

Australian Foreign Minister to Visit China as Frosty Relations Thaw

SYDNEY/BEIJING - Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne will travel to China this week, the two governments announced on Monday, as China ended an unofficial suspension for more than six months of visits by top Australian government ministers. Ties between the two countries, which compete for influence in Asia and particularly in the Pacific, have been strained since Australia accused China of meddling in its domestic affairs late last year.

Ending the stand-off, China's foreign ministry said Payne's visit, which begins on Wednesday, will include talks with State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi. Her trip is being seen in Aus-



tralia as a bid by China to seek warmer ties with Australia's recently installed Prime Minister Scott Morrison.

"I am looking forward to discussions with Minister Wang to enhance bilateral understanding and cooperation across the full

range of Australia's interests, spanning strategic, economic and people-to-people connections," Payne said in a statement. In Beijing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying noted that Payne and Wang had met in September

on the sidelines of the U.N. General Assembly and had reached "an important consensus" on ties.

"We are willing to work hard with the Australian side on the basis of mutual respect, equality and benefit to expand exchanges and cooperation in all fields, to promote Sino-Australian relations to achieve new developments," Hua told reporters. In August, Morrison became Australia's sixth different prime minister in the last decade after a backbench revolt ousted his predecessor, Malcolm Turnbull, who criticized China and banned its Huawei Technologies Co [HWT.UL] from Australia's broadband network. (Reuters)

Neighbor News

Iran will break US Sanctions and Continue to Sell Its Oil: President Rouhani

TEHRAN - Iran will continue to export its oil and will "break" the sanctions reinstated by the US on Monday, the nation's leader Hassan Rouhani said in a TV address. "America wanted to cut to zero Iran's oil sales," but the Islamic Republic "will continue to sell" its oil "to break sanctions," Rouhani warned during a meeting with the economists, which was broadcast on TV.

The Iranian president said that the country will undercut Washington's plan for sanctions on its energy and banking sectors. The US began reimposing sanctions on

Tehran after President Donald Trump withdrew the country from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) on the Iranian nuclear program in May, branding the deal "defective at its core."

In the months leading up to the re-imposition of restrictions on buying Iranian oil, officials in Washington made it clear that their goal was to virtually eliminate the nation's oil exports.

While the first round of US sanctions on Iran kicked off in August, the second round officially came into force on Monday. (Russia Today)

PM's China Visit to Open up New Vistas of Bilateral Cooperation: Fawad Ch

LAHORE - Federal Minister for Information and Broadcasting Chaudhry Fawad Husain has said that Prime Minister Imran Khan's landmark visit to China was a great success and has opened up new vistas of cooperation on the economic and strategic fronts.

Addressing a press conference at the Press Information Department (PID) regional office here on Monday, he said Pakistan and China had decided to trade in Chinese yuan instead of the dollar, adding that Pak-China current trade volume was 15 billion dollars and the switch of the US dollar to Chinese yuan would reduce burden on country's dollar reserves with the State Bank of

Pakistan (SBP). The Information minister, dilating on the successes of the PM visit to China, said it was as successful as that of Saudi Arabia in terms of economic and technical support.

He said Pak-China relations had moved beyond the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), adding China had extended currency support, cooperation in agriculture sector and establishment of new industrial zones in the country which would create new jobs and enhance economic activity. He said Federal Finance Minister Asad Umer and Planning Minister would divulge details of the economic cooperation on their return. (Monitoring Desk)

Poland's Ruling Populists Face Setback in Mayoral Races

WARSAW, Poland - Poland's populist ruling party has suffered a blow in the country's mayoral races, with early results showing it failing to win control of any of the nation's largest cities.

Final results from Sunday's local runoff elections are expected Monday afternoon. But unofficial results reported in Polish media already show that in 107 of the country's cities and largest towns, the ruling Law and Justice party is expected to win only six mayor's seats, the largest of which is Zamosc,

population 65,000. It is a sign that Law and Justice, while still popular with its conservative rural base after winning a national election in 2015, struggles to find support in urban areas despite a booming economy and cash handouts to families. For now, the ruling party seems unlikely to win the super majority in the parliament that it seeks in Poland's national elections in 2019.

Compared to the last local election in 2014, Law and Justice lost five cities and gained just one. (AP)

Russia Sends New Frigate with Cruise Missiles Onboard to Mediterranean

MOSCOW - Russia said it deployed its new frigate with long-range Kalibr cruise missiles to the Mediterranean Sea on Monday, a few months after Moscow had reinforced its naval forces off Syrian coast.

