

At U.N., China Delays U.S. Bid To Blacklist Ships, Companies Over North Korea

UNITED NATIONS - China delayed a U.S. request for a United Nations Security Council committee to blacklist 33 ships, 27 shipping companies, and a Taiwan man for violating international sanctions on North Korea, diplomats said on Friday. The United States submitted the request a week ago, a move it says is "aimed at shutting down North Korea's illicit maritime smuggling activities to obtain oil and sell coal." The U.N. request coincided with the United States imposing its largest package of unilateral sanctions against North Korea on Friday, intensifying pressure on Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons and missile programs.



China did not give a reason for placing a hold on the U.S. request. A hold can be lifted and is often used when a Security Council member wants more information, but sometimes it can lead to a permanent blocking of a proposed blacklisting. The Security Council North Korea sanctions committee works on the basis of unanimity. If agreed, the 33 ships proposed by the United States, 19 of which are North Korean vessels, would be subjected to a global port entry ban. Countries would also be required to deregister the 14 ships that are not North Korean. The 27 proposed companies and the one individual would be subjected to an asset freeze. (Reuters)

Markets Right Now: Late Rally

Erases an Early Stock Slide
NEW YORK - The latest on developments in financial markets (all times local): A late burst of buying erased a sharp drop in stocks suffered early in the day. Bond yields and the price of gold rose Friday, both signs that investors expect inflation might tick up. Investors remain focused on President Donald Trump's threat to impose tariffs on steel and aluminum imports. A trade war could lead to inflation and weaker profits for U.S. exporters and companies that are big users of steel and alu-

minum. Caterpillar fell 2.6 percent. Small-company stocks rose. The Standard & Poor's 500 index rose 13 points, or 0.5 percent, to 2,691. The Nasdaq rose 77 points, or 1.1 percent, to 7,257. The Dow Jones industrial average came mostly back from a 390-point loss and ended down 70 points, or 0.3 percent, at 24,538. Stocks are mostly lower on Wall Street as investors worry that an escalation of trade tensions could harm big U.S. companies and the global economy. (AP)

Indian Prime Minister's Party Ahead in Key State Elections

NEW DELHI - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party appeared headed Saturday to ending the 25-year uninterrupted rule of a communist party in a northeastern state and consolidating its position in two other states in provincial elections. An impressive win is expected to boost the prospects of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party when it seeks a second term in national elections next year. The BJP has been riding a wave of rising Hindu nationalism in the



country. With over 90 percent of votes counted, the Indian Election Commission's tabulation suggested that

the BJP was likely to form a government on its own in Tripura state, replacing the Communist Party of India (Marxist). It also

looked like it could win a majority with support from other groups in Meghalaya and Nagaland states. (AP)

Italy's 5-Star Rallies Voters as Rivals Fret



ROME - Italy's 5-Star Movement told roaring supporters it was close to winning a looming election at the end of campaigning on Friday as its main

rivals worried about the anti-establishment party's popularity. Pollsters predict Sunday's parliamentary election will result in a hung parliament in

which former prime minister Silvio Berlusconi's alliance of center-right groups will be the largest bloc and 5-Star the biggest single party.

The ruling center-left Democratic Party (PD) has failed to capitalize on a tentative economic recovery following the worst recession since World War Two, and the coalition it heads could end up in third place. "We are a step away from victory," 5-Star leader Luigi Di Maio said at a rally in Rome's Piazza del Popolo, where a crowd waved flags and chanted "honesty", the group's buzzword. (Reuters)

Top Beijing Official Urges Outreach to Non-Mainland Chinese

BEIJING - A top Chinese leader called Saturday for continued efforts to rally non-mainland ethnic Chinese, including those overseas, around the country's national interests and help realize President Xi Jinping's "Chinese Dream" of national rejuvenation. The comments from Yu Zhengsheng come amid heightened Western scrutiny of the Communist Party's attempts to exert control and influence abroad, including over the Chinese diaspora in countries like Australia and the United States. In a speech at the open-

ing of a largely ceremonial political advisory conference, Yu said the advisory body has "meticulously" worked to enhance patriotism among young people in Hong Kong and Macau as well as those farther abroad with invitations to visit China and outbound delegations. He said he was seeking to "mobilize all the sons and daughters of (ethnic Chinese) to work together for the greater national interests and the realization of the Chinese Dream," referring to Xi's nationalist vision of China as the pre-eminent global power. (AP)

