

North Korea Says It Has Tested 'Ultramodern Tactical Weapon'

SEOUL, South Korea - North Korean leader Kim Jong Un observed the successful test of an unspecified "newly developed ultramodern tactical weapon," state media reported Friday, in an apparent bid to apply pressures on the United States and South Korea amid a stalemated nuclear diplomacy.

It didn't appear to be a nuclear device or a long-range missile targeting the mainland U.S., a string of which last year had many fearing war before the North turned to engagement and diplomacy early this year. Still, any mention of weapons testing could influence the direction of currently stalled diplomacy between Washington and Pyongyang that's meant to rid the North of its nuclear



weapons. The North hasn't publicly tested any weapons since November of last year, but in recent days Pyongyang reportedly expressed anger at U.S.-led international sanctions and ongoing small-scale military

drills between South Korea and the United States. Earlier this month, North Korea's Foreign Ministry warned it could bring back its policy of bolstering its nuclear arsenal if it doesn't receive sanctions relief. "It's

a North Korea-style coercive diplomacy.

North Korea is saying 'if you don't listen to us, you will face political burdens,' said analyst Shin Beomchul of Seoul's Asan Institute for Policy Studies. Shin said the weapon North Korea tested could be a missile, artillery, an anti-air gun, a drone or other high-tech conventional weapons systems.

Yang Wook, a Seoul-based military expert, said a "tactical weapon" in North Korea refers to "a weapon aimed at striking South Korea including U.S. military bases" in the South so that the North may have tested a short-range missile or a multiple rocket launch system. (Fox News)

Japan PM Tells Putin No U.S. Bases on Disputed Isles If Handed Over: Asahi

TOKYO - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, eager to resolve a row that has haunted ties with Moscow since World War Two, has told Russian President Vladimir Putin the United States would not put troops on disputed islands if they are handed over to Japan, a newspaper reported on Friday. Seeking to cement his diplomatic legacy and improve ties with Russia to counter a rising China, Abe has pledged to settle the dispute over four isles

in the Western Pacific that were occupied by Soviet troops toward the end of the war. They are known as the Northern Territories in Japan and the Southern Kuriles in Russia. Any agreement involving transfer of sovereignty to Japan would have to address whether the U.S.-Japan security treaty, the core of Japan's diplomacy, would apply, including whether Washington would have the right to put military bases on the islands. (Reuters)

SINGAPORE - U.S. President Donald Trump didn't make it to this week's summit of Asian nations in Singapore, but his influence was still keenly felt among the leaders who gathered in the city.

One prime minister warned that the trade war between Washington and Beijing could trigger a "domino effect" of protectionist steps by other countries. Another fretted that the international order could splinter into rival blocs. "The most important

Trump's Summit No-Show Draws Asian Nations Closer Together

and talked-about ... leader, President Trump, is the only one that did not turn up," said Malcolm Cook, a senior fellow at the ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore. And yet, in Trump's absence, countries from South to East Asia pressed on with forging multilateral ties on trade and investment among themselves, including with China. China's representative at the meetings, Premier Li Keqiang, egged them on. "Now the world is facing rising protectionism. It is



all the more important for us to come together and respond to the complex world situation to uphold multilateralism and free trade," Li said on Thursday.

The U.S. president's lack

of engagement with Asian nations came just days after a trip to France for World War One commemorations at which he appeared isolated from NATO allies. (Reuters)

French Polynesian President Acknowledges Nuclear Test Lies



PARIS - French Polynesian President Edouard Fritch has acknowledged that the leaders of the French collectivity of islands in

the South Pacific lied to the population for three decades over the dangers of nuclear testing. From 1960 to 1996, France

carried out 193 nuclear tests in French Polynesia. Images of a mushroom cloud over the Mururoa atoll provoked international protests.

"I'm not surprised that I've been called a liar for 30 years. We lied to this population that the tests were clean. We lied," Fritch told officials in the local assembly Thursday in footage broadcast by Tahiti Nui Television.

France's overseas ministry declined to comment when contacted by the AP Friday. Bowing to decades of

pressure, in 2010 the French government offered millions of euros in compensation for the government's 201 nuclear tests in the South Pacific and Algeria. But the process is painstaking and many have still not received compensation. Bruno Barrillot, a whistleblower investigating the impact of the Polynesian nuclear testing who died last year, raised awareness on the disproportionate rate of thyroid cancer and leukemia to hit Polynesians' 280,000 residents. (Fox News)

UK PM May Battles to Sell Brexit Deal Amid Rumors of No-Confidence Vote

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May was fighting for survival on Friday after a draft divorce deal with the European Union provoked the resignations of senior ministers and calls for a vote of no confidence in her leadership. More than two years after the United Kingdom voted to leave the EU, it is still unclear how, on what terms or even if it will leave the EU as planned on March 29, 2019. May, who won the top job in the turmoil that followed the 2016 referendum, has sought to nego-

tiate a Brexit deal ensuring the United Kingdom leaves in the smoothest way possible.

