

China Backs Financial Times Hong Kong Editor's Visa Denial

HONG KONG — China has defended its decision to refuse to renew the work visa of a Financial Times editor in Hong Kong, in a case that has drawn concern over the shrinking space for free speech in the Chinese territory. The central government "firmly supports" the local government's rejection of Asia editor Victor Mallet's visa renewal application, according to a statement from the foreign ministry's office in Hong Kong issued late Saturday.

"No foreign country has any right to interfere," the office said, in a response to expressions of concern from the British foreign ministry and the U.S. Consulate in the territory.

Mallet is vice president of Hong Kong's Foreign Correspondents' Club, which drew criticism from



the authorities for hosting a talk by the leader of a now-banned pro-Hong Kong independence party.

Hong Kong was promised semi-autonomy for 50 years as part of its 1997 handover from Brit-

ish rule, allowing it to retain its limited democracy and rights to assembly and free speech that are denied on the Chinese mainland. Rights groups have called the visa rejection the latest sign of Beijing's expanding restric-

tions on the territory, including legal cases brought against pro-democracy legislators and organizers of large-scale anti-government protests in 2014. In a statement dated Friday, Britain's Foreign and Commonwealth Office asked for "an urgent explanation" as to why Mallet's visa renewal application was rejected.

"Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and its press freedoms are central to its way of life, and must be fully respected," the statement said. The U.S. Consulate said the rejection was "deeply troubling," especially since it reflected problems faced by international journalists in mainland China whose visas can be held up or refused because of political considerations. (AP)

Neighbor News

PM Arrived Lahore on Day Long Visit

LAHORE - Prime Minister Imran Khan on Sunday arrived Lahore on a day long visit where he is scheduled to meet Punjab Governor and the Chief Minister.

According to a press release of the PM Office media wing, the prime minister would also meet the members of the

provincial cabinet.

During his meetings, issues pertaining to PTI's first 100 days plan and the overall affairs of the province would be discussed.

Later, the prime minister would hold an interaction with the media representatives. (Monitoring Desk)

Iran Parliament Passes Counter-Terror Finance Bill

TEHRAN - Iran's parliament on Sunday approved a bill to counter terrorist financing that was strongly opposed by conservatives but seen as vital to salvaging the nuclear deal with European and Asian partners.

The bill aims to bring Iran's laws in line with international standards and allow it to join the UN Terrorism Financing Convention.

It is one of four bills put forward by the government in recent months in a bid to meet demands by the international Financial Action Task Force (FATF), which has given Iran until later this month to tighten its laws against money laundering and terror financing.

"Neither I nor the president can guarantee that all problems will go away if we join (the UN convention)," said Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif during Sunday's debate. "But I guarantee that not

joining will provide the US with more excuses to increase our problems," he added.

The issue has become particularly pressing since the United States walked out of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran earlier this year and began reimposing sanctions.

The other parties to the deal -- Britain, France, Germany, China and Russia -- have sought to salvage the agreement and maintain trade with Iran, but have demanded that it accede to the FATF.

Joining the UN convention has been controversial because hardliners say it will limit Iran's ability to support armed groups in the region such as its Lebanese ally, Hezbollah.

Iran is alone with North Korea on the blacklist of the FATF, although the Paris-based organization has suspended counter-measures since June 2017 while Iran works on reforms. (AFP)

CM Assures to Strengthen LG System in KP

PESHAWAR - Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Mehmood Khan Sunday said that the local government system would be further strengthened and made effective in order to ensure provision of quick and inexpensive civic amenities to the people at their doorstep.

All the development works would be carried out under the new local government system across the province, he said this while talking to a representative delegation of Bannu district led by Malik Shah Mohammad here.

The CM made it clear that the elected representatives would con-

centrate on legislation and constitutional responsibilities in the provincial legislators. He assured that he would all possible measures to address the problems of the people in the respective communities.

