

Trump-Xi Meeting at G20 Raises Hope for Trade Truce

WASHINGTON - US President Donald Trump and Chinese leader Xi Jinping have agreed to meet at the G20 summit in Japan next week, raising hopes for a truce in the bruising trade war between the world's top two economies.

The two leaders spoke on the phone on Tuesday, weeks after negotiations broke down when Trump accused Beijing of reneging on its commitments, hiked tariffs on \$200 billion in Chinese goods and then black-listed Chinese telecom giant Huawei.

The US president took a conciliatory approach this time. "Had a very good telephone conversation with President Xi of China. We will be hav-



ing an extended meeting next week at the G-20 in Japan," Trump said on Twitter. "Our respective teams will begin talks prior to

our meeting," he said ahead of the June 28-29 summit.

Xi noted that bilateral relations had encountered

difficulties that were "not in the interest of either side" but he warned that dialogue must be conducted on "an equal footing."

"China and the US will both gain by cooperating and lose by fighting," Xi told Trump, according to state media.

Global shares were buoyed by the announcement, with Wall Street rallying on Tuesday and Asian stock markets surging on Wednesday. The White House readout of the call said the leaders "discussed the importance of leveling the playing field for US farmers, workers, and businesses through a fair and reciprocal economic relationship." ...*(More on P4)...(13)*

Sudan Generals Must Transfer Power to Regain Trust: UK Envoy

KHARTOUM - Sudan's ruling generals must swiftly hand power to civilians if they are to regain the trust they lost after a deadly crackdown on protesters this month, Britain's envoy to Khartoum has told AFP.

Crowds of protesters who had camped for weeks outside the capital's army headquarters to demand civilian rule were violently dispersed on June 3 by armed men in military fatigues. The gunmen shot and

beat protesters at the crack of dawn in an operation that left dozens dead and hundreds wounded, according to doctors and witnesses. The killings sparked a wave of international condemnation, and the ruling military council has distanced itself from the events.

But Irfan Siddiq, Britain's ambassador to Khartoum and a leading advocate of civilian rule in Sudan, said the military council was ultimately responsible. ...*(More on P4)...(16)*

UN Expert Calls for Probe amid 'Credible Evidence' Saudi Crown Prince MBS Was Involved in Khashoggi's Killing

UNITED NATION - A United Nations expert said Wednesday that there's "credible evidence" that Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman was responsible for the killing of writer Jamal Khashoggi.

The 101-page report released by Agnes Callamard into the killing of Khashoggi at the Saudi consulate in Istanbul urges U.N. bodies or Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to "demand" a follow-up criminal investigation.

She admitted the "extreme sensitivity" of suggesting the criminal responsibility of the crown prince, in addition to Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, a senior adviser to the Saudi royal court who hasn't been charged. "No conclusion is made as to guilt," she wrote of the two officials. "The only conclusion made is that there is credible evidence meriting further investigation, by a proper authority, as to whether the threshold of criminal responsibility has been met."

She added that there



was "no reason why sanctions should not be applied against the Crown Prince and his personal assets." She said such measures were applied in the past on people even before their guilt was determined. ...*(More on P4)...(14)*

Pentagon's Plan to Counter China with Robotic Ships May be Impractical or Even Bluff



WASHINGTON - The US Navy is eyeing a large-scale introduction of robotic surface ships of various sizes as a counter to China's

boosted capabilities. The vision, however, relies on not-yet-proven technologies and may even be a bluff. The world's largest

navy feels threatened by Beijing, whose advancements in anti-ship missile technologies and large investments in its own naval assets over the past years mean that a conflict near China's shores may not end in US favor. Among the Pentagon's plans to deal with the problem is to switch away from larger ships in favor of smaller ones and make scores of them robotic.

A drone ship would be cheaper to build and operate since it doesn't need all the facilities for

the meatbags and the drones may be spread over wider areas.

