

## China's President Inaugurates Hong Kong-Mainland Mega Bridge

ZHUHAI (China) - China's President Xi Jinping officially opened the world's longest sea bridge connecting Hong Kong, Macau and mainland China Tuesday, at a time when Beijing is tightening its grip on its semi-autonomous territories.

The 55-kilometre (34-mile) crossing, which includes a snaking road bridge and underwater tunnel, links Hong Kong with the southern mainland city of Zhuhai and the gambling enclave of Macau, across the waters of the Pearl River Estuary.

Xi presided over an inauguration ceremony attended by Hong Kong's and Macau's city leaders at a new port terminal in Zhuhai. "I declare the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau bridge officially open," Xi said in a one-line address, as digital fireworks ex-



ploded on a screen behind him at the indoor ceremony, before leaving the stage immedi-

ately. Supporters of the multi-billion-dollar bridge

promote it as an engineering marvel that will boost business and cut travel time, but critics say it is one more way to integrate Hong Kong into China as fears grow that the city's cherished freedoms are being eroded.

China's Vice Premier Han Zheng characterised the bridge as part of the development of the Greater Bay Area - a Beijing-driven project to create an economic hub linking nine southern mainland cities to Hong Kong and Macau.

At the ceremony he described the strategy as "deployed and driven by Xi Jinping personally". Hong Kong leader Carrie Lam said the bridge would help transform Hong Kong from a "connector to a more active participant". (AFP)

### Vietnam Parliament Elects Communist Party Chief as President

HANOI, Vietnam - Vietnam's rubber stamp National Assembly elected Communist Party General Secretary Nguyen Phu Trong as the country's president on Tuesday, consolidating his influence as the most powerful man in the Southeast Asian nation.

The 74-year-old Trong is the first Vietnamese leader to hold the two positions since founding President Ho Chi Minh in the 1960s. He succeeds President Tran Dai Quang, who died last month after

battling a viral illness for more than a year.

Raising one hand and placing the other on the constitution, Trong vowed during the swearing-in ceremony to be "absolutely loyal to the nation, people and the constitution."

He acknowledged in his acceptance speech that despite impressive achievements in recent years, Vietnam faces many challenges. "Many heavy tasks and duties are waiting ahead of us," he said. (AP)

### Saudi Sees Deals worth \$50 Billion at Investment Conference despite Boycotts

RIYADH - Saudi Arabia was set to sign deals worth \$50 billion on Tuesday at the opening of an investment conference despite being overshadowed by the killing of journalist Jamal Khashoggi which prompted a boycott by Western politicians, top world bankers and company executives. Energy Minister Khalid al-Falih told a panel that the world's largest oil exporter was passing through a "crisis of a sort" but would power ahead with economic diversification plans.

"Nobody in the kingdom can justify it (Khashoggi's killing) or explain it," he said.

Speaking at the opening session, Saudi businesswoman Lubna Olayan described the killing of the dissident Saudi journalist which has sparked a global outcry and strained Riyadh's ties with the West as "alien to our culture".

"It is natural that our thoughts tend to focus on recent events surrounding the death of Jamal Khashoggi ... may he rest in peace," she said. Hundreds of bankers



and company executives joined officials at a palatial Riyadh hotel for the Future Investment Initiative. But while last year's inaugural conference drew the global business elite, this year's event has been marred by the pullout of more than two dozen high-level speakers. (Reuters)

### Erdogan Claims Consulate Cameras Removed before Khashoggi Killing



ISTANBUL - A team of Saudi Arabian agents began arriving in Turkey the day before journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed, President Tayyip Erdogan said on Tues-

day. He also said that cameras at the consulate had been removed the day before the team's arrival. Erdogan, who also said the issue of diplomatic

immunity would also be discussed in regards to the case, was speaking at a meeting of his AK Party in parliament. He had previously promised to detail Turkey's investigation of the case.

Erdogan said a Saudi team of 15 entered the consulate the day of the killing, and that three men from the team went on an exploration trip to Belgrad forest in Istanbul and Yalova, a 90-kilometre drive south of Istanbul. On Monday, Saudi Arabian officials said they do not know details

of how dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed in their consulate in Istanbul or where his body was.

Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said on Sunday Khashoggi was approached by "Saudi security team" when he entered the consulate and their account of what happened after that differed from that of Turkish officials, which prompted the Saudis to investigate. "He was killed in the consulate. We don't know in terms of details how. (Tolo News)

### Dangerous Cat 4 Hurricane Willa Closing in on Mexico Coast

MAZATLAN, Mexico - Authorities rushed to evacuate low-lying areas and set up shelters as an "extremely dangerous" Hurricane Willa with winds of 130 mph (215 kph) headed toward a Tuesday afternoon landfall along a stretch of Mexico's Pacific coast dotted with high-rise resorts, surfing beaches and fishing villages.

Farther south, meanwhile, Mexican officials reported late Monday that there had been 12 deaths related to heavy rains from

Tropical Storm Vicente. Willa briefly reached Category 5 strength, then weakened a bit to Category 4. But the U.S. National Hurricane Center warned that it still was likely to bring "life-threatening storm surge, wind and rainfall" to parts of west-central and southwestern Mexico. Workers taped up windows in hotels and officials ordered schools closed in a low-lying region where towns sit amid farmland tucked between the sea and lagoons. (AP)

### Turkey Says It Will Not Tolerate Shift in Greek Maritime Border

ISTANBUL - Turkey warned Greece on Tuesday it would not tolerate a shift in the Greek maritime border, a few days after Athens said it planned to extend its territorial waters to 12 miles to the west of the country.

Territorial waters are a sensitive issue between the two neighbors, who are separated by the Aegean Sea. Turkey and Greece have been at odds over their respective continental shelves for decades.

Turkey has previously warned it could not preclude military action to defend its interests.

Former Greek Foreign Minister Nikos Kotzias, who resigned last week, said on Saturday that Athens planned to extend its territorial waters in the Ionian Sea, which flanks the west coast of the country. The planned measure would not affect the Aegean region, off Greece's eastern and southern coasts.

Turkey's foreign ministry, however, said that it had noted statements from Athens of plans for the gradual expansion of Greek territorial waters.

"It is not possible to tolerate steps where there is no bilateral agreement on the Aegean where the two countries have mutual shores," Foreign Ministry spokesman Hami Aksoy said in a statement.

The statement recalled a 1995 declaration of Turkey's parliament which had authorized action, not excluding military action, to safeguard Turkish interests.

"(Parliament's) declaration...dated 8 June 1995 has the necessary political warning in this context and it still maintains its validity today," the statement added. (Reuters)

### Trump: 'I'm Not Satisfied' with Accounts of Khashoggi Death

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump said Monday he's not satisfied with the explanations he's heard about the death of Saudi writer Jamal Khashoggi and is awaiting reports from U.S. personnel returning from the region.

Khashoggi, who lived in the United States and wrote critically about the Saudi royal family, died earlier this month at the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul. Saudi Arabia said he was killed in a fistfight, but Turkish officials said the 59-year-old Washington Post columnist was attacked and killed by a 15-man Saudi team.

Asked if he believed Saudi Arabia's explanation,



Trump said, "I am not satisfied with what I've heard." "We're going to get to the bottom of it. We have people over in Saudi Arabia now. We have top intelligence people in Turkey. They're coming back either tonight or tomorrow," Trump told reporters on the South Lawn of the White House

before leaving for a political rally in Texas. "We're going to know a lot over the next two days about the Saudi situation," said Trump. "It's a very sad thing." CIA Director Gina Haspel is among the intelligence officials who are in Turkey to review the case, according to a U.S. official. (AP)

### Three Arrested over Alleged Bid to Blackmail Founder of India's Paytm

MUMBAI - Indian police have detained three people, including the spokeswoman of the country's biggest digital payments company Paytm, over an alleged bid to blackmail its founder and extort \$2.7 million by threatening to leak stolen personal data.

The incident threatens to embarrass the company, synonymous with taking digital payments mainstream in India

after the government's controversial currency note ban of late 2016, as well as its billionaire founder.

Paytm, whose investors include China's Alibaba Group and Japan's SoftBank Group Corp, has declined to say how the stolen material would have allowed the blackmail of its founder, but added that only his personal data was taken. (Reuters)

### Brexit Backer Dyson to Make Electric Cars in Singapore

LONDON - British electric appliance pioneer Dyson said Tuesday it had picked Singapore as the site for its first electric car plant, sparking criticism of the company's Brexit-backing billionaire founder for not investing more in British manufacturing.

Dyson, founded and owned by serial entrepreneur James Dyson, said the factory was scheduled for completion in 2020 as part of a £2.5 billion (2.8 billion euro, \$3.3 billion) global investment drive in new technology.

The company, best known for its cordless vacuum cleaners, hand dryers and fans, is aiming to launch electric vehicles in 2021.

"The decision of where to make our car is complex, based on supply chains, access to markets and the availability of the expertise that will help us achieve our ambitions," Dyson chief executive Jim Rowan said in a statement.

"Our existing footprint and team in Singapore, combined with the nation's significant advanced manufacturing expertise, made it a frontrunner. Singapore also offers access to high-growth markets as well as an extensive supply chain and a highly-skilled workforce," Rowan said.

"Singapore has a comparatively high cost base, but also great technology expertise and focus. It is therefore the right place to make high quality technology loaded machines, and the right place to make our electric vehicle."

The company already has production facilities in Malaysia and Singapore. (AFP)

## Neighbor News

### Zarif Confident about Iran's Overcoming US, Allies Sanctions

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has expressed confidence that the Islamic Republic will manage to overcome sanctions imposed by the United States and its allies.

"Many countries have shown readiness to do business with Iran," Zarif said in an interview with Kyodo News published on Monday.

In response to a question about efforts by Britain, France and Germany to preserve a 2015 nuclear agreement after the United States' unilateral move to withdraw from the deal, the foreign minister said "serious measures" must be taken before a second round of US sanctions in November.

Zarif said the three European signatories to the deal, officially known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), have made commitments and proposals, but some technical details

still need to be worked out.

He criticized "US massive illegal interference" in the process, but emphasized, "For the time being, we are selling our oil (and) we are able to maintain our economy."

In addition to the three Europeans, other countries that attach great importance to the JCPOA, including Russia, China and Japan, "are ready to implement their part," Zarif added.

The JCPOA was signed between Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council -- the United States, Britain, France, Russia and China -- plus Germany in 2015. US President Donald Trump announced in May that Washington was pulling out of the nuclear agreement, which lifted nuclear-related sanctions against Tehran in exchange for restrictions on Tehran's nuclear program. (Press TV)

### US to Join "Battle" With Russia for Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - The US intends to raise the level of trade and investment cooperation with Uzbekistan, Uzbek media reported citing Chairman of the American-Uzbekistan Chamber of Commerce Carolyn Lamm as saying during an Uzbek-American business forum.

"Yesterday, we learned a very important fact that the Russians signed more agreements [than the US]. We decided that we could make more agreements to increase the level of investment and trade. Our memorandums with Uzbekistan are only the beginning, we are only moving forward," she said.

According to Lamm, American companies are ready to invest over

\$9 billion in projects in Uzbekistan.

At the same time, following the visit of Vladimir Putin, Uzbekistan and Russia signed 785 bilateral agreements and memorandums totaling \$27.1 billion.

In January-September 2018, Uzbekistan and the US almost doubled their bilateral trade to \$332 million. Currently, 210 enterprises with the participation of US companies are successfully operating in Uzbekistan. Since the beginning of 2018, 25 enterprises have been created with the participation of American capital.

The total US investments and loans attracted to the economy of Uzbekistan for the period of 1998-2017 exceeded \$1 billion. (Trend)

### Caspian Countries to Discuss Poaching Problem in Ashgabat

ASHGABAT - The discussion of the protocol on cooperation in combating the illegal harvesting of biological resources (poaching) in the Caspian Sea will be held in Ashgabat on Oct. 23-25, the Turkmen government said in a statement.

The event will be attended by authorized delegations from Azerbaijan, Russia, Iran, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan.

The previous meetings dedicated to this topic were held in the Turk-

men capital in 2016 and 2017. The parties spoke in favor of monitoring of the biological resources and the marine environment of the Caspian basin.

The Caspian Sea is the largest inland water reservoir in the world, which is not connected with the World Ocean, and has the climate-forming significance. It is unique in that it has a variety of relict flora and fauna, including the world's largest herd of sturgeons. (Trend)

### Pakistan PM Says He will resume Efforts to Improve Ties with India after 2019 Lok Sabha Elections

ISLAMABAD - Imran Khan said that he had tried to pursue peace with New Delhi after coming to power, but was rebuffed.

Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan said on Tuesday that he will resume efforts to improve relations with India after the 2019 General Elections. Elections to the Lok Sabha are scheduled in April-May 2019.

"What we need is stability, and stability

means peace with all neighbours," he said at the Future Investment Initiative Conference in Riyadh, the capital of Saudi Arabia, Dawn reported. "Our problems right now are with Afghanistan and India. When I won the elections and came to power, the first thing I tried to do was extend a hand of peace to India, but I am afraid we got no response from India. In fact, we got rebuffed." (Agencies)