Making strong the local bodies system is the vision of the Prime Minister Imran Khan which will ensure rapid development in the province and will provide an effective system for resolution of problems at local level. Earlier, the delegation apprised the CM about the problems being faced by them in the execution of development projects in their areas. (Monitoring Desk)

Turkmenistan to Send Fertilizer to India via Iran

ASHGABAT - A bilateral agreement has been signed to use Amirabad Port in the northern Mazandaran province as a corridor for transiting 30,000 tons of fertilizer from Turkmenistan to India, the director of Amirabad Special Economic Zone said.

Siyavash Rezvani added around 10% of the cargo, which was dispatched from Turkmenistan's Turkmenbashi Seaport, has so far entered Amirabad port.

The official noted that the freight will first be transported via railroad to Shahid Rajaei Port, Iran's biggest container port at the mouth of the Strait of Hormuz in southern Hormozgan province. "Then, it will be shipped to India," he added.

Iran has been trying to boost its role as a transit corridor between the Asian countries and the Europe via developing major seaports and railroad connected to international lines. (Agencies)

President Kovind Arrives in Tajikistan

DUSHANBE - President Ram Nath Kovind arrived in Tajikistan today with the first lady of India. He is on a three-day visit to the country. He was received by Tajikistan Deputy Prime Minister

Zokirzoda Mahmudtoir at the Dushanbe International Airport. President will hold talks with his Tajikistan counterpart and top leaders of the countries during his visit. (Agencies)

Kavanaugh Sworn in at US Supreme Court after Divisive Fight

WASHINGTON - Conservative US judge Brett Kavanaugh was confirmed to the Supreme Court Saturday by a razor-thin margin in the Senate, ending months of partisan rancor over his nomination and offering Donald Trump one of the biggest victories of his presidency.

Kavanaugh was sworn in shortly after the Senate voted 50-48 in his favor -- a move that cemented the high court's shift to the right under the Republican leader, who has cho-

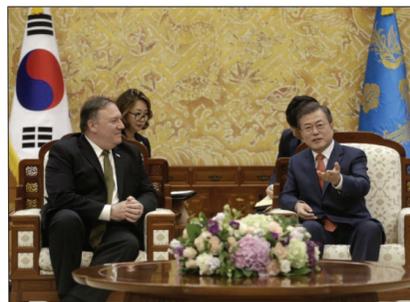
sen two of the nine sitting justices. Protesters rallied in Washington and other US cities against the ascent of the 53-year-old judge, who has faced multiple allegations of sexual misconduct and been criticized for his angry partisan rhetoric. The prolonged nomination battle has roiled American politics, disrupting the status quo on Capitol Hill and firing up both Republicans and opposition Democrats a month before crucial midterm elections. (AFP)

Pompeo Cites Progress Made with Kim Jong Un on N. Korea Trip

SEOUL, South Korea — U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said that he and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un made unspecified progress Sunday toward an agreement for the North to give up its nuclear weapons. But there was no immediate indication whether Pompeo had managed to arrange a much-anticipated second summit between Kim and President Donald Trump.

Arriving in Seoul after several hours in Pyongyang on his fourth visit to North Korea, Pompeo

tweeted that he had a "good trip" and that he and Kim "continue to make progress on agreements made at Singapore summit." Trump and Kim held a historic summit there in June that resulted in a vague agreement for the North to denuclearize. The top U.S. diplomat offered no details, and upon landing in South Korea, he briefed White House national security adviser John Bolton and Trump chief of staff John Kelly on his trip, officials said.



Pompeo, on the third stop of a four-leg Asian tour that began in Japan and was to end in China on Monday, then met South Korea's president,

Moon Jae-in. Moon, who has met twice with Kim, asked Pompeo to make public as much information as he could about the trip. (AP)

Jamal Khashoggi: Editorialist and Critic of 'Extremist' Saudi



DUBAI - Jamal Khashoggi, the prominent Saudi journalist missing since he entered his country's consulate in Istanbul on October 2, has been an

outspoken critic of the ultra-conservative kingdom's government. Turkish police believe that the Washington Post contributor, who

went into self-imposed exile in the United States in 2017 after falling out with Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, was murdered inside the consulate, according to an unnamed Turkish government official, a claim strongly denied by Riyadh.

Prince Mohammed has invited police to inspect the consulate, stressing his country had "nothing to hide".