The US admirals seem confident enough in this vision to request \$629 million in 2020 for research and development and want to spend a total of \$4.5 billion on the efforts through 2024, according to a recent report by the Congressional Research Service. Automatization and introduction of drones in combat is a process that happens in many nations, but it's ...*(More on P4)...(15)*

Ex-French President Sarkozy Loses Bid to Halt Corruption Trial

PARIS - Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy has lost his final bid to avoid a trial on charges of corruption and influence peddling, and will likely have to appear in court in the coming months, sources close to the case told AFP Wednesday.

The country's Court of Cassation, which rules on questions of law, ruled Tuesday that a trial was justified for Sarkozy as well as his lawyer Thierry Herzog and a former judge, Gilbert Azibert.

That means a trial will now go ahead, according to a source close to the case and one of the defence lawyers. Sarkozy's lawyers were not immediately available for comment.

The influence-peddling case centres on conversations between Herzog and Azibert that were tapped by investigators looking into claims that Sarkozy accepted illicit payments from the L'Oreal heiress Liliane Bettencourt for his 2007 presidential campaign. ...*(More on P4)...(17)*

Australian Government Boosts Senate Numbers Ahead of Tax Cut Bill

SYDNEY - Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison will need to secure just three votes in the country's upper house to pass legislation after election results on Wednesday showed his government picked up four additional Senate seats.

Morrison's position will be tested when he seeks to pass his major re-election policy of A\$158 billion in tax cuts when lawmakers return to parliament for the first time since the election -- expected to be in the first week of July.

Morrison secured re-election in May when his coalition won a majority of seats in Australia's lower house - a result he declared as a political miracle. Confirming the ...*(More on P4)...(18)*

Japan's Abe in Hot Seat after Pension Report Highlights an 'Inconvenient Truth'

TOKYO - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe faced stiff opposition criticism on Wednesday after a report warned that many retirees won't be able to live on pensions alone, a topic likely to become an issue in an election for parliament's upper house.

Abe has made reform of the social security system a top priority to cope with Japan's fast-ageing, shrinking population.

But the furor over the report and Finance Minister Taro Aso's refusal to accept its findings have created a headache for Abe's coalition ahead of the upper house poll and amid speculation that the premier may also call a snap election for the ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

Rocket Hits Basra Oil Headquarter Site of Exxon, Royal Dutch Shell

BASRA - A rocket was fired at the headquarters of a number of global oil companies, including ExxonMobil, west of Basra, Iraq on Wednesday, injuring three Iraqi workers.

Iraqi police said the rocket hit the Burjesia residential and operations headquarters, but no responsibility has been claimed for the short-range Katyusha missile that landed just 1,000 yards from Exxon's operation and residential area. Royal Dutch Shell PLC and Italian Eni SpA also operate out of the site.



The US evacuated hundreds of diplomatic staff from its Baghdad embassy in May, citing threats from Iran. Exxon staff were also evacuated at the time, and had just begun to return to Basra before this attack.

After the rocket incident, Exxon said it was evacuating 21 foreign staff immediately. There have been two attacks on bases housing US military personnel in Iraq in the last few days. (RT)

Kuwait's Ruler in Baghdad amid Rising Gulf Tensions

BAGHDAD - Kuwait's ruling emir arrived on a state visit to Iraq on Wednesday and is expected to discuss escalating regional tensions after attacks on oil tankers near the Strait of Hormuz.

Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah was met by Iraq's president, oil minister and other senior Iraqi officials and will discuss bilateral ties and recent regional and international developments, Kuwait's state news agency KUNA said.

The two OPEC member states transport most of their crude through the Strait of Hormuz, through which almost a fifth of the world's oil passes, and near where six tankers have been attacked in the past month.

The United States and Saudi Arabia have accused Iran of being behind the attacks, which Tehran denies. Kuwait has described the tanker attacks as a threat to international peace and security, without assigning blame. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

Iran 'Categorically Rejects' US Tanker Attack Allegations

TEHRAN - Iran's defence minister "categorically rejected" Wednesday accusations that Tehran was behind two tanker attacks in the Gulf of Oman, describing evidence presented by Washington as "unsubstantiated", official news agency IRNA reported.

