

G-20 Leaders Clash over Values, Face Calls to Protect Growth

OSAKA, Japan — World leaders attending a Group of 20 summit in Japan that began Friday are clashing over values that have served for decades as the foundation of their cooperation as they face calls to fend off threats to economic growth.

"A free and open economy is the basis for peace and prosperity," Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told his counterparts in opening the two-day G-20 meeting, which comes as leaders grapple with profound tensions over trade, globalization and the collapsing nuclear deal with Iran.

While groups like the G-20 endeavor to forge consensus on broad policy approaches and geopolitical issues, they also are divided on an array of is-



sues. Defying Chinese warnings not to bring up the issue of recent protests in Hong Kong, Abe told Chinese President Xi Jinping it was important for "a free and open Hong Kong to prosper under 'one country, two

systems' policy," Japanese officials said, referring to the arrangement for the former British colony's autonomy when China took control in 1997. They said Abe reminded Xi of the importance of guaranteeing freedom, human rights, the "rule of law"

and other universal values in raising concern over proposed Hong Kong legislation that would allow some criminal suspects to be extradited for trial in mainland China. The bill, now shelved, prompted protests by hundreds of thousands of Hong Kong residents and minor demonstrations elsewhere in Asia, including Osaka.

Xi is not the only leader facing a pushback from his Western counterparts. European Union Council President Donald Tusk blasted Russian President Vladimir Putin for saying in an interview with the Financial Times newspaper that liberalism was "obsolete" and conflicts with the "overwhelming majority" in many countries. (AP)

Neighbor News

US Will Sanction Any Country That Buys Oil from Iran, No Exemptions — Special Envoy

TEHRAN - The United States will put sanctions on any country that imports Iranian oil, and no exemptions are currently in place, US special envoy for Iran Brian Hook told reporters in London.

The Trump administration's hard-line economic policy against the Islamic Republic continues in response to Tehran downing a US drone last week. After Trump announced new sanctions directly targeting the Iranian leadership on Monday, the US now says they will enforce penalties on those who violate previous restrictions as well.

"We will sanction any imports of Iranian crude oil... There are right now no oil waivers in place," Hook said when asked about continued sales of Iranian crude in Asia. Waivers had previously been in place allowing for several countries, reliant on importing Iranian oil, to continue buying it in spite of sanctions. Hook explicitly mentioned reports that Iran's largest buyer, China, has received at least one shipment since its sanctions waiver was revoked, reiterating: "We will sanction any illicit purchases of Iranian crude oil." (RT)

Gov't Retires Record External Debt of \$9.5 Bn in A Year: Hammad

ISLAMABAD - Minister of State for Revenue Hammad Azhar said on Friday that the Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) led government had retired record foreign loans worth of US \$ 9.5 billion during current fiscal year which had never been done by any government in a single year.

On point of personal explanation in National Assembly, Hammad Azhar said during first year of PTI government, external debts were increased by US \$ 2.7 billion whereas in last year of PML-N government, foreign loans were surged by over US \$ 7 billion. Responding to the opposition's claim of obtaining domestic loans worth Rs 7000 billion or Rs 10,000 billion during first

year of PTI government, Hammad Azhar said the figures were highly exaggerated. "Pakistan's total debt and liabilities had risen from Rs 6100 billion to Rs 31000 billion in June 2018," he said adding that the government had already shared the debt profile in the house in which all figures of debt were explained.

The minister pointed out that last year, Pakistan's debt profile was changed by 146 percent and long term commercial loans were converted by 146 percent to short term commercial loans which resulted in extra burden on the current government to repay the debts as those debts were to be matured this year and next year. (Monitoring Desk)

World's First Plant to Manufacture Synthetic Fuel from Gas Opens in Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - Opening ceremony of the plant to be the first in the world to produce synthetic fuel from natural gas on an industrial scale was held in Ovadandep settlement of Turkmenistan's Ahal province, Trend correspondent reported from the scene.