Scotland's Shiant Islands Become Safer Haven for Seabirds after Rats Finally Driven Away

LONDON - The Shiant Islands off the coast of Scotland's Outer Hebrides has declared a victory in its four-year battle against rats, assuring a brighter future for seabirds inhabiting on the isles. The remote and uninhabited islands attracts over 100,000 pairs of nesting seabirds every year, and is officially classed as an internationally important wildlife colony. However, it had been plagued for years by non-native black rats, thought to have arrived from a shipwreck, which have feasted on chicks and eggs. On Friday, the islands were officially declared rats free thanks to the European Union (EU)-backed 622,000 U.S. dollars project to restore them as a secure haven for nesting seabirds. (Xinhua)

DPRK Official Daily Taunts U.S. Political System over Gov't Shutdowns

PYONGYANG - The official media of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Saturday taunted the U.S. political system, which has been experiencing frequent government shutdowns. The shutdown of the U.S. government, the second in three weeks last month, was a "laughing stock worldwide" and "showed the plight of the U.S. on the decline," said Rodong Simmun, the daily of the DPRK's ruling Workers' Party of Korea. "The government shutdown is a product of political confrontation spawned by the reactionary bipartisan ruling system in the U.S. and an inevitable result of the serious crisis of the U.S. economy which has plunged into an irretrievable structural contradiction due to its war policy of aggression," the daily said in an article. (Xinhua)

Hardliners Give Cautious Welcome to May's Brexit Vision

LONDON - The head of a hardline group of pro-Brexit lawmakers on Saturday gave a cautious welcome to Prime Minister Theresa May's plans for Britain's future ties with Europe, saying now was not the time to nitpick. May, battling to strike a deal with Europe that appeases both sides of her deeply divided party, used a speech in London on Friday to warn that the country needed to face up to some "hard facts" that "neither of us can have exactly what we want". Jacob Rees-Mogg, the leader of an influential group in May's Conservative Party who



has warned the government not to waver in its approach, congratulated May for taking a "sensible, pragmatic and generous approach to Brexit". "There are inevitably a few small points that will concern Leave campaigners but we must all recognize that everyone will have to give up

something to get a deal, so now is not the time to nitpick," he said. Rees-Mogg told the BBC the issues he remained concerned about included how the fisheries industry would be treated and how British companies would liaise with European agencies. (Reuters)

Drastic Staff Cuts At U.S. Embassy in Cuba Now Permanent

HAVANA - The United States said on Friday it was making permanent its decision last year to slash staffing at its Havana embassy by around two-thirds because a spate of alleged health incidents among its diplomats remained unsolved. The decision casts a pall on U.S.-Cuban relations and limits the United States' ability to play a role in the civil society of the Communist-run island as it prepares for its first non-Castro president in nearly 60 years. It will also hurt Cuban-American families divided by the Florida Straits, who

have struggled to get visas to visit one another since the United States first cut the embassy's staff in September due to the "attacks" that it says have caused hearing loss, dizziness and fatigue in two dozen employees. President Donald Trump's administration also expelled 17 Cuban diplomats stationed in the United States. By law, the State Department is required to decide whether to send diplomats back six months after an ordered departure, and the deadline for that decision was up this weekend. (Reuters)

San Francisco Art Exhibition Expected To Inspire East-West Exchanges

SAN FRANCISCO - An exhibition on the art of 18th-century Europe at a local museum is expected to inspire visitors to reflect on the exchanges between East and West, a top executive of the museum said Friday.

The ongoing exhibition, entitled "Casanova: The Seduction of Europe," presents the cultural and social world of Europe during the Age of Enlightenment with one of its most colorful characters, an Italian man named Giacomo Casanova who lived from 1725 to 1798, as a guide. Through more than 80 works of art, including paintings, sculptures, period furnishings and delicate porcelains, the exhibition, which runs through May 28 at the Legion of Honor Art Museum in downtown San Francisco, recreates the world of masked balls, palaces, theaters and operas at that time.

