill-tempered first phone call behind them.

From the moment Trump strode out to greet Turnbull on the South Lawn and they shared a side-by-side stroll along the colonnade to the Oval Office, it was clear the pair were ready to put on a show.

Both sang the praises of a more than century old relationship, with Trump picking up his guest's reference to 100 years of US-Australian "mateship -- a term that you used very beautifully, Mr prime minister."

For his part, Turnbull flattered, saying he was "inspired" by Trump's tax cuts, and adding for good measure that the US president's leadership on infrastructure was "admired around the world." (AFP)

Mexico to Host 'Difficult' New Round of NAFTA Talks

MEXICO CITY — Negotiators from the United States, Mexico and Canada open a new round of talks Sunday on overhauling the North American Free Trade Agreement, with the Mexican hosts already warning of turbulence.

Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo said the renegotiation of the 24-year-old trade deal is entering a critical phase as the three countries head to their seventh round of talks, scheduled to run through March 5.

"It's going to be a difficult meeting, because the more you advance in the negotiations and wrap up work on the constructive issues... what you're left with are the highly complex issues," Guajardo told journalists.

"That's why, as of this round, there won't be any more easy rounds." After the last round of talks, in Montreal, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer said the three sides were making progress, but "very slowly."

The uncertainty looming over the deal is only increasing as the clock ticks on. Mexico, which sends some 80 percent of its exports to the United States, is gearing up for elections on July 1.

The presidential frontrunner, the fiery leftist Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, has sent mixed signals on NAFTA. At one point, he said he would start the negotiations over and "make Donald Trump see reason" — though his campaign has sought to strike a more moderate tone.

Washington has also sent mixed signals since Trump triggered the renegotiation of what he has described as the worst trade deal in history. (AFP)

Neighbor News

State Institutions Emanate from Parliament :Ahsan

LAHORE — Interior Minister AhsanIqbal on Saturday stressed the need to ensure dignity and respect of Parliament as it was the centre from where state institutions ultimately take powers and owe their existence.

Talking to the media after addressing the 2nd All Punjab Workshop on Young Peace Development Corps (YPDC) here at Lahore College for Women University (LCWU), he said all politicians must get united on national issues to

tackle major challenges. Today, he said, one of Pakistan's neighbouring countries was threatening to carry out surgical strikes for which all segments of society must get united to confront the situation.

On the FATF grey list, AhsanIqbal said Pakistan had already taken several measures to curb the money-laundering and putting Pakistan on the watch list would not affect its economic development. (Monitoring Desk)

Daesh Not Over, US Relocating It: Iran's Zarif

TEHRAN — Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the United States is regularly relocating Daesh terrorists to outside of the Middle East, where they had been based before losing all the territory they had occupied. Foreign Minister Zarif made the remarks during an event called the Patterns of Regional Order in the Post-ISIS Era at the Tehran University on Saturday.

The US transfer of the Daesh elements from the Syrian cities of Hama, Hama, and Dayr al-Zawr as well as other areas to outside the region "is a dangerous development that has had a regular pattern," he said.

"Their (the terrorists') communication network remains in place, their leaders remain [alive or at large], and they still receive financial support; so we must expect the re-emergence of the threat any day," the Iranian foreign minister warned. Zarif also stressed that

although Daesh had been defeated territorially, its ideological and financial resources coming from the region and beyond had yet to be destroyed.

"One of the West's major mistakes is that they believe that Daesh is over," he said. "[But] the conditions that created Daesh in the region are still present. Daesh is the birth child of the US invasion of Iraq and, before that, the Israeli oppression against the Palestinian people."

The top Iranian diplomat also put forward an initiative for security in the region that includes dialog in the Persian Gulf.

Daesh started offensives in Iraq and Syria in 2014, occupying territory in the two Arab countries and establishing a self-proclaimed "caliphate." Soon, the Iraqi and Syrian armies — both receiving advisory military help from Iran — galvanized to retake Daesh-held territory. (Press Tv)

Japan Implements 5 Social Projects in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE — Japan has completed implementation of five projects in the Khatlon district of Tajikistan, TajikTA news agency reported.

The projects were supported as part of the Japanese government's program of gratuitous aid and humanitarian security for the general population in the Khatlon district, the Japanese Embassy in Tajikistan said.

In particular, the Khuroson district hosted a completion ceremony for the reconstruction project of a secondary school, for which the Japanese government had previously

allocated about \$82,200. Also, a grant worth \$82,200 was issued for completion of the project on construction and equipping of a women's support center in the Bokhtar city.

Japan provided grants worth more than \$84,000 each for improving the drinking water supply system in the Kubodiyon district, rehabilitation of the existing school building and construction of new buildings for a school in the Shahritus district, as well as reconstruction of two bridges in the Jayhun district. (Trend)

Turkmenistan Building Fiber-Optic Line to South Asia

ASHGABAT — A ceremony to lay a fiber-optic communication line over the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India route was held in Turkmenistan with participation of other countries' representatives, a source in Turkmen Communications Ministry told Trend. Five international fiber-optic communication lines are linked on the territory of Turkmenistan.

Two fiber-optic systems are currently operating in the country: the circular Ashgabat-Mary-Turkmenabat-Dashoguz-Ashgabat system and the radial Garabogaz-Turkmenbashi-Ashgabat-Atamyrat-Yamnazar system, which are connected with networks of the neighboring countries. The projects are

implemented with use of the Dense Wavelength Division Multiplexing (DWDM), an optical multiplexing technology used to increase bandwidth over existing fiber networks to 100 Gbit/s. The DWDM works by combining and transmitting multiple signals simultaneously at different wavelengths on the same fiber. "Our country is establishing itself as a key link in Central Asia, an important information-communication bridge between the East and the West, the North and the South thanks to the development of national telecommunications system meeting the international standards and guaranteeing high-quality communication," Turkmen State News agency said in its message. (Trend)