

Trump-Putin Meeting 'Settled,' Preparations Ongoing – Kremlin

WASHINGTON - The Kremlin received no notice of US President Donald Trump calling off talks with Russian leader Vladimir Putin at the G20 event in Argentina, the Kremlin spokesperson confirmed after Trump saying he might back out.

Preparations for the talks "continue" and the meeting between Trump and Putin is "settled," Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday.

"We have no other information from our US colleagues," he stressed.

His remarks came after Trump told the Washington Post that he might call off the talks with Putin in response to the recent



maritime incident in the Kerch Strait, in which the Russia seized three Ukrainian naval vessels it said violated Russian sovereignty.

Putin's schedule also contains "contacts" with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, his spokesperson told the media. Earlier, the Kremlin said that the Russian leader and the Crown Prince will have an opportunity to talk on the sidelines of the summit.

Trump isn't planning to hold a meeting with bin Salman, the president's National Security Advisor John Bolton said earlier. He added, however, that he "wouldn't rule anything out."

The annual G20 summit will kick off in Buenos Aires, Argentina on Friday. (Russia Today)

Neighbor News

Pakistani PM Opens Corridor with India to Promote Religious Tourism

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan on Wednesday laid the foundation stone at the ground breaking ceremony of a corridor along the country's border with India in a move to facilitate Indian Sikh pilgrims across the border.

The Kartarpur Corridor links Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur in Pakistan's Punjab province, the final resting place of Sikh faith's founder Guru Nanak, and the international border with India.

Hundreds of Sikh pilgrims also attended the function and some participants welcomed the opening of the corridor which will enable them to visit the religious site without visa.

Khan was joined by Pakistan army chief Gen. Qamar Javed Bajwa, Islamabad-based diplomats and senior officials. Indian Minister of Food Processing Industries Harsimrat Kaur Badaal and Junior Minister for Urban Development Hardeep Singh Puri attended the opening ceremony.

Experts believe the opening of the corridor could decrease tensions between the two neighbors and have positive impact on bilateral relations.

India had postponed dialogue with Pakistan in April 2016 after an attack on an Indian airbase in January which New Delhi blamed on Pakistan-based militants. (Xinhua)

Buried Hill Energy, Turkmenistan Mull Joint Development of Caspian Hydrocarbons

ASHGABAT - Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov received CEO of Buried Hill Energy Peter Kallos, the Turkmenistan State News Agency reported.

The sides discussed the results of joint work and prospects for cooperation, including in the field of exploration and development of oil and gas fields

in the Turkmen sector of the Caspian Sea.

In this context, the parties noted significance of the Convention on the Legal Status of the Caspian Sea signed in August this year, which opened up new opportunities for enhancing mutually beneficial cooperation of coastal states with the world business community. (Trend)

EU's Climate Chief Calls for Net-Zero Emissions by 2050

BRUSSELS - The European Union's climate chief called for the bloc to take the lead and aim for net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 in its climate strategy published on Wednesday, ahead of key U.N. talks on curbing global warming.

As President Donald Trump pulls the United States out of the Paris climate accord, European Commission climate chief Miguel Arias Canete said the bloc had to lead by example at next week's climate

talks in Poland.

The EU executive published its strategy on Wednesday, setting out eight pathways to reducing emissions - two of which chart a course for Europe to becoming climate neutral by absorbing as much greenhouse gas as it emits.

"It's worth becoming the first major economy to fully decarbonise, to fully reach net zero emissions," Canete told Reuters on Tuesday. "It will require lots of effort, but it is doable." (Reuters)

China Keen to Promote Win-Win Cooperation in Blue Economy

NAIROBI - China will leverage on its successes in developing a vibrant blue economy to promote global cooperation in areas that advances the green agenda, food security, peace and stability, an official said late Tuesday during a side event at the blue economy summit underway in Nairobi. He Guangshun, director general of National Marine Data and Information Service (NM-DIS) in the Ministry of Natural Resources, said Beijing has prioritized

fruitful cooperation in the blue economy in line with the Belt and Road Initiative.

"China advocates building blue partnership. The Chinese government has put forward the initiative of 'building blue partnership' and has carried out a series of work to promote the building of blue partnership," He remarked during the side event titled marine economy and the path of blue growth in China. The Chinese embassy in Kenya and the UN Envi-



ronment jointly hosted the side event with NM-DIS to shed light on the Asian country's success in harnessing marine resources to hasten industrial growth, attain food security and mitigate climate change. (Xinhua)

Security Concerns Arise as Argentina Hosts G-20



BUENOS AIRES, Argentina - Argentine authorities say that Buenos Aires will be an armored city when world lead-

ers arrive for this week's G-20 summit. But security failures that marred a soccer championship and deeper unrest over

an economic austerity program are now raising concerns about the country's ability to ensure safety.

About 22,000 police and security agents will guard U.S. President Donald Trump and other leaders from the Group of 20 industrialized and emerging nations during the two-day meeting that starts Friday. At least another eight U.S. aircraft and up to 400 American military personnel and civilians are expected to provide security. "We're working on eve-

ry detail," said Argentine Security Minister Patricia Bullrich, at a press conference addressing G-20 concerns. "We don't have disagreements, and even less so in these types of operations where we work in teams."

Even with beefed up security, however, the Argentine government will inevitably be facing demonstrations that could potentially draw thousands of activists, some of whom might be coming from other parts of the world. (Fox News)

WWII Vet, Social Activist Harry Leslie Smith Dies at 95

LONDON - British World War II veteran and political activist Harry Leslie Smith died. He was 95. Smith had built a strong following with his calls for social justice and his warning that a greed-driven society was failing those in need.

