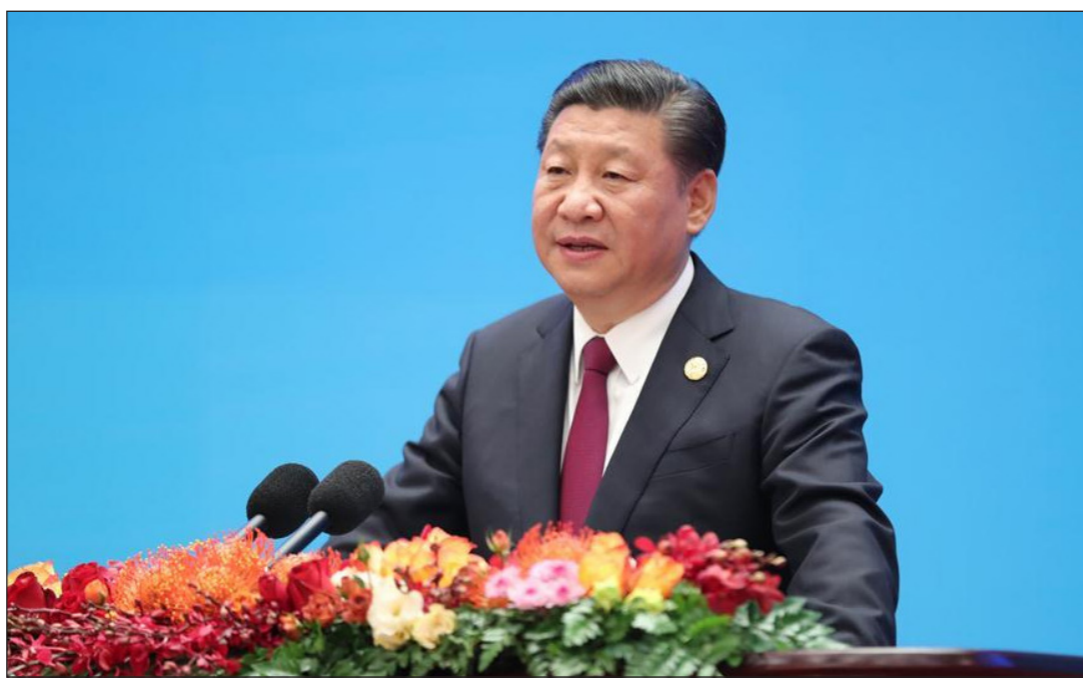


President Xi's Calls for a Shared Future

BEIJING - Themed "Creating a Shared Future in a Fractured World," the 48th World Economic Forum (WEF) annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, is urging concerted global efforts to address major challenges from protectionism, terrorism and climate change.

The four-day gathering of policymakers and economists from around the world will see more than 400 workshops to seek consensus and collaboration on "a shared future", a vision converging with the China-proposed concept of "a community of shared future for mankind". The 2018 WEF theme revives the memory of a Chinese head of state's first participation when President Xi Jinping attended it



last year and put forward the concept of "a community of shared future for mankind." This is a vision Xi has elaborated before, during and after his Davos speech. The following are some of those occasions:— Sept. 28, 2015, Speech at the General Debate of the 70th Session of the UN General Assembly. As the United Nations enters a new decade, let us unite ever more closely to create a new mutually beneficial partnership and community of shared future for mankind. Let the vision of a world free of war and enjoying lasting peace take root in our hearts. Let the aspirations of development, prosperity, fairness and justice spread across the world! (Xinhua)

Russia Slams U.S. for Accusing it of Chemical Attack in Syria

MOSCOW - Russia on Wednesday slammed the United States for accusing it of being involved in a chemical attack in eastern Syria, calling it "unacceptable".

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said Moscow does not agree with Washington's approach to investigating the alleged use of chemical weapons in Syria, local media reported.

