

As US Retreats, China Touts Its Trade Deal Wares to Asia

SINGAPORE - China is touting itself as the new defender of global commerce as it works with Asia-Pacific leaders to hammer out the world's largest trade deal - with the United States relegated to the sidelines. World leaders gathered in Singapore this week for a summit where a massive Beijing-backed agreement covering half the world's population has dominated discussions. Diplomats have been trying to nail down details as Beijing entices its neighbours to join a pact seen as an antidote to President Donald Trump's "America First" protectionist trade policy. The US has imposed tariffs on roughly half of what it imports from China, prompting Beijing to retaliate with its own levies. China, Japan, India and other



Asia-Pacific countries are expected to announce progress on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) later Wednesday. Beijing had hoped to have the meat of the deal done by the end of this year, but the timetable

has now slipped to 2019. However, this has not stopped Chinese leaders from basking in the progress already made. During a meeting with Southeast Asia leaders, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said he was hope-

ful talks would "break through the ceiling" and take regional trade "to new heights".

Trump is not at the summit, nor a subsequent gathering of world leaders in Papua New Guinea at the end of the week, having sent Vice President Mike Pence instead. National Security Advisor John Bolton, however, told reporters in Singapore that the president's no-show should not be seen as a lack of commitment towards the region. He blamed a "schedule crunch" after a particularly frenetic few weeks that included the midterm elections, attending the World War I armistice commemorations in France and preparing for the G20 in Argentina later this month. (AFP)

Turkey in Close Cooperation with EU on Iran Sanctions, Minister Says



ANKARA - Turkey is in close cooperation with the European Union, the United States, and other parties to reduce the negative impact of U.S. sanctions on its relations with Iran, the

text of a speech by Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu showed on Wednesday. Cavusoglu was speaking to a parliamentary committee in Ankara on Wednesday. (Reuters)

Trump 'Bashes' UK's May after She Calls to Congratulate Him on Midterm Results

LONDON - Donald Trump's turbulent European visit started with an "acrimonious" conversation with British Prime Minister Theresa May, who called to celebrate the Republican wins in the midterm elections, a Washington Post report claims. The conversation, which was never officially reported by either side, came on Friday as Trump was traveling to Paris aboard Air Force One, the newspaper claims citing anonymous sources. Trump,

who was allegedly in a foul mood, berated May over Britain not doing enough to support his anti-Iranian agenda, questioned her handling of Brexit negotiations and recounted his grievances about what he sees as unfair trade relations between the US and European nations. The episode was not the only one that marred Trump's visit to mark the centenary commemoration of the end of World War I. Others were quite public, like Trump's verbal sparring



with the host, French President Emmanuel Macron, and the PR disaster, which was the US President's decision not to attend a ceremony honoring military sacrifices made during the

war. The report implies Trump's moods were spoiled before the trip by several events at home, including the Democratic Party's takeover of the House. (Russia Today)

Putin to Visit Turkey Nov. 19: Kremlin



MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin will visit Turkey on Monday, Nov. 19, the Kremlin said in a statement on

Wednesday. In Istanbul, Putin, together with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, will take part in a ceremony

marking the completion of the construction of the offshore section of the TurkStream gas pipeline in a video-conference, it

said. The two leaders will also have a meeting, during which issues of further development of Russian-Turkish relations and current regional and international problems will be discussed, the statement said. The construction of the TurkStream, a natural gas pipeline from Russia to Turkey across the Black Sea, started in May 2017. Russian gas giant Gazprom plans to begin supplying gas through the TurkStream at the end of 2019. (Xinhua)

Global Shares Dip after Wall Street Falls over Oil Concerns

TOKYO - Global shares were mostly lower Wednesday, after the steepest drop in oil prices in more than three years put investors in a selling mood on Wall Street. KEEPING SCORE: France's CAC slipped nearly 1 percent in early trading to 5,051.98. Germany's DAX was down 0.8 percent at 11,375.79. Britain's FTSE 100 lost 0.7 percent to 7,005.43. U.S. shares were set to drift lower with Dow futures slipping 0.2 percent at 25,291. S&P 500

futures were down 0.3 percent at 2,720.30. ASIA'S DAY: Japan's benchmark Nikkei 225 inched up 0.2 percent to finish at 21,846.48, while Australia's S&P/ASX 200 lost 1.7 percent to 5,732.80. South Korea's Kospi edged down 0.2 percent at 2,068.05. Hong Kong's Hang Seng fell 0.5 percent to 25,654.43, while the Shanghai Composite was down nearly 0.9 percent at 2,632.24. Shares were also lower in Thailand and Singapore. (AP)