Casanova was considered by his own contemporaries to be a witty conversationalist, autobiographer, gambler, spy and one of the greatest travelers of all time, said Max Hollein, director and CEO of the Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco (FAMSF). Casanova used to travel to Constantinople (today known as Istanbul), the Western terminus of the Silk Road linking Europe and China. The art works associated with him reflect Europe's strong interest in Asia as well as the intellectual and cultural exchanges between East and West, said Hollein.

"Casanova's time witnessed the world coming closer together, when people were traveling farther and (were) more open to new ideas," he said. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

Iran Says No Missile Talks Unless West Gives Up Its Nuclear Weapons

TEHRAN - Iran's armed forces spokesman said on Saturday that there can be no talks on the country's missile programme without the West's destruction of its nuclear weapons and long-range missiles. "What Americans say out of desperation with regards to limiting the Islamic republic of Iran's missile capability is an unattainable dream," Brigadier General Masoud Jazayeri told the official IRNA news agency. "The condition for negotiations on Iran's missiles is the destruction of Amer-

ica's and Europe's nuclear weapons and long-range missiles." Jazayeri said US criticism of Iran's missile programme was driven by "their failures and defeats in the region." US President Donald Trump has threatened to tear up a 2015 nuclear deal between Iran and world powers unless more is done to curb Iran's missile programme. European governments have been scrambling to appease Trump and keep the deal intact, and have voiced increasing concern over Iran's missile programme. (AFP)

Pakistan's Ruling Party Backed Candidates Leading Senate Elections As Counting Continues

ISLAMABAD - Candidates backed by the Pakistani ruling party Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) are leading the elections of the Senate, the country's upper house of the parliament. Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf managed to secure one seat from northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Province so far. The counting of the remaining votes is underway.

Pakistan's Senate comprises 23 members from each province, eight from FATA and four members from Islamabad. The Senate elections are held after every three years to elect half seats that have completed their six-year term. The last elections were held in 2015 and the next will be conducted in 2021.

The contestants from provinces will be elected by members of provincial assemblies respectively while the aspirants from Islamabad and FATA will get votes from the members of the National Assembly, or the lower house of the country's parliament. (Xinhua)

Uzbek President Offers Condolences to Azerbaijani Counterpart

TASHKENT - Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev has expressed condolences to Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev in connection with a fire in Baku's Drug Abuse Treatment Center, which led to human casualties, the press-service of the Uzbek president said in a message March 3. "We were deeply saddened by the news of death of many Azerbaijani citizens in a fire in Baku's Drug Abuse Treatment Center," the message reads. "I extend my deepest condolences to the families of the deceased, wishes for

the speedy recovery of all the injured," the message said. The strong fire broke out at 06:10 (UTC+4) on March 2 in a one-story building of Azerbaijan's Republican Drug Rehabilitation Center in Baku. Twenty-five people died as a result of fire, says a joint statement of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Prosecutor General's Office, the Ministry of Emergency Situations and Health Ministry of Azerbaijan. The statement says that it was managed to save 30 people of 55 who were in the building of the center during the fire. (TREND)

Turkmenistan Appoints Ambassador to Morocco

ASHGABAT - Ishanguly Amanlyev has been appointed Turkmenistan's extraordinary and plenipotentiary ambassador to Morocco in accordance with President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov's decree. The diplomat will also continue to lead the diplomatic mission in Turkey. In a letter to President Berdimuhamedov, in October 2017, King of Morocco Mohammed VI expressed confidence that the existing relations of brotherhood and mutual respect between

Morocco and Turkmenistan will continue to strengthen and develop on the basis of mutually beneficial cooperation in the interests of the two peoples. Stressing the important role of cooperation with African states earlier, the Turkmen Foreign Ministry expressed its commitment to development of relations with the African Union. The African Union, established on July 9, 2002, is an international intergovernmental organization uniting 55 African states. (TREND)