His son John said on Twitter that Smith died Wednesday morning. He had been hospitalized in critical condition in Canada following a recent fall.

Smith's son said that when his father realized he could not fully recover from his fall, he quenched an overwhelming thirst with a beer even though he was unable to eat anything. Smith was an outspoken human rights activist with a Twitter following of more than 250,000. He had come to prominence in recent years with his advocacy of the National Health Service and the need to protect refugees. He was also a strong critic of Britain's austerity program. He had toured refugee camps to highlight their plight. (AP)

Poland Says US Ambassador's Letter Will Not Spoil Good Ties

WARSAW, Poland - The Polish government said Wednesday that a letter from the U.S. ambassador that took it to task over its treatment of a U.S.-owned television station and misspelled the prime minister's last name will not spoil "very good" bilateral ties.

The letter from Ambassador Georgette Mosbacher to Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki circulated in Polish media Tuesday, drawing angry comments from politicians and ordinary Poles who found its tone and the mistakes disrespectful. But some praised Mosbacher for defending media freedom.

Mosbacher wrote to express "deep concern" over the government's criticism of TVN, a Polish broadcaster owned by the U.S. company Discovery. (AP)

Doomed Lion Air Jet Was 'Not Airworthy' on Penultimate Flight

JAKARTA - A Lion Air jet that crashed into the sea off Indonesia last month was not in an airworthy condition on its second-to-last flight, when pilots experienced similar problems to those on its doomed last journey, investigators said on Wednesday.

Contact with the Boeing 737 MAX jet was lost 13 minutes after it took off on Oct. 29 from the capital, Jakarta, heading north to the tin-mining town of Pangkal Pinang. In a preliminary report, Indonesia's transport safety committee (KNKT) focused on the airline's maintenance practices and pilot training and a Boeing anti-stall system but did not give a cause for the crash that killed all 189 people on board. (Reuters)

Two Koreas Study Possible Rail Link as Ties Get Back on Track

SEOUL - South and North Korea will launch a field study on Friday to relink railways cut since the 1950-53 Korean conflict, Seoul's Unification Ministry said on Wednesday, the latest development in improving ties between two sides technically still at war. The announcement came after the U.N. Security Council granted sanctions exemptions last week following consultations between South Korea and the United States. The survey would be a first step in an agreement to reconnect rail and road links reached by South Korean President Moon



Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un at their first summit in April. About 30 officials from each side are expected to take part in the 18-day study, which will include a 2,600-km (1,615-mile) train trip. They will in-

spect two routes in North Korea, between Kaesong and Sinuiju in the west and Mount Kumgang and the Tumen River in the east, which would ultimately be linked to the South, the ministry said. (Reuters)

Turkey's Erdogan Urges Islamic World to Use National Currencies in Trade

ISTANBUL - Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday called on the Islamic world to use national currencies in trade so as to be free from "imperialist shackles."

"There is no other way out other than using national currencies in trade among the Islamic countries," Erdogan said at a meeting of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in Istanbul. "Otherwise we will continue to be crushed under the dollar exchange rate," he added.

The Turkish leader also urged the Is-

lamic countries to complete the necessary procedures to make preferential trade system "a reality" to increase their internal trade to 25 percent.

"The more we invest in each other as member countries, the stronger we will be," Erdogan told the 34th ministerial session of the OIC's Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation.

He advised OIC member states to modernize and simplify their custom systems to better cope with the trade wars across the globe. (Xinhua)

Berlin and Paris Rebuff Fresh Calls for Tougher Sanctions on Russia - Report

BERLIN/PARIS - German and French diplomats are against hitting Moscow with a new round of sanctions following a maritime clash with Ukraine, and instead want to improve trust between the nations, a media report suggests.

High-ranking diplomats from France and Germany favor tackling the renewed Russian-Ukrainian tensions with more "trust-building measures," German paper Die Welt reported on Wednesday.

The paper, citing its own sources, wrote that additional sanctions weren't included in the diplomats' proposal. Instead, they reportedly offered to "continue diplomatic efforts" to solve the crisis and to consider the role of the OSCE in resolving the conflict.

According to Die Welt, this approach was voiced by Berlin and Paris on Tuesday during a "secret meeting" of the EU's Political and Security Committee in Brussels.

Earlier, German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas asked Russia and Ukraine to seek de-escalation and exhibit "maximum restraint" in order to avert a larger crisis. On Sunday, the Russian Coast Guard seized three Ukrainian naval vessels as they tried to pass through the Kerch Strait. Three Ukrainian sailors were wounded when a Russian warship opened fire at a Ukrainian gunboat after it failed to stop. (Russia Today)

Turkmenistan Conducts Environmental Monitoring of Artificial Island in Caspian Sea

ASHGABAT - During construction of an international seaport in the Turkmen city of Turkmenbashi, the extracted soil was used to create an artificial island in the Turkmenbashi Bay of the Caspian Sea, the Neutral Turkmenistan newspaper reported.

This island of 170 hectares has become a nesting and wintering habitat for water birds. To assess the state of island nature, a group of scientists from the Academy of Sciences and the State Committee for Environmental Protection and Land Resources of Turkmenistan visited the island.

Experts from the Insti-

tute of Chemistry took samples of coastal water as well as soil for research. The condition of the flora was estimated by scientists of the Institute of Biology and Medicinal Plants. A quantitative analysis of vegetation species was carried out, and its condition was studied. The island has the shape of a crescent, with its concave side facing the city embankment.

In the future, when the island will organically fit into the Turkmenbashi Bay as part of the natural environment, it is planned to use it as an ecotourism destination. (Trend)