"We categorically disagree with the approach of the Americans, who are following the path of de-railing real international

investigations of previous cases, and prefer to stick labels groundlessly," Peskov told the press.

U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley on Tuesday said Russia might be connected to the reported chemical attack in Syria's Eastern Ghouta. Calling the statements "absolutely unacceptable" for Russia, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergey Ryabkov Wednesday said, "On this basis, we cannot work with the United States." (Xinhua)

Gov't Shutdown Fight Exposes Deep Fractures in American Politics

NEW YORK - In agreeing on Monday to end a three-day U.S. government shutdown, the fourth in the past 25 years, Republicans and Democrats made some compromise to bridge the partisan divide.

However, polarization and deep fractures in American politics exposed in the display of partisan dysfunction will only get deeper as fundamentals of the bipartisan bickering have not changed at all, U.S. experts said.

"TWO ONE-PARTY NATIONS"?

U.S. President Donald Trump signed a bill Monday night to keep the government open until Feb. 8. The stopgap legislation was approved by the Congress earlier in the day after Republicans and Democrats capped off a nearly three-day deadlock over bitter dispute over immigration and border security.

"It is not anything important, just posturing," said Michael C. Munger, professor of political science at Duke University, referring to this round of Republican-Democratic



standoff. "Both sides are using it to make their 'base' feel good. It's expensive, but it's only taxpayer money, so they don't care," he told Xinhua in a written interview on Tuesday. "It would be embarrassing, but neither party feels any

responsibility for 'saving face' for the government," Munger said. "I think THAT is the reason for the polarization: the parties are detached from any sense of responsibility for governing. THAT is a real problem." (Xinhua)

U.S.-Led Coalition Kills over 10,000 in 40 Months in Syria



DAMASCUS - Over 10,000 people have been killed since the U.S.-led anti-terror coalition started its operations against

the Islamic State (IS) in Syria in September of 2014, a monitor group reported on Tuesday.

Altogether 2,815 civil-

ians, including 655 children, and 7,396 IS militants were among those killed, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. The London-based watchdog group said the U.S.-led coalition continues to carry out airstrikes in IS-held areas in Syria despite the fact that the terror-designated group is controlling only 3 percent of the Syrian territories following their defeat in their major

strongholds in northern and eastern Syria. The coalition has enabled the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) to capture IS de facto capital in Syria's northern city of Raqqa.

The Syrian government has for long condemned the U.S. coalition, slamming it as "illegitimate" as it's fighting in Syria without the consent of the Syrian government. Due to the civilian casualties, the Syrian government urged the UN to dissolve the coalition. (Xinhua)

UK's Davis Denies Brexit Backtracking with Transition Period

LONDON - European Union citizens will remain free to settle in the U.K for about two years after the country leaves the bloc in 2019, Britain's top Brexit official said Wednesday.

Brexit Secretary David Davis said that during a transition period, Britain will abide "to a very large extent" by the EU's rules. It will continue to pay into EU coffers and be subject to the jurisdiction of European courts. Freedom of movement will also continue, although Davis told Parlia-

ment's Brexit committee that EU citizens will have to register with authorities in Britain. Once Britain is fully out of the EU, it will end the automatic right of people from the 27-nation bloc to live and work in the U.K.

Britain's vote to leave the EU has left many of the 3 million EU citizens in the country worried about their future. But Davis said the government had "a moral responsibility" to ensure EU nationals could "continue their lives as they are now" after Brexit. (AP)

Britain Seeking Equivalence with EU Regulation, Not Harmonisation: Minister

LONDON - Britain will not seek to harmonise its regulations with the European Union after leaving the bloc, but will aim instead for "outcome equivalence", Brexit minister David Davis said on Wednesday. "There's undoubtedly an impetus among some continental countries and on the part of the Commission to try to trade off regulatory freedom against market access," Davis told a parliamentary committee. "Our strategy for dealing with that is to say we will seek outcome equivalence in some areas, but not harmonisation - otherwise if you have harmonisation you might just as well have stayed in." (Reuters)

Senior Al-Qaeda Leader Added to U.S. Terror List

WASHINGTON - The U.S. State Department announced on Tuesday it has added Khalid Batarfi, a senior leader of the al-Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), to the list of U.S. government's specially designated global terrorists.