"The Black Sea Navy Fleet's frigate Admiral Makarov left (Navy base) Sevastopol and laid a course for the Black Sea straits. The vessel will be acting in the standing naval force of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean," the Russian Defence Ministry said in state-

ment. Russia has in the past fired Kalibr cruise missiles from frigates and submarines stationed in the Mediterranean Sea at militant targets to support Syrian army offensives. The ministry did not say whether the frigate was supposed to take part in the military operation in Syria where Moscow has backed President Bashar al-Assad since entering the war in 2015.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said in May that Russian military vessels with Kalibr cruise



missiles would be on permanent standby in the Mediterranean to counter what he said was the terrorist threat in Syria. Russia deployed several warships to the Mediterranean this summer, including the Admiral Grigorovich, Admiral Essen and Pytliviy frigates, along with landing ship Nikolai Filchenkov and the Vishny Volochek missile corvette. (Reuters)

Turkey Vows to Make 'Sea Bandits' Drilling Gas off Cyprus Pay, like 'Terrorists in Syria' Did



ANKARA - Ankara will not allow any "sea bandits" to roam free and tap the disputed natural gas reserves off Cyprus, Turkey's president has

vowed, while commissioning a new warship to challenge competitors militarily, should the need arise. "We will not accept at-

tempts to seize natural resources in the Eastern Mediterranean through the exclusion of Turkey and the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC)," Erdogan said Sunday, according to Daily Sabah. While claiming that Turkey has no ambitions to annex any "territories," Ankara promised to protect "the rights of our country and of our brothers."

"Those who thought that they could take steps in the Eastern Mediterranean or the Aegean despite [this] have begun to un-

derstand the magnitude of their mistake. We will not allow bandits in the seas to roam free just like we made the terrorists in Syria pay," Erdogan said at a ceremony transferring the TCG Burgazada corvette to the Turkish Navy.

The exploration of hydrocarbon resources off the coast of the Republic of Cyprus has become a sensitive issue for the international community, ever since the first gas deposit discoveries were made off the coast in 2011. (Russia Today)

Saudi Arabia Vows to Prosecute Khashoggi Killers, Defends Rights Record at U.N.

GENEVA - Saudi Arabia told the United Nations on Monday it would prosecute those responsible for the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi at its Istanbul consulate, and defended its human rights record. Bandar Al Aiban, the head of the Saudi government delegation at the first U.N. review of the kingdom's record in five years, heard calls from other envoys for a credible investigation into the killing and for the protection of critics of the government.

He told the hearing that King Salman had instructed the Saudi public prosecutor to "proceed with the investigation into this case according to the applicable laws and preparation to reaching all facts and bringing all the perpetrators to justice".

In the remarks, which did not appear in an advance transcript of the speech, Aiban gave no details on the status or whereabouts of the 18 Saudi nationals detained in connection with the case. (Reuters)

Swedish Conservative to Try Again to Form Government

STOCKHOLM - The leader of Sweden's conservative Moderates party will get a second chance to try to form a government, the speaker of parliament said Monday, two months after elections produced a political deadlock.

Ulf Kristersson's Moderates are part of the centre-right four-party Alliance which received marginally fewer votes on September 9 than the previous governing centre-left coalition.

Both blocs have struggled to form a majority after refusing to make a deal with the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats, which has roots in the neo-Nazi movement.

Kristersson failed in his first bid to form a government on October 14, and outgoing Prime Minister Stefan Lofven then said he had also failed on October 29. (AFP)

Indonesia and Australia Sign New Economic Cooperation Deal

CANBERRA, Australia - Indonesian and Australian ministers signed an agreement to strengthen government economic exchanges on Monday as the neighboring countries work toward forging a bilateral free trade deal.

Treasurer Josh Frydenberg and Indonesian Finance Minister Sri Mulyani signed a memorandum of understanding at the Australian Parliament House that updates a framework for policy and technical exchanges between two governments that have existed for 12 years. Indonesian and Australian officials have concluded negotiations on a free trade deal. (AP)

Outgoing German Spy Chief Attacks 'Naive' Left, Reopens Coalition Row

BERLIN - German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer faced calls on Monday to dismiss the outgoing head of domestic intelligence from a new advisory role, after the spy condemned what he called "naive and leftist" government policies and said he might enter politics.

