

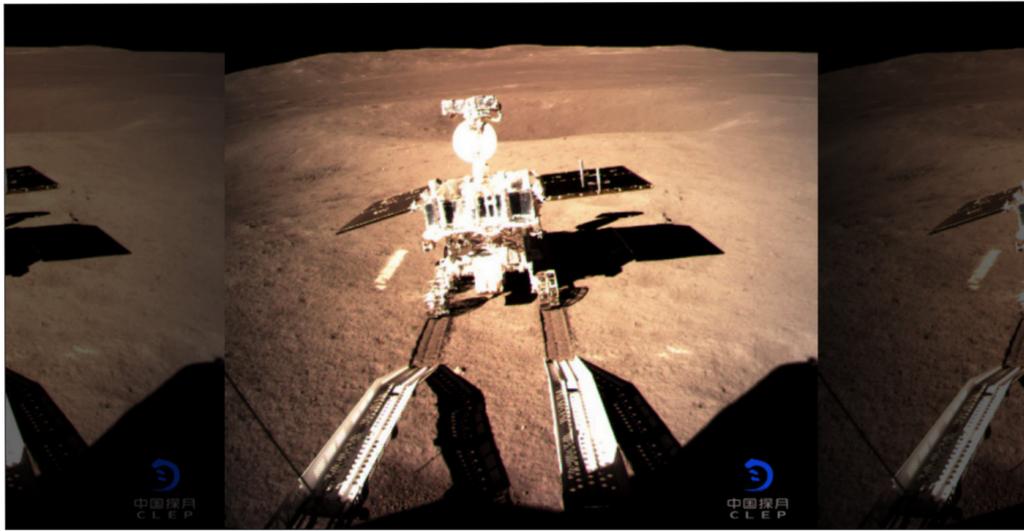
Chinese Rover Begins Exploring 'Dark' Side of Moon

BEIJING - China's space agency has posted a photo of a lunar rover making tracks on the surface shortly after leaving a spacecraft that had made the first-ever landing on the moon's far side.

The Jade Rabbit 2 rover drove off a ramp and onto the moon at 10:22 p.m. Thursday, about 12 hours after the Chang'e 4 spacecraft touched down.

Lunar project chief designer Wu Weiren called the separation of the rover "a small step for the rover, but one giant leap for the Chinese nation."

Other countries have sent spacecraft to the side of the moon that faces Earth. The Chinese mission is the first to the far side, sometimes called the dark side because it is relatively unknown. (Fox News)



Kim's Vision of a Coal-Fueled North Korean Future May be Tough to Realize

SEOUL - When North Korean leader Kim Jong Un used his New Year speech to highlight coal as a "primary front" in developing the economy, he was making a case for what analysts see as a flawed but key resource on which his country increasingly relies.

Coal has long been a major resource for North Korea, and Kim's call for self-sufficiency in the face of international pressure is a recurring theme.

But as international sanctions have increased over the past year, coal is one

of the few local resources to which Kim can turn as he tries to make good on promises to improve life in a country notorious for limited electricity, analysts and defectors say.

Last year Kim declared that his nuclear arsenal was "complete" and vowed to focus on building the economy.

South Korea-based analysts and North Korean defectors report that with sanctions still blocking most coal exports, the North has put more of its stockpile to use domestically. (Reuters)

DHAKA, Bangladesh - Congratulatory messages are flowing to Bangladesh's Prime Minister-elect Sheikh Hasina, ensuring she will withstand the reverberating calls to investigate serious allegations of widespread irregularities in Sunday's election that was dominated by her coalition.

Hasina is all set to form the government for a third consecutive time, and on Thursday the country's president invited her to form the Cabinet that will take oath on Monday.

India, China, Saudi Ara-

Global Support Lets Bangladesh PM Withstand Election Worries



bia, Russia, Qatar, Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Bhutan and Pakistan have congratulated Hasina,

while the United States and the European Union say they want to continue to cooperate.

An analyst says the U.N. "would be happy" to see Hasina at the helm. (Fox News)

Massive Data Hack: Merkel Among 100s of German Politicians, Journos & Celebrities Affected



BERLIN - Phone numbers, addresses, as well as private messages of German politicians, journalist and celeb-

ties have been stolen and uploaded online by unnamed hackers. The massive leak affected all political parties except

the AfD. German politicians and prominent newsmakers have fallen victim of what appears a brazen hack attack on their private data. MPs and government officials had their contacts, home addresses, chat entries and personal messages hijacked and uploaded to a Twitter account in several packages.

Justice Minister Katarina Barley has already given her take on the incident, calling it a "grave attack" on the country's democracy.