Pence Issues Sharp Rebuke to Myanmar's Suu Kyi over 'Persecution' of Rohingya

SINGAPORE - U.S. Vice President Mike Pence expressed the Trump administration's strongest condemnation yet of Myanmar's treatment of Rohingya Muslims on Wednesday, telling leader Aung San Suu Kyi that "persecution" by her country's army was "without excuse". Pence also pressed Suu Kyi to pardon two Reuters journalists who were arrested nearly a year ago and sentenced in September to seven years in prison for breaching the Official Secrets Act.

"The violence and persecution by military and vigilantes that resulted in driving 700,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh is without excuse," Pence told Suu Kyi in remarks open to the media before they went into private talks on the sidelines of an Asia-Pacific summit in Singapore. (Reuters)

Negotiations on RCEP Poised for Conclusion in 2019: Singaporean PM

SINGAPORE - Negotiations on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) have made substantial progress this year and are poised for conclusion in 2019, Singaporean Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong said at a summit here on Wednesday.

"We are now at the final stage of negotiations with a strong momentum generated this year. I'm pleased to know that the RCEP negotiations are poised for conclusion in 2019," the prime minister of Singapore, the rotating chair of ASEAN for 2018, said in his opening remarks for the second RCEP summit on the sidelines of the 33rd ASEAN summit. (Xinhua)

APEC Summit: The Xi Show by The Sea Shore

PORT MORESBY - Hundreds of fluttering red flags, buses emblazoned with "China Aid" logos and even a purpose-built pagoda: driving around Port Moresby, you could be forgiven for thinking that Xi Jinping is hosting this week's APEC summit of Asia-Pacific leaders.

US President Donald Trump's decision to skip the summit in Papua New Guinea has allowed the Chinese leader to take centre stage, an opportunity that Beijing is seizing with relish. Xi will embark on a state visit a day before the rest of the delegates descend on this dusty sun-baked



city - and host a meeting with Pacific leaders - a schedule designed to emphasise growing Chinese influence in the region. On Friday, he is expected to open a new road and be treated to a traditional "sing sing" - a tribal welcome complete with Birds of Paradise-feath-

ered headdresses and grass skirts, underscoring his status as the man of the moment. In front of the plush Stanley Hotel where Xi and the Chinese delegation will stay, dozens of red flags surround a pagoda, every bit as ostentatious as Xi's diplomatic gambit. (AFP)

Swedish Parliament Rejects Center-Right PM Candidate, No End in Sight to Political Deadlock

STOCKHOLM - Sweden's Riksdag has voted against Ulf Kristersson's candidacy for prime minister, after his center-right allies refused to create a future coalition that would rely on support from the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats. The previously expected result leaves Sweden without a permanent government two months after the election, an unprecedented political stalemate in the

country's democratic history. The Sweden Democrats backed Kristersson's Moderates, but he received the support of only 154 deputies, short of the 175 majority needed. The 195 that voted against included the center-left, green and socialist parties, and the Liberal and Center parties, who campaigned together with Kristersson ahead of September's election. (Russia Today)

Israeli Defense Minister Quits Over Gaza Truce in Blow to Netanyahu

JERUSALEM - Israeli Defence Minister Avigdor Lieberman announced his resignation on Wednesday in protest at a Gaza ceasefire that he called a "capitulation to terror", weakening Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's conservative coalition government.

"Were I to stay in office, I would not be able to look southern residents in the eye," Lieberman told reporters, referring to Israelis subjected to a surge in Palestinian rocket attacks before Tuesday's truce took hold. Lieberman said his resignation, which will go into effect 48 hours after he submits a formal letter to Netanyahu, also withdraws his far-right Israel Beitenu party from the coalition. That would leave Netanyahu with control of just 61 of the 120 seats in parliament a year before Israel's next election.