But Brexit minister Dominic Raab resigned on Thursday over her deal, sending the pound tumbling. Mutinous lawmakers in her own party openly sought to challenge her leadership and bluntly told her that the Brexit deal would not pass parliament. May, who has vowed to stay on as prime minister, was asked by a caller on LBC radio to "respectfully stand down". (Reuters)

Asia Shares Mixed on Uncertainty Over Trade Tensions

SINGAPORE - Shares were mixed in early trading in Asia on Friday on revived concerns over the prospects for a breakthrough in trade tensions between the U.S. and China.

KEEPING SCORE: Japan's Nikkei 225 index lost 0.4 percent to 21,717.57 and the Hang Seng in Hong Kong gave up 0.5 percent to 25,967.01. South Korea's Kospi rose 0.2 percent to 2,091.63 while Australia's S&P ASX 200 was flat at 5,737.50. The Shanghai Composite index edged 0.1 percent lower to 2,664.81. Shares in Southeast Asia were mostly higher.

WALL STREET REBOUND: Gains for technology companies and banks helped reverse an early slide for U.S. stocks Thursday, breaking a five-day losing streak for the market. (AP)

Indian Airport Protesters Block Woman Activist's Plan to Enter Hill Temple

KOCHI/NEW DELHI - Thousands of protesters blocked all the exits at a southern Indian airport on Friday to stop a women's rights activist from heading to a Hindu temple to defy a centuries-old ban on the entry of women of menstruating age.

Widespread protests broke out in the tourist resort state of Kerala after the Supreme Court in September ordered authorities to lift a ban on women or girls aged between 10 and 50 from entering the temple, which draws millions of worshippers a year.

The activist, Trupti Desai, who arrived with a group of women at Kerala's biggest and busiest airport in the city of Kochi, at 4.30 a.m. (2230 GMT), has been held up for hours by the demonstrators. (Reuters)

Pelt and Road: Tribal Welcome for Xi in PNG

PORT MORESBY - Sporting parrot feathers, possum pelts and seashell necklaces, dozens of people from various tribes in Papua New Guinea serenaded China's president on Friday as he opened a new Chinese-funded road in the poor Pacific Island nation.

Xi Jinping unveiled a plaque marking the new "Independence Boulevard" outside Papua New Guinea's parliament, a symbolic show of the Asian giant's growing influence in the region.

On the first state visit by a Chinese leader, Papua New Guinea rolled out the red carpet welcome,



with a military guard of honour, beats from wooden drums and a royal gun salute.

"I feel so excited about him coming and he will see new things (here). We feel proud that our country is going to develop this year," said Veldar Keiron, a 20-year-old

student who was among those in parliament to welcome Xi.

Papua New Guinea has already signed up to Beijing's trillion-dollar "Belt and Road Initiative" that seeks to enhance sea and land trade routes between the Middle Kingdom and Eurasia. (AFP)

Turkey 'Detains' Academics Linked to Jailed Activist

ISTANBUL - Turkish police on Friday detained over a dozen people including academics from two Istanbul universities linked with an association led by imprisoned human rights activist Osman Kavala, a state-run news agency reported.

Police issued arrest warrants for 20 people as part of an investigation into Anadolu Kultur (Anatolian Culture) whose chairman Kavala has been

jailed for more than a year but not formally charged, Anadolu news agency said.

Twelve had been rounded up so far in simultaneous raids at several addresses early Friday, it added.

Professor Betul Tanbay of the prestigious Bogazici University and Professor Turgut Tarhanli, deputy dean of the private Bilgi University, were among the detainees. (AFP)

Experts Urge U.S., China to Work Together for Better World

NEW YORK - The United States and China must and will find ways to work together to make the world safer, more sustainable and prosperous, renowned U.S. experts said here on Thursday.

To make the world better and for the benefits of both peoples, the United States and China must "work together to confront the real threats of climate change, terrorism, pandemics and economic crisis," said Stephen A. Orlins, president of the U.S. National Committee on U.S.-China Relations (NCUSCR), at its annual gala dinner in New York City.

Noting that ties between the world's two largest economies are now experiencing a difficult time, Orlins believed that in the end it is the people of the United States and China who will determine the future of the U.S.-China relationship.

