

Trump, North Korea's Kim to Hold Second Summit in Late February

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump will hold a second summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in late February but will maintain economic sanctions on Pyongyang, the White House said on Friday after Trump met Pyongyang's top nuclear negotiator.

The announcement came amid a diplomatic flurry in Washington surrounding the visit of Kim Yong Chol, a hardline former spy chief, and marked a sign of movement in a denuclearization effort that has stalled since a landmark meeting between Trump and the North Korean leader in Singapore on June 12.

"President Donald J. Trump met with Kim Yong Chol for an hour and a half to discuss denuclearization and a second summit, which will take place near the end of



February," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said. She said a location would be announced later.

The summit was announced even though there

has been no indication of any narrowing of differences over U.S. demands that North Korea abandon a nuclear weapons program that threatens the United States and Pyongyang's de-

mands for a lifting of punishing sanctions.

Sanders said that Trump's talks with the North Korean envoy were productive but added that the United States "is going to continue to keep pressure and sanctions on North Korea."

South Korea's presidential office said it expected the upcoming summit to be a "turning point to lay the firm foundation for lasting peace on the Korean peninsula."

South Korea will work with the United States and other countries to "achieve concrete and practical results toward complete denuclearization and a lasting peace regime through the North Korea-U.S. summit..." presidential spokesman Kim Eui-kyeom said in a statement on Saturday. (Reuters)

Horrifying Fireball at Ruptured Mexico Oil Pipeline Kills 21

MEXICO CITY — A massive fireball that engulfed people scooping up fuel spilling from a pipeline ruptured by thieves in central Mexico killed 21 people and badly burned 71 others in what was a chronicle of a tragedy foretold.

It came just three weeks after new President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador launched an offensive against fuel theft gangs that drilled dangerous, illegal taps into pipelines an astounding 12,581 times in the first 10 months of 2018, an

average of about 42 per day. With crowds of townspeople often involved, either aiding thieves or collecting spilled fuel in primitive containers, it was only a matter of time before a fire occurred.

In fact, they have occurred before, but seldom with the scale and horrifying death toll of Friday's fire in the state of Hidalgo, which came as people collected the spilled gasoline in buckets, plastic jugs and garbage cans. (AP)

Indian Opposition Stages Giant Joint Rally to Oust Modi

KOLKATA, India - India's main opposition parties joined forces against Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday at a rally which attracted hundreds of thousands of people months ahead of elections.

The 23 regional groups said they forged a common front to stop Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party, which beat the main opposition Congress and regional parties in 2014. Rural anger over weak farm prices and slug-

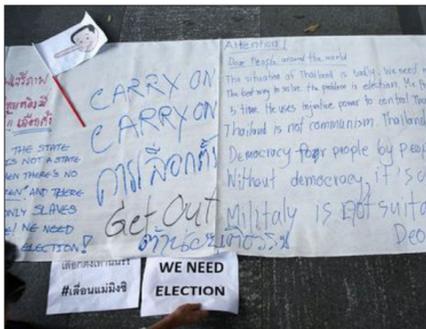
gish job creation mean Modi's BJP faces a tough challenge to stay in power after electoral losses in three key states last month.

Hundreds of thousands of people flocked to Kolkata from rural Bengal for the rally, bringing disruption to the city. Mamata Banerjee, chief minister of the state of West Bengal, called on regional party leaders to join a single platform to defeat the "anti-people" government of Modi, which the 64-year-old said was "nearing its



end". A poll last month by ABP News forecast Modi's party could fall about 25 seats short of a majority in national elections and Banerjee is among the few opposition leaders who could emerge as a prime ministerial candidate if the BJP loses. (Reuters)

Rival Groups Demonstrate in Thailand as Election Tensions Grow



BANGKOK - Rival groups held demonstrations in Thailand's capital on Saturday, with hundreds of people demand-

ing quick elections to end military rule and a much smaller group of pro-junta supporters saying it was too soon for a vote.

The competing protests were tiny compared to those that paralyzed Bangkok in 2014 before the army seized power in the name of ending instability, but were an indication of the tensions in the run-up to a long-delayed ballot.

No date has been set for an election which was first promised for 2015 and most recently postponed from Feb. 24. Hundreds joined a demonstration calling for elections on March 10. "We're calling for elections as soon as possible,"

activist Sirawith Seritiwa told the crowd.

The junta has said the most recent election delay is because of scheduling difficulties with planning for the coronation of King Maha Vajiralongkorn in early May - although it has said it still wants the ballot held before those ceremonies.