Washington has blamed Iran for last week's attacks, releasing images and a grainy video it alleges shows Iranians on a patrol boat removing an unexploded limpet mine attached to one of the tankers.

"Accusations levelled against Iran's armed forces and the published film with regards to the incident (that) happened

to the vessels ... are unsubstantiated and we categorically reject these accusations," IRNA quoted Defence Minister Brigadier-General Amir Hatami as saying. "The armed forces and the port organisation were among the first to approach the tankers after the incident for relief operations and they rescued 23 people in the first tanker," he added. Hatami did not explicitly specify which of the two ships he was referring to, but Iran's English-language Press TV at the time broadcast footage of 23 sailors rescued from the Front Altair, a tanker owned by a Norwegian listed company. (Press Tv)

Pakistan, Japan Sign MOU on Defence Cooperation

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan and Japan on Tuesday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on defence cooperation and exchanges. The MoU was signed after the 10th round of military-to-military talks at the Ministry of Defence in Rawalpindi. Additional Defence Secretary Rear Admiral Owais Ahmed Bilgrami led the Pakistani delegation, while the director general for International Affairs at Japan's Bureau of Defence Policy led the Japanese side.

The two sides exchanged views on enhancing and diversifying bilateral cooperation and agreed on stronger collaboration for promotion of international peace and se-

curity, the officials said. Rear Admiral Bilgrami recalled the goodwill existing between the armed forces of the two countries and briefed the Japanese delegation on Pakistan's role and efforts in pursuing enduring peace in the region.

Security dialogue The seventh round of Pakistan-Japan security dialogue was, meanwhile, held at the Foreign Office.

The Pakistani side was led by Intiaz Ahmad, Special Secretary (Asia Pacific), while Shigeaki Takizaki, Director General, Southeast and Southwest Asian Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, led the Japanese side. (Monitoring Desk)

Installation of Outer Containment Dome of Nuclear Reactor in Pakistan to Boost Cooperation Between China, BRI Countries

BEIJING - The successful installation of outer containment dome of a nuclear reactor in Pakistan will speed up nuclear cooperation between China and the countries participating in the Belt and Road Initiative, analysts said.

The outer containment dome of the Karachi unit 2 nuclear reactor was successfully installed, a milestone marking the end of its general construction

work, said China National Nuclear Corp, one of China's largest nuclear power companies, China Daily reported on Wednesday. The installation of the outer containment dome of Karachi unit 2, the first export of China's Hualong One pressurized water reactor design, a third-generation reactor design, will be followed up by containment and heat tests, it said. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran, Russia Square Up to US Sanctions with 12 Accords

TEHRAN - Iran and Russia have signed a dozen cooperation agreements covering energy, railway, agriculture, pharmaceuticals and tourism, with senior officials stressing the political will of the two countries to reinforce ties in the face of US sanctions.

The agreements were signed as Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak visited Iran with a delegation of 120 businesspeople, including representatives of private and public companies.

The two sides held their 15th meeting of the joint commission for economic and trade cooperation in Isfahan Tuesday, which was also attended by governors of several Iranian provinces and ministers of several Russian republics. "Both Iran and Russia

are affected by illegal sanctions. It is hoped that the sanctions can be used as an opportunity to expand ties and increase cooperation," Iranian energy minister Reza Ardekani said, stressing that there is "political will" on both sides to do that.

Novak described Iran and Russia as "good neighbors", saying both are determined to strengthen their cooperation.

The Iranian Ministry of Petroleum's Shana news agency said the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding covering oil, gas, petrochemicals, electricity and nuclear power. Russian news agencies cited Novak as saying that Moscow and Tehran have been discussing joint development of Caspian Sea hydrocarbon projects. (Press Tv)

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