Also at the gala dinner, Dr. Henry Kissinger, the former U.S. secretary of state, told the audience: "I think we are now at a moment of fundamental importance in our relationship."

"The fundamental issue is whether two great countries can live together in a new world for international politics ... in which we find that we emphasize the importance of better relations and the importance of co-existence," said the 95-year-old diplomat and renowned strategist, who just returned from a trip to Beijing. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

Pakistani Gov't Official Goes Missing from Islamabad

ISLAMABAD - A Pakistani government official of the Capital Development Authority (CDA) went missing from the capital city of Islamabad, local media and officials said on Friday. Muhammad Ayaz, deputy director of CDA, went missing from the G6 sector of the federal capital Islamabad on Thursday, said CDA officials, adding that Ayaz left his office at 2:30 p.m. (local time) and has been missing since then. "CDA is inquiring into the whereabouts of the deputy director and all security institutions have been informed that

he is missing," the officials added. The disappearance of the government official came days after a senior Pakistani police officer went missing from Islamabad on Oct. 26 and his body was later found in Nangarhar province of Afghanistan on Tuesday. On Thursday, Afghan officials handed over the dead body of the police officer Tahir Khan Dawar to Pakistani authorities at the Torkham border, a key border crossing with Afghanistan, according to local media reports. (Xinhua)

Iran Blasts Using Human Rights Mechanisms as Tool

TEHRAN - Iran strongly condemns using human rights resolutions and mechanisms as a tool after a UN panel adopts one such resolution targeting the Islamic Republic. Iranian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Bahram Qassemi blamed "certain Western countries, the occupying and infanticidal Zionist regime [of Israel], and some reactionary regional regimes," for application of the human rights capacities in such a way, the Ministry reported on its website on Friday. He said the resolution had been adopted by some governments, whom themselves were "the biggest violators of human rights in their own country and other countries." The resolution, the official said, had been adopted while "ignoring the reali-

ties inside Iran and based on a selective, discriminatory, ill-intentioned, and politically-charged attitude." Such a trend would compromise the international community's trust in international mechanisms and their efficacy, he added. In contrast with such measures, the country lends credit to the UN Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR), which would assess all countries without discrimination, Qassemi said. Tehran's constructive and active participation in the process reflected the Islamic Republic's seriousness in enhancing human rights and acting on its international commitments in the area, he concluded. (Press TV)

Enterprises with Foreign Capital in Uzbekistan Manufacture 40% of Industrial Products

TASHKENT - As indicated by the official statistics, almost 40 percent of industrial products in Uzbekistan for 10 months of 2018 has been produced by the enterprises with the participation of foreign capital, News of Uzbekistan reported. According to the information of the State Statistics Committee of Uzbekistan, products worth 68.2 trillion soums have been manufactured during that period produced by the enterprises with the participation of foreign investments with the growth rate of 130 percent as compared to relevant period of the last year.

While the share of products of joint ventures accounted for 31.7 percent of the total volume of production in the previous year, it has increased to 39.3 percent during January-October of the current year, said the report. The contribution of joint venture in industrial production growth of the country during January-October of the current year amounted to 7.6 percent having provided intensification of pace of reformation and liberalization of economy, as well as improvement of competitiveness of the products on the world market. (Trend)

Turkmenistan Eyes to Start Gas Supply to South Asia in 2020

ASHGABAT - The Turkmen gas, which is to be delivered via the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) pipeline, will reach Pakistan in two years, the Turkmenistan State Concern said in a message quoting CEO of the TAPI Pipeline Company Ltd. Consortium Muhammetmyrat Amanov. He was speaking at the Abu Dhabi International Petroleum Exhibition & Conference (ADIPEC) underway in the UAE. Amanov also noted that the total cost of the TAPI pipeline is about \$7 billion. "We plan to make a final investment decision in the first half of next year, and then to gradually complete construction in Afghanistan, Pakistan and India," he noted. The construction of the pipeline began in Decem-

ber 2015. As the leader of TAPI Pipeline Company Limited, Turkmenistan State Concern, which has a controlling stake, is the main financier and project manager. The consortium also includes the Afghanistan Gas Corporation, Inter State Gas Systems (Private) Limited and Indian GAIL. The total length of the pipeline, with a capacity of 33 billion cubic meters of gas per year will be 1,840 kilometers. The gas will be supplied from the Galkynysh field in Turkmenistan, the second largest in the world. This energy bridge will pass through the Afghan cities of Herat and Kandahar (816 kilometers), through the cities of Quetta and Multan across Pakistani territory (819 kilometers), and reach the settlement of Fazilka in India. (Trend)