The Election Commission of Thailand has given March 10 or March 24 as possible polling dates, but no date has been set and a royal decree must be issued before it can be. (Reuters)

Philippines' Richest Man Henry Sy Dies at 94

MANILA - The Philippines' wealthiest man Henry Sy, who rose from being a penniless Chinese immigrant to leading a multi-billion dollar business empire, died on Saturday, his conglomerate has announced.

The 94-year-old, from the Chinese city of Xiamen, made his fortune with a Philippine shopping centre conglomerate that has put up some of the largest malls in the world.

However his holdings also included banks, hotels and real estate in the

Philippines, as well as shopping centres in China. He had a net worth of \$19 billion as of Friday, according to Forbes.com. Forbes said he was the 52nd richest person in the world last year, beating out bold name tycoons like Elon Musk, Rupert Murdoch and George Soros. "Henry Sy... passed away peacefully in his sleep early Saturday morning. There are no further details at the moment," his SM group said in a statement to AFP. (AFP)

Neighbor News

Iran Unveils Domestically-Built Radar Near Pakistan Border

TEHRAN - Iran has unveiled a domestically-built radar in the city of Zahedan near the border with Pakistan.

The inauguration ceremony was held in the capital of Sistan and Baluchestan Province by Brigadier General Alireza Sabahi-Fard, the commander of the Iranian Army's Khatam al-Anbiya Air Defense Base, Fars News Agency reported on Saturday.

The radar has been manufactured and rendered operational by experts at Vahdat defense base, which is in charge of guarding the country's airspace against potential threats.

The inauguration came ahead of the fortieth

anniversary of the victory of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

Sabahi-Fard, who was conducting an inspection of the missile and radar units based in the country's east, praised the sensitive electronic surveillance site as well as the level of their operational readiness against enemies' threats.

Recently, the Khatam al-Anbiya Air Defense Base's deputy commander, Brigadier General Alireza Elhami told IRNA said the Islamic Republic was enhancing the range and altitude covered by its radars as well as the precision of the equipment's performance. (Press TV)

Russia, Turkmenistan Preparing for High-Level Meetings

ASHGABAT - Deputy Foreign Minister of Russia Grigory Karasin held a meeting in Moscow with Ambassador of Turkmenistan Batyr Niyazliev, Trend reports referring to the Russian Foreign Ministry. Bilateral cooperation and preparation for high-level meetings were discussed during the conversation, the report says.

There are about 190 companies with Russian capital in Turkmenistan. ARETI has been operating in the Turkmen sector of the

Caspian Sea since 2009 based on a production sharing agreement.

Russia, a traditional trade partner of Turkmenistan, stopped the purchase of Turkmen gas in 2016. However, it was announced that the parties will start talks on resuming the Turkmen gas purchase by Gazprom.

A strategic partnership agreement between Turkmenistan and Russia was signed following the visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to Ashgabat in October 2017. (Trend)

Zarif Slams Bolton with '10-Year Challenge' Meme

TEHRAN - Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has hit out at US National Security Advisor John Bolton's anti-Iran stance, saying the Iran hawk has long supported a military attack against the country.

In a play on the viral 10-year challenge meme on social media, Zarif mocked Bolton's calls for a strike on Iran, posting on his twitter account the titles of two separate articles from 2009 and 2019, in which Bolton urged attack on Iran.

In the first article, published by The Washington Post on July 2, 2009, Bolton advised Israel to use "military force" against what he had said was "Tehran's nuclear weapons program," repeating Washington's claims that Iran's nuclear activities had a military aspect. The second article reflected a revelation by The Wall Street

Journal last Sunday that showed Bolton had asked the Pentagon in September to prepare military options for an attacking on Iran.

The Journal reported that the Pentagon developed plans for a strike on Iran in response to the Bolton's request, but it was unclear whether those plans were shared with the White House.

Unnamed sources told the paper that the request raised alarm within the Defense and State Departments.

"It definitely rattled people," a former senior administration official told the newspaper. "People were shocked. It was mind-boggling how cavalier they were about hitting Iran," the official added.