Never one to mince his words, Khashoggi described a new Saudi era of "fear, intimidation, ar-

rests and public shaming" in an article published in the Post last year. He had previously served as an advisor to the Saudi government, but Khashoggi, who turns 60 on October 13, has been a vociferous critic of Prince Mohammed's policies in both the Arab and Western press. In a March 6 editorial in Britain's The Guardian newspaper co-authored with Robert Lacey, Khashoggi wrote: "For his domestic reform programme, the crown prince deserves praise. (AFP)

Turkey-Backed Syrian Forces Begin Implementing Idlib Truce

BEIRUT — A Turkey-backed umbrella group for Syrian rebels says it has begun implementing a deal reached between Russia and Turkey to demilitarize the front lines between the opposition and Syrian government forces in the northern Idlib province.

Najji al-Mustafa, spokesman for the 15-member National Front for Liberation, says Sunday the groups are unanimous in implementing the deal reached last month and expect

to demilitarize 15-20 kilometers (9-12 miles) along the front lines by Oct. 15.

He says Turkish troops have reinforced the areas to monitor violations. Al-Mustafa says opposition forces began pulling their heavy weaponry back a day earlier and will keep their forward bases and light and medium weapons in place. The largest armed group in Idlib, an al-Qaida affiliate, has not said whether it will comply with the deal. (AP)

Netanyahu to Meet With Putin after Downing of Russian Plane

JERUSALEM — Israel's prime minister says he will meet Russia's president for the first time since the downing of a Russian warplane by Syrian forces reacting to an Israeli air raid last month. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been trying to ease tensions with Russia since the incident. Russia blamed Israel for the shootdown and responded by supplying Syria with sophisticated S-300 air defense systems. Speaking to his Cabinet Sunday, Netanyahu said he had spoken to Russian President Vladimir Putin and would soon travel to Moscow for face-to-face talks. (AP)

India Successfully Conducts Night Trial of Nuclear Capable Prithvi-II Missile

NEW DELHI - India successfully conducted a night trial of its indigenously developed surface-to-surface nuclear capable Prithvi-II missile from a test range in its eastern state of Odisha, local media said Sunday.

The trial of missile was conducted Saturday night by the strategic force command of the Indian army as part of a user trial.

"The missile having a strike range of 350 km blasted off from the launching complex-III of Integrated Test Range (ITR) at Chandipur of Odisha coast at 8:30 p.m. (local time)," reports quoted defense officials as saying. (Xinhua)

UK PM May Seeks Support as Others Draw Brexit Battle Lines

LONDON - Prime Minister Theresa May appealed to wavering British voters on Sunday ahead of a defining few months in which she hopes to secure a Brexit deal and face down opponents who say her EU exit plan is too hard, too soft, or just plain wrong.

May, tasked with delivering Britain's exit from the European Union after a 2016 referendum which continues to divide the country, must find a way through deadlocked talks in Brussels and then convince a skeptical parliament to back the outcome.

On Sunday she launched an unusual plea for the



backing of center-ground voters who had previously backed the Labour Party but felt alienated by a shift to the left under current Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

"I want voters who may previously have thought

of themselves as Labour supporters to look at my government afresh. They will find a decent, moderate and patriotic program that is worthy of their support," May wrote in an article for the Observer newspaper. (Reuters)

Brazil Votes amid Anger at the Ruling Class

SAO PAULO — Brazilians are choosing their leaders Sunday in an election marked by intense anger at the ruling class following years of political and economic turmoil, including what may be the largest corruption scandal in Latin American history. Many had thought that "throw-the-bums-out" rage would buoy the chances of an outsider and end the hegemony of the center-left Workers' Party and the center-right Brazilian Social Democracy Party, which have for years battled it out

for the presidency.

Like much in this election, it hasn't turned out as predicted. The man who has benefited most from the anger is a 27-year veteran of Congress — Jair Bolsonaro — whose outsider status is based largely on hard-right positions that have alienated as many as they have attracted — nostalgia for a military dictatorship, insults to women and gay people and calls to fight crime by loosening controls on already deadly police forces. (AP)