Before the ceremony, a solemn meeting was held with the participation of President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov, prominent public figures, businessmen, representatives of diplomatic missions and mass media, and foreign guests in the Mizan business center. In his speech, President Berdimuhamedov emphasized the rapid eco-

nomic growth of the country, which has become an influential player in the regional market. The president spoke about mutually beneficial cooperation with other countries and companies, the influx of foreign investments, the introduction of the most advanced technologies, the creation of transport corridors, new directions of industrial development and the new stage of the market reforms. "Turkmenistan's economic model is built up taking into account the best international experience, based on the state and national interests, tasks of regional and global sustainable development," the president said. (Trend)

China Dominates Digital Infrastructure in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan's Ministry of Development of Information Technologies and Communications and China's CITIC Group and Henan Costar Group signed an agreement on the implementation of Uzbekistan's "Safe City" project. The project will take Uzbekistan's surveillance capabilities to a new level and have long-term implications. China's Huawei, lately subject to U.S. sanctions and at the heart of deepening tensions between the United States and China, is the main participant in the project, offering "advanced technology and innovative solutions." The recent agreement involves a \$300 million investment from the

CITIC Group, China's state-owned investment company. Henan Costar Group — a photonics company that manufactures and supplies optical and electromechanical products such as city monitoring systems — will likely manufacture monitoring systems in Uzbekistan. Huawei will likely be involved in integrating the monitoring systems, providing analytical support, and managing information coming from the systems. The announced investment is a part of a \$1 billion agreement President Shavkat Mirziyoyev signed during his trip to China in late April to participate in the second Belt and Road Forum. (Agencies)

Turkey Politician Faces 17 Years for 'Insulting' Tweets

ISTANBUL - Hundreds gathered at Istanbul's main court on Friday to support an opposition politician who faces 17 years in prison for a series of tweets criticising the government. Canan Kaftancıoğlu, who heads the secular Republican People's Party (CHP)'s Istanbul branch, is accused of "insulting" President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and the Turkish state in tweets posted between 2012 and 2017. She played a key role in the victory of the newly elected Istanbul mayor Ekrem Imamoglu this week — the first time

the CHP has run the city in 25 years. Imamoglu told reporters the case against Kaftancıoğlu was one of "political interference". "It is an attempt to restrict rights and freedoms. I will always stand by her," he said. Supporters outside the court chanted "Down with fascism" and held signs reading "We are thirsty for justice". Kaftancıoğlu's tweets include an insult directed at Erdogan, and criticism of the death of a 14-year-old boy who was hit by a tear gas grenade during the mass "Gezi Park" protests of 2013. (AFP)

OSAKA - Presidents Donald Trump and Vladimir Putin shared a laugh at the G20 Summit in Japan when the Russian leader quipped that "fake news" is not strictly an American phenomenon. The two heads of state gave a short press conference before their closed-door meeting at the G20 Summit in the city of Osaka Friday. When the subject moved to shoddy journalism, President Trump took American reporters to task.

'Great Term, Isn't It?' Putin and Trump Bond Over 'Fake News'



"Get rid of them," Trump said. "Fake news is a great term, isn't it? You don't have this problem in Russia, but

we do." "We also have," Putin replied in English. "It's the same." Among President Trump's many

catchphrases and slogans, 'fake news' has come to symbolize his frequent battles with the press. (RT)

Theresa May Offers Putin Icy Hand-Shake at G20 Summit in First Meeting Since Salisbury Nerve Agent Attack



OSAKA - A stone-faced Theresa May delivered an icy greeting to Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday as they

met for the first time since last year's Salisbury poisoning. The outgoing British prime minister and Pu-

tin last met three years ago. The frosty relationship between the two countries was strained even further after the March 4, 2018 nerve agent attack on former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia. They survived after nearly being killed. May all but avoided looking at Putin as they shook hands at the start of their meeting at the Group of 20 summit in Osaka, Japan. According to Downing Street, May told Putin "there cannot be

a normalization of our bilateral relationship until Russia stops the irresponsible and destabilizing activity." Downing Street said May told Putin the poisoning was a "truly despicable act" carried out by two Russian military officers, the BBC reported. She said the U.K. had irrefutable evidence that Russia was behind the attack, which also led to the death of a British woman, Dawn Sturgess, the BBC reported. (Fox News)

Tunisia Says No 'Power Vacuum' Despite President's Illness

TUNIS - Tunisian authorities said Friday President Beji Caid Essebsi's condition was improving and insisted there was no power vacuum in the North African country, shaken by the 92-year-old leader's hospitalisation and twin suicide attacks. Essebsi was taken to hospital for a "serious illness" on Thursday, the same day that bombings claimed by the Islamic State group killed a police officer in Tunis and wounded

several other people. Officials sought to calm fears among Tunisians that the cradle of the Arab Spring uprisings would descend into new violence and political instability. "We have a president. There is no constitutional vacancy," one of Essebsi's key advisors, Nouredine Ben Ticha, told the Express FM radio station. Presidential spokeswoman Saida Garrach said that Essebsi's "state of health is improving". (AFP)