Bolton frequently promoted the military option against Iran and long pressed his claims about Iran's military weapons program. (Press TV)

Turkmenistan Developing Seismic Risk Reduction Program

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan's Academy of Sciences, in partnership with ministries and state agencies is drafting a seismic risk reduction program, Trend reports citing the Turkmenistan TV channel. The work on "The Project for Improvement of the Earthquake Monitoring System in and around the Ashgabat City" is underway with the support of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Additionally, a forecasting and monitoring strategy is being developed. Measures for reducing social, economic and environmental losses associated with possible earthquakes in seismically active areas, as well as increasing the preparedness of urban and rural populations, buildings and structures, transportation and communication systems for such natural disasters are outlined in the document. Turkmenistan is located in a seismically active zone. On the night of Oct. 6, 1948, Ashgabat experienced a catastrophic earthquake, the magnitude of which reached 10 and claimed many lives. (Trend)

Sen Graham: Syria Withdrawal Without Plan Can Lead to Chaos

ANKARA, Turkey — A U.S. withdrawal from Syria that has not been thought through would lead to "chaos" and "an Iraq on steroids," Sen. Lindsey Graham warned Saturday, urging President Donald Trump not to get out without a plan.

Speaking to reporters in the Turkish capital Ankara a day after meeting with Turkish officials, the Republican senator from South Carolina said a plan to withdraw from Syria should ensure that the Islamic State group is defeated, that Iran is contained and that Turkey is protected from threats from Kurdish rebels. (AP)

US Senator Says Saudi Crown Prince Must be 'Dealt with' over Khashoggi Murder

ANKARA - A key US senator on Saturday said the Saudi crown prince was responsible for Jamal Khashoggi's murder and must be "dealt with," as he threatened new sanctions.

Republican Lindsey Graham, an influential ally of President Donald Trump, has previously said that Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was complicit in the grisly killing of Washington Post contributor Khashoggi in October.

"I have concluded that the relationship between Saudi Arabia and the United States cannot move forward until MBS has been dealt with," Graham said, using the initials for the crown prince. Graham also threatened new sanctions against those suspected of involvement in the murder during a press conference in Ankara. (AFP)

Thousands of Yellow Vests Protest despite Macron Outreach

PARIS — Thousands of yellow vest protesters rallied in several French cities for a tenth consecutive weekend on Saturday, despite a national debate launched this week by President Emmanuel Macron aimed at assuaging their anger.

In Paris, protesters answered a call from a prominent and provocative protester promoting a march starting at the Invalides monument in Paris, home to Napoleon's tomb, to remember the 10 people killed in protest-related traffic accidents and hundreds injured since the movement kicked off Nov. 17. Police has been criticized



by protesters for the use of rubber projectiles that have left dozens of people injured. "It's not normal to treat people the way we are being treated. We have injured people every Saturday," said Juliette Rebet, a demonstrator marching in Paris.

At the Invalides, protesters carrying a banner

that read "Citizens in danger" marched at the front of the procession and held coffin-shaped black boards in memory of those killed.

Paris deployed 5,000 police around the capital, notably around government buildings and the Champs-Elysees, stage of recent violence. (AP)

We Have Responsibility to Get an Orderly Brexit, Says Merkel

BERLIN - German Chancellor Angela Merkel said on Saturday she would do all she could to make sure Britain leaves the European Union with an agreement and, striking a conciliatory tone, she felt a responsibility to get an orderly solution.

The rejection this week of London's deal with the European Union by British lawmakers has thrown the process into disarray with options ranging from a no-deal Brexit in 10 weeks time to staying in the bloc.

"I will work until the very last day to get a solution with a deal for Britain's exit from the EU and I will work towards having the best relationship," Merkel said at a conservative party event in the northern city of Rostock.

Merkel said Germany respected Britain's decision to leave, but added: "We have a responsibility to shape a divorce process so that people don't shake their heads at us in 50 years time and say why weren't they in a position to make a compromise?" (Reuters)

Canada Says It Won't be Deterred by Chinese Pressure

TORONTO — Canada's public safety minister said Friday that the country won't be deterred by Chinese pressure after China threatened reprisals if Huawei was banned from supplying equipment for 5G networks, highlighting the growing rift between America's neighbor and the emerging superpower.

There are accusations that the telecom giant is controlled by China's ruling Communist Party or is required to facilitate Chinese spying. The U.S., Australia, Japan and other governments have imposed curbs on use of its technology.

Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale said Canada has been abundantly clear it will not compromise national security.

"It's a difficult challenge but we'll not be deterred by what we believe to be right and what we believe to be in the interests of Canada," Goodale said. Lu Shaye, China's ambassador to Canada, warned Thursday of repercussions if Canada bars the firm from its new 5G network.

"One of the things that is of concern in this situation is the blending of Chinese commercial interests with Chinese political positioning and consequences. That's something that I think should be of concern to Canadians and people around the world," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said.

Canada and its security agencies are studying whether to use equipment from Huawei as phone carriers prepare to roll out fifth-generation technology. (AP)