The designation seeks to deny Batarfi the resources for further terrorist attacks, said the State Department in a statement. Batarfi was the top commander for AQAP in Abyan, Yemen, and was a former member of AQAP's shura council, the statement said.

Following the designation, all of Batarfi's property and interests in property subject to U.S. jurisdiction will be blocked, and U.S. persons are generally prohibited from engaging in any transactions with him. (Xinhua)

ASEAN Leaders Gather in New Delhi for Commemorative Summit with India

NEW DELHI - Heads of governments of 10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members headed for New Delhi on Wednesday for the "India-ASEAN commemorative summit" scheduled for Thursday.

The summit, with the theme "Shared Values, Common Destiny," will mark 25 years of India's ties with the Southeast Asian bloc. The 10 ASEAN leaders will attend India's Republic Day parade and other functions as chief guests on Friday. Trade and business



are expected to top the agenda of the summit. India's trade with ASEAN, its fourth largest trading partner, increased to 70 billion U.S. dollars in 2016-2017, from 65 billion dollars in the previous year. India became sectoral partner of the ASEAN in 1992, full dialogue partner

in 1995, summit level partner in 2002, and upgraded its relationship into strategic partnership in 2012. New Delhi holds an annual "Track 1.5" event called "Delhi Dialogue," for discussing politico-security and economic issues between ASEAN and India. (Xinhua)

U.S. Attorney General Sessions Interviewed in Russia Probe

WASHINGTON - U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions was reportedly interviewed for several hours last week by the special counsel's office as part of the ongoing Russia probe.

The meeting, first reported by The New York Times on Tuesday, was the first time that investigators for the special counsel, Robert Mueller, are known to have questioned a member of U.S. President Donald Trump's cabinet.

Other U.S. news outlets confirmed the Sessions-Mueller interview, citing a

spokesman for the Justice Department that declined to provide any details. Mueller is investigating allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election and collusion between the Trump campaign and Moscow.

Sessions, an early supporter of Trump's presidential bid, has drawn attention for his contacts with Russia during the presidential campaign, and had a role in Trump's firing of then FBI director last May. (Xinhua)

Syrian Force Ready to Respond to Any Turkish Attack on Manbij: Spokesman

BEIRUT - U.S.-backed Syrian fighters in the Manbij area of northern Syria have deployed to frontlines to confront a threatened Turkish assault and are in contact with the U.S.-led coalition over protecting the city, their spokesman said on Wednesday.

Turkey has launched an air and ground operation in Afrin in northwest Syria targeting the U.S.-backed Kurdish YPG militia - seen by Ankara as a threat to its security - and has threatened to extend its operation some 100 km (60 miles) eastwards to Manbij.

Unlike Afrin, Manbij is an area where the United States has military personnel stationed, raising the risk of possible confrontation between the NATO allies amid Turkish fury over U.S. support for the YPG militia.

Manbij is bordered to the west by a stretch of territory controlled by Turkey-backed Free Syrian Army groups. "Of course we in the Manbij Military Council have taken the necessary measures and deployed our forces to the frontlines," said Sharfan Darwish of the Manbij Military Council.

"We are in full readiness to respond to any attack (by Turkey and its allies)." "Of course our coordination with the international coalition continues with regards to the protection of Manbij," he added. Darwish said the U.S.-led coalition had stepped up patrols in the Manbij area in apparent response to the Turkish threats, though a coalition spokesman said there was no indication that this was the case. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

Senior Legislators from China, Japan Agree to Push for Improvement of Ties

TOKYO - Senior legislators from China and Japan have agreed to push for further improvement of bilateral relations during their meetings which concluded on Wednesday. Chen Zhu, vice chairman of China's National People's Congress (NPC) Standing Committee, led a Chinese delegation to attend the 10th meeting of the cooperation committee between China's NPC and the House of Representatives of the Japanese parliament, and the 7th meeting of the bilateral exchange mechanism between China's NPC and Japan's House of Councillors.