UK's Johnson Says He Has Not Offered Anyone a Government Job

EXETER, England - British prime ministerial candidate Boris Johnson said on Friday he has not offered anybody a job in any future government he might lead. Former foreign minister Johnson is front-runner in the competition with current foreign minister Jeremy Hunt to be next leader of the Conservative Party and prime minister. "I want to stress - nobody has been offered a job," Johnson said at a hustings event in Exeter, southwest England, after a newspaper reported that he had offered the post of finance minister to Sajid Javid, the current interior minister. (Reuters)

Stocks Indexes Edge Higher to Finish Off a Wobbly Week

NEW YORK — U.S. stocks edged higher in early trading on Wall Street Friday as investors closed a wobbly week ahead of key trade talks between the U.S. and China.

Every major index was headed for a weekly loss, but still solidly on track to close the month and quarter with gains. The latest early push marks the second straight day of gains following four days of losses.

Banks led the gains after the Federal Reserve late Thursday approved plans by the country's 18 biggest banks to return more money to shareholders. The approvals were part of the Fed's annual checkup of the banking system. JPMorgan Chase rose 3% and Bank of America rose 3.2%. Bond prices fell. The yield on the 10-year Treasury rose to 2.02%. Higher yields allow banks to charge more interest on loans. (AP)

Ruins of Bridge in Italy Demolished Nearly a Year after Deadly Collapse

GENOA - The remnants of a bridge in Italy that collapsed last summer, killing 43 people, were finally torn down as a planned explosion cleared the structure in Genoa on Friday morning. The Morandi Bridge, which linked the port city to a high-speed highway leading to the French Riviera and another highway leading to Milan, was brought down in a matter of a few seconds after a planned explosion went off at 9:37 a.m. local time.

Some 3,500 people who live nearby had been evacuated as a precaution on Thursday and before dawn on Friday. Before leaving, many



had covered windows and doors with plastic sheeting in a bid to prevent dust from infiltrating their homes. The blast was an effort to remove the remaining pillars and road that did not come down during the deadly August 14 collapse that killed 43 people last summer.

While officials have not yet named an official cause, the bridge, first built in 1967, had undergone tremendous stress from the 25 million vehicles that traveled it on average every year and sea air that heavily corroded the steel rods suspending the road, the BBC reported. (Fox News)

Merkel 'Active', 'Healthy' after Fresh Trembling Spell

BERLIN - The German government insisted Friday that Chancellor Angela Merkel was in robust health, after a second episode of uncontrolled shaking sparked concerns about the wellbeing of the EU's longest-serving leader.

Asked about how Merkel, who is in Japan for a G20 summit, was faring after her second trembling spell in as many weeks, government spokeswoman Martina Fietz said she was fine.

"The images you can see from Osaka show that the chancellor is very active and healthy — doing her job and keeping her planned appointments," Fietz told reporters.

The long-serving leader, who turns 65 next month, sparked renewed fears for her health Thursday when she began to tremble at a ceremony with the German president at his Berlin palace. (AFP)

Coca-Cola Foundation Launches Initiative to Replenish Water in S. Africa

JOHANNESBURG - The Coca-Cola Foundation on Friday launched an investment of 1.275 million U.S. dollars to replenish up to 2,800 million liters of water back into nature to address water security in the country's key watersheds.

The Coca-Cola Foundation will invest to remove invasive alien plants from five main water catchment areas that feed major cities and towns across the country in a program called Replenish Africa Initiative (RAIN).

"Apart from reducing water usage in our plants, we are investing in providing cost-effective solutions to managing water security in South Africa," said general manager of the South African franchise of the Coca-Cola Company, Luis Avellar at the launching ceremony in Johannesburg. Avellar said alien invasive plants consume millions of liters of water resulting in water shortages and permanent loss to an already stressed water system.

South Africa's Minister of Environment, Forestry and Fisheries Barbara Creecy called on all stakeholders to partner government to clean invasive alien plants and replenish water in the country. She said that South Africa is an arid country, one of the 30 driest countries in the world.

"We need to work together to improve stream and river-related ecological infrastructure — by clearing invasive alien plant infestations, especially in mountain catchments and riparian areas," said Creecy. (Xinhua)