The remarks, made at a closed meeting of European intelligence chiefs and published by the newspaper Sueddeutsche Zeitung on Monday, threatened to re-open a rift which Chancellor Angela Merkel's fractious coalition had only just patched up.

Seehofer once before rescued chief spy Hans-Georg Maassen from



dismissal when he questioned the authenticity of videos showing far-right extremists chasing immigrants in the eastern city of Chemnitz. This time Maassen, whose agency monitors extremist threats to Germany's constitutional order, compared the videos to Russian propaganda and presented himself as the victim of

a witch-hunt by "radical-left forces" in the Social Democratic Party (SPD), junior partner in Merkel's coalition. "I'm seen in Germany as a critic of idealistic, naive and leftist foreign and security policy," he said. "I can imagine a life outside public service, for example in politics or business." (Reuters)

S. Korea, Us Resume Suspended Joint Marine Drills

SEOUL - South Korea and the United States on Monday resumed small-scale military training that was indefinitely suspended following an historic summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The combined marine drills were among "select" joint exercises that were indefinitely delayed in June, after Trump met with Kim in Singapore and pledged to halt "very provocative" and expensive joint military drills with Seoul. But the Korean Marine Exchange Programme (KMEP), involving some 500 marines from the US and South Korea, will resume for two weeks from Monday in the South's southern city of Pohang, Seoul's defence ministry said.

"We have previously said we will conduct US-South Korea battalion-level or small-scale drills as planned," ministry spokeswoman Choi Hyun-soo told reporters. Washington is Seoul's security ally and stations 28,500 troops in the South to protect it from its nuclear-armed neighbour.

The two countries have long carried out joint exercises which they insist are purely defensive in nature, but which Pyongyang sees as a rehearsal for invasion. Along with the marine drills, Seoul and Washington suspended the annual Ulchi Freedom Guardian training in August involving tens of thousands of troops. (AFP)

UK Brexit-Supporting Lawmaker Baker: We Must Leave the EU Customs Union

LONDON - A prominent rebel lawmaker in Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative Party said on Monday that the United Kingdom must leave the European Union's customs union. "If we're going to regulate our own economy, if we're going to have our own independent trade

policy, if we're going to be a normal, independent country which is what I understood the referendum to have decided, then we need to be out of the customs union," lawmaker Steve Baker told BBC radio. "And we need to get of the customs union in a timely way." (Reuters)

ITS Gains First Core Banking System Client in Tajikistan, Sohibkorbank

DUSHANBE - Sohibkorbank, Tajikistan's first Islamic bank, has signed a deal with International Turnkey Systems (ITS) to implement the vendor's flagship Ethix core banking system.

ITS describes the deal as "groundbreaking". Esam Alkhesham, CEO of ITS, says that gaining the first client in Central Asia "is aligned with the company's strategic expansion plan".

The scope of work includes the implementation of a number of the Ethix modules covering core, branches, finance, customer relationship management (CRM), on-

line and mobile banking, and FATCA.

Sherali Zardov, CEO of Sohibkorbank, says ITS was selected following "a rigorous evaluation process". Its Ethix solution meets the needs of the bank, he explains, and ITS offers "the high quality of technical support", including the ability to provide support in the local language. This, he feels, demonstrates the vendor's commitment.

Sohibkorbank was established in 1999. It is now in the process of converting into a fully-fledged Islamic bank. (Agencies)

Turkmenistan, Afghanistan Discuss Joint Infrastructure Projects

ASHGABAT - A meeting with Mohammad Homayoun Qayumi, Acting Finance Minister of Afghanistan has been held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkmenistan, the Turkmen Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

During the meeting, special attention was paid to the implementation of important joint infrastructure projects, such as the construction of the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) gas pipeline and the use of the first phase of the "International Asian Railway Transport Corridor" Kerki-Imamnazar (Turkmenistan) - Akina (Afghanistan).

The sides reaffirmed the mutual commitment of the two countries to fur-

ther intensify the bilateral dialogue, discussed the situation in the region and the priorities for the development of Turkmen-Afghan cooperation in various fields. Among the priority themes, the parties noted the important role of interstate cooperation in the trade-economic, fuel-energy, transport and cultural-humanitarian fields.

"The delegation of the IRA expressed sincere gratitude for the continued assistance provided by Turkmenistan in the reconstruction of Afghanistan, commending Turkmenistan's active participation in stabilizing and establishing a peaceful and prosperous life in the neighboring state," the message says. (Trend)