The leaks weren't limited to contact information, as photographs of their IDs, letters, and even credit cards information emerged online. The majority of them only featured private data and didn't include anything relating to politics. Also, some of the leaked data isn't up-to-date, as many entries date back to 2017 or earlier. The last bit of information was published on Twitter in late December but was not spotted until Thursday. (Russia Today)

Indian Rescuers Struggle to Pump Out Water from Flooded Mine

GUWAHATI, India - Indian rescuers trying to reach a group of miners trapped in a remote and illegal "rat-hole" coal mine are struggling to pump out water from the 370-foot-deep pit, further dimming their chances of survival more than three weeks into their ordeal. The slow progress in the rescue efforts in the northeastern state of Meghalaya has been contrasted with the dramatic rescue of 12 Thai boys and their football coach from a flooded cave in July last year, which

drew a massive international audience.

The mine became flooded after at least 15 miners went down the narrow pit on Dec. 13. Rat-hole mines killed thousands of workers in Meghalaya before India's environmental court banned the practice in early 2014.

Many mines continued operation, despite the ban, requiring workers, often children, to descend hundreds of feet on bamboo ladders and dig coal out of narrow, horizontal seams. (Reuters)

Japan Urges South Korea to Avoid Unfair Measures in Forced Labor Case

TOKYO - Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono on Friday urged his South Korean counterpart to take prompt steps to avoid measures unfair to Japanese companies in the wake of South Korea's claim against a Japanese firm over wartime forced labor. Ties between the two Asian neighbors have been frosty since a South Korean court ruling in October that Nippon Steel and Sumitomo Metal Corp should pay 100 million won (\$90,500) to each of four South Koreans in a World War Two forced labor case.

The ruling had angered Japan and, in a development that seemed set to increase tensions, lawyers for the South Korean plaintiffs said on Wednesday their clients had applied to seize some of Nippon Steel's Korean assets. (Reuters)

U.N. Rights Office Says Saudi Trial in Khashoggi Case 'Not Sufficient'

GENEVA - The United Nations human rights office said on Friday it could not assess the fairness of a trial taking place in Saudi Arabia related to the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi, but that in any case it was "not sufficient". Spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani, asked about reports that a Saudi prosecutor had sought the death sentence for five suspects linked to the Oct. 2 killing, reiterated the office's call for an independent investigation "with international involvement".

The U.N. rights office always opposed the death penalty, she added. (Reuters)

Spain Replaces Italy as Europe's Main Destination for Migrant Crossings

BRUSSELS - Most of the migrants who crossed the Mediterranean to Europe last year arrived in Spain, according to European Union estimates published on Friday, as Italy had the fewest irregular entries in five years.

The border and coast guard agency Frontex estimated that 150,000 people entered the EU through irregular crossings in 2018, the lowest number in five years and far below the peak of more than a million recorded in 2015.

The number of arrivals in Italy, which has taken



measures to prevent rescued migrants landing, fell 80 percent to around 23,000, the fewest since 2012.

Meanwhile, arrivals in Spain doubled to 57,000 migrants last year, making the route from Morocco to the Iberian Pen-

insula the most active in Europe. Arrivals in Greece and Cyprus through the so-called Eastern Mediterranean route rose to 56,000 last year, most of the migrants coming from Afghanistan, Syria or Iraq. (Reuters)

Brazil's Bolsonaro Urges Quick Passage of Bill to Protect Police

SAO PAULO/RIO DE JANEIRO - Brazil President Jair Bolsonaro on Friday continued to set out priorities for his new administration, stressing his desire for the quick passage of a bill to protect security officials and measures to open up competition in the banking sector.

The far-right president, elected on a law-and-order platform, warned in a tweet that sky-high violence would only slow if laws were passed to provide police and soldiers freedom from prosecution when on active duty.

"The legislative, executive and judicial powers have to make this commitment urgently," he tweeted.

Throughout the campaign, Bolsonaro said he wanted to give police and soldiers peace of mind while on often-violent operations, and he has also advocated broadening access to guns so people can defend themselves.

Critics argue those ideas only risk inflaming Brazil's violent streets and worsening Brazil's murder tally, nearly 64,000 people in 2017, a record. (Reuters)

Eurozone Concerns Mount as Inflation Dips and Economy Slows

LONDON - Further signs of a slowdown in the eurozone economy emerged Friday, weighing on expectations that the European Central Bank will start raising interest rates this year.

Inflation across the 19-country currency union fell in December to an eight-month low in the wake of the recent slump in oil prices. And a closely watched survey found that the eurozone economy barely grew during the month largely because of popular protests that brought much of France to a standstill.

Eurostat, the European Union's statistics agency, said consumer prices were up 1.6 percent in the year to December, down from the previous month's 1.9 percent. Inflation is now at its lowest level since April.