The two sides held frank

and pragmatic discussions on bilateral relations, parliamentary exchanges, cultural exchanges, environmental protection, disaster prevention and mitigation, as well as regional and international issues of mutual concerns.

As this year marks the 40th anniversary of the signing of the China-Japan Treaty of Peace and Friendship, the two sides agreed to take this opportunity to enhance communication in various areas to promote mutual understanding, enhance cooperation and push for continued improvement and development of bilateral relations. (Xinhua)

Belt, Road Initiative to Create Connectivity, Create Linkages: PM

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi Wednesday said the Belt and Road Initiative would create connectivity, create linkages and boost economic growth of countries part of the project.

He was speaking at a panel discussion on "The Belt and Road Impact"; part of the 48th World Economic Forum being held at Davos Switzerland. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is envisioned to enhance connectivity across continents through infrastructure investment, cultural exchange and technological know-how transfer. Prime Minister Abbasi

who is on a two-day visit to attend the Forum on the invitation of its President Professor Klaus Schwab said Pakistan recognizes the initiative of President Xi Jinping of China who through his vision has created global connectivity for tomorrow. He said the initiative touches the lives of half of the humanity and would have a far reaching impact across the continents. Pakistan is one of the 80 countries through which the BRI passes or would have an impact. Pakistan terms it China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). (Monitoring Desk)

Hostile Stance on JCPOA Exposed US Lies about Iran: Qassemi

TEHRAN - Iran has rejected the hostile accusations leveled by US Vice President Mike Pence against the Islamic Republic, saying Washington's stance on the 2015 multilateral nuclear deal exposed its lies about Tehran seeking nuclear weapons.

Pence told the Israeli parliament on Monday that the nuclear deal with Iran was a "disaster," and that "the United States of America will no longer certify this ill-conceived agreement," officially called the Joint Comprehensive of Action (JCPOA).

The US official also accused the Iranian government of pursuing "a clandestine nuclear program," trying to "dominate the wider Arab world," and sowing chaos across the

region.

In response, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qassemi gave a list of Washington's malicious and unfair measures against the Islamic Republic over the past decades ranging from support for the use of chemical attacks against civilians to the imposition of brutal sanctions against the nation. Among Washington's belligerent anti-Iran moves, he said, was its backing for former Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein in his 1980-88 war against Iran, during which he used chemical arms against people in some Iranian cities, as well as the 1988 downing of an Iranian passenger jet by a guided-missile cruiser in the Persian Gulf waters. (Presstv)

Leaders of S. Korea, Uzbekistan Vow Efforts to Enhance Bilateral Ties

TASHKENT - South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Uzbek President Shvkat Mirziyoyev agreed Wednesday to continue working together to enhance relations between the two countries, the presidential office Cheong WaDae said.

The two leaders reached the agreement during a phone call, noting that Mirziyoyev's state visit to South Korea last year created the foundation for the countries' traditionally friendly relations to be developed into a future-oriented cooperative partnership, according to Cheong Wa Dae.

The leaders also "agreed to seek ways to further enhance cooperation through the South Korea-

Uzbekistan economic ministers' meeting to be held next month," Cheong WaDae spokesman Park Soo-hyun said in a press release.

The telephone conversation came about two months after Moon and his Uzbek counterpart held a bilateral summit during Mirziyoyev's four-day state visit to Seoul, which began on Nov. 23. Mirziyoyev expressed hope to further increase exchange of people and ranking officials between the two countries, noting two South Koreans recently began work as advisers to his health and labor ministers, according to the Cheong WaDae spokesman. (Agencies)