Political commentators had speculated that Netanyahu, who despite his approval ratings has been dogged by multiple corruption investigations, might bring forward the ballot. They also saw in Lieberman's decision to quit a bid to poach votes from Netanyahu and far-right cabinet rival Naftali Bennett of the Jewish Home party, ahead of an election. A spokesman for Netanyahu's right-wing Likud played down the option of an early poll, saying the prime minister would assume the defense post. "There is no need to go to an election during what is a sensitive period for national security." (Reuters)

Neighbor News

Iran's President: U.S. Chose Wrong Path on Sanctions, Will be Defeated

GENEVA - The United States has chosen the wrong path in reimposing sanctions on Iran and will be defeated, Iranian President Hassan Rouhani said Wednesday, according to the Tasnim news agency. Washington reinstated sanctions targeting Iran's oil industry on Nov. 5 as it seeks to force the Islamic Republic to accept tougher curbs on its nuclear program, halt its development of ballistic missiles as well as its support for proxy forces in Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and Yemen. "The Americans will def-

initely be defeated in this path. The path they have chosen is wrong and incorrect," Rouhani said. "If they are being honest and they are looking for regional security, this is not the path. If they are being honest and respect the Iranian people, this is not the path." He added, "They have made themselves more infamous in the world and in front of our people. It's clear for everyone that the incorrect and cruel sanctions of America will harm the dear and honorable people of our country." (Reuters)

Iran Hangs 'Sultan of Coins', Accomplice for Corruption

TEHRAN - Two men sentenced to death for corrupt economic practices were hanged in Tehran early Wednesday morning, the Judiciary's Mizan news agency reported. Vahid Mazlumin, known as the "sultan of coins", and his accomplice Mohammad Ismail Qasemi, also known as Mohammad Salem, had been convicted of "spreading corruption on earth", a capital offense under the Islamic law. According to Mizan, the court had found them guilty of forming "a corruption network, disrupting the country's economic, foreign currency and monetary system by carrying out illegal transactions and major smug-

gling of foreign currencies and coins." They had been sentenced to death by a special court set up in August to confront profiteering and corruption in the wake of new US sanctions on Iran. The ruling had been upheld by the Supreme Court. Eleven more defendants in the case have received jail terms of up to 10 years, Judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Mohseni Ejei said on Saturday. The special courts were set up on the request of the Judiciary chief from Leader of the Islamic Revolution Ayatollah Seyyed Ali Khamenei who has called for "swift and just" legal action to confront an "economic war" by foreign enemies. (Trend)

Roghun Hydropower Plant Ready to Generate Electricity

DUSHANBE - A group of journalists arrived in the Roghun hydropower plant site on November 14 in order to see firsthand how the first facility of the Roghun power plant is being prepared for introducing into operation, news.tj reports. An official launch of the first unit of the Roghun HPP into operation is set for November 16 and Tajik President Emomali Rahmon will unveil the first facility of the plant. Officials from foreign countries, including nations participating in the CASA 1000 Project, and senior representa-

tives of diplomatic missions and international organizations active in Tajikistan have been invited to attend the event. Saidsho Okhounov, Leading Engineer at the Open Joint-Stock Company (OJSC) NBO Roghun, says the current volume of water in the reservoir powering the Roghun HPP is 214 million cubic meters that is enough for introducing the first unit of the plant into operation. "Since 2008, some 12 billion somoni have been spent for construction of the Roghun HPP," Okhounov said. (Trend)

Pakistan Standing by Palestinians, Not Developing Ties with Zionist Regime

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan Permanent Ambassador to UN Maleeha Lodhi's statement that Pakistan will always stand by with Palestinians has put an end to rumors that the country is trying to develop some kind of working relationship with the Zionist Regime. Maleeha Lodhi said Pakistan has enhanced financial support to Palestinian refugees. She said that the assistance has been increased under government's orders and as per people's wishes. She further said Pakistan will continue to stand by with its Palestinian brothers and sisters. She said that peaceful Palestinian demonstrators are being killed in Gaza as the expansion of illegal Zionist settlements was going on unchecked. Meanwhile, Pakistan foreign ministry strongly dismissed a media report

terming it fake regarding Pakistan's ties with the Zionist Regime. The ministry through a statement said that news item circulating in local media attributed to the Foreign Minister regarding Pakistan and Zionist Regime's relations is false. Earlier the Pakistan government had strongly rejected reports that a Zionist Regime's aircraft carrying some officials secretly landed in Islamabad and flew away after several hours at the airport here. The editor of a Zionist newspaper Haaretz's English edition, Avi Scharf, sparked a controversy by claiming in a tweet that a private Zionist Regime's business jet travelled to Islamabad from Tel Aviv and remained on ground in Pakistani capital for nearly 10 hours. (IRNA)