A slump in energy prices in the last months of 2018 was the main reason for the decline: over the year, they were up 5.5 percent against the 9.1 percent recorded in November.

When stripping out potentially volatile items such as energy, alcohol, food and tobacco, inflation remains stubbornly low. The so-called core rate was steady at 1 percent in the year to December.

The fall in the headline inflation rate, coupled with the consistently low core rate, will likely rein in expectations that the European Central Bank will raise interest rates soon, especially if oil prices remain subdued. The euro fell on the news to trade 0.2 percent lower on the day at \$1.1398. (AP)

Neighbor News

Iran to Send Warships to the Atlantic, Closer to U.S. Waters

LONDON - The Iranian navy will send warships to deploy in the Atlantic from March, a top commander said on Friday, as the Islamic Republic seeks to increase the operating range of its naval forces to the backyard of the United States, its arch foe.

Iran sees the presence of U.S. aircraft carriers in the Gulf as a security concern and its navy has sought to counter that by showing the flag near American waters.

A flotilla will leave for the Atlantic early in the Iranian new year, starting from March, Iran's naval deputy com-

mander said. "The Atlantic Ocean is far and the operation of the Iranian naval flotilla might take five months," Rear-Admiral Touraj Hassani was quoted as saying by the state news agency IRNA.

He said Sahand, a newly-built destroyer, would be one of the warships. Sahand has a flight deck for helicopters and Iran says it is equipped with anti-aircraft and anti-ship guns, surface-to-surface and surface-to-air missiles and has electronic warfare capabilities. (Reuters)

Total Capital of Central Asian Companies in Turkey Falls Almost Threefold

TASHKENT - The total capital of Central Asian companies (Turkmen, Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz), registered in Turkey, decreased in November 2018 almost three times and amounted to 5.8 million Turkish liras, the Turkish Union of Chambers and Commodity Exchanges (TOBB) told Trend.

In November 2018, 34 companies with Central Asian capital were registered in Turkey, which is 56 companies less compared to the same month of 2017.

"In November 2018, 11 companies with Turkmen capital were registered in Turkey, which is 25 companies less than in November 2017. The total capital of the Turkmen companies regis-

tered in November 2018 amounted to 2.6 million liras," TOBB said.

TOBB noted that in November 2018, eight companies with Kazakh capital were registered in Turkey, which is 17 companies less compared to November 2017.

"The total capital of the Kazakh companies registered in November 2018 amounted to 1.5 million liras," TOBB said.

"In the reported month, 56 companies with Uzbek capital were registered in Turkey, which is three companies less compared to November 2017. The total capital of Uzbek companies registered in November 2018 amounted to 1.2 million liras," TOBB said. (Trend)

Turkmenistan Chairs Commonwealth of Independent States This Year

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan chairs the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) this year, Trend reports with reference to the Turkmen government.

A meeting of the Council of CIS Heads of Government is scheduled for late May in Ashgabat, while a meeting of the Council of CIS Heads of State will be held on October 11.

The priority objectives in the concept of Turkmenistan's chairmanship in the CIS in 2019 are to strengthen trust among the countries, support stability and security, strengthen political and diplomatic interaction, increase the level of CIS cooperation with international organizations,

including the UN and the OSCE and create conditions for enhancing trade economic cooperation.

The key areas of partnership between the CIS countries are energy, transport and communications. Special attention is paid to the promotion of cultural, humanitarian, scientific, educational, sports ties among the CIS countries.

Turkmenistan already chaired the CIS in 2012 and held about thirty events.

Ashgabat decided to participate in the CIS as an associate member in 2005. Turkmenistan withdrew from the agreement on visa-free regime with all CIS countries in 1999. (Trend)

2019-2021 Declared Years of Development of Rural Areas, Tourism and Folk Crafts in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - President Emomali Rahmon noted in his annual address yesterday signed a decree on declaring 2019-2021 the Period of Development of Rural Areas, Tourism and Folk Crafts in Tajikistan, according to the Tajik president's official website, Trend reports referring to news.tj.

The decree reportedly aims at speeding up the development of rural areas, tourism and supporting folk crafts in the country.

Rahmon ordered President's Executive Office to work out the plan of actions on implementation of this decree and submit it for consideration within a month. Recall, President

Emomali Rahmon noted in his annual address to both houses of parliament on December 26 that visitor numbers doubled last year, compared to 2017, and pledged to develop the country's infrastructure to create a conducive environment for tourism.

Proclaiming 2018 the Year of Tourism and Folk Crafts in Tajikistan gave a serious impetus to understanding of the significance of these areas for the social and economic life of the people, the head of state noted on December 26. However, one year is not sufficient to achieve the objectives we set forth, the president added. (Trend)