

China Remains Largest Holder of U.S. Treasuries

WASHINGTON - After decreasing for six consecutive months, China's holdings of U.S. Treasuries slightly rebounded to 1.123 trillion U.S. dollars in December, according to data released Friday by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.

China, which is still the largest foreign holder of U.S. Treasuries, held 1.121 trillion dollars of U.S. Treasuries in November, down by 17.5 billion dollars from the previous month.

In the meantime, Japan's holdings of U.S. Treasuries increased to 1.042 trillion dollars in December, up from the 1.036-trillion-dollar level in November.

Combined, China and Japan hold more than a third of the total foreign holdings of U.S. Treasuries.



When aggregating net foreign acquisitions of long-term securities, short-term U.S. securities and banking flows, the result was a 33.1-billion-dollar net foreign outflow of U.S. securities in December, the data showed. (Xinhua)

Neighbor News

Iran Asks Pakistan to Move against Attackers, Warns Saudi

DUBAI - Iran urged neighbouring Pakistan on Saturday to crack down on militants who killed 27 of its Revolutionary Guards in an attack near the border or expect military action by Tehran "to punish the terrorists", state media reported.

Revolutionary Guards commander Major General Mohammad Ali Jafari also warned Iran's regional rival Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) that they could face "retaliatory measures" for supporting militant Sunni groups that have attacked Iran's security forces. Riyadh and the UAE deny this.

"If Pakistan does not carry out its responsibilities, Iran reserves the right to confront threats on its borders ... based on international law and will retaliate to punish the terrorists," Jafari was quoted as saying by state news agency IRNA. A suicide car bomber killed 27 members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards on Wednesday in a southeastern region where security forces are facing a rise in attacks by militants from the country's Sunni Muslim minority. The Sunni group Jaish al Adl (Army of Justice), which says it seeks greater rights and better living conditions for the ethnic minority Baluchis, claimed responsibility for the attack. (Reuters)

Saudi Crown Prince Postpones Pakistan Visit amid Widespread Protests

ISLAMABAD - Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's visit to Pakistan has been postponed amid widespread protests against him as well as heightened tensions in the region.

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said that a two-day visit by the crown prince to Islamabad that was scheduled for Saturday had been postponed.

The ministry said bin Salman will arrive in Islamabad on Sunday, but had no further explanation over the postponement.

Protesters took to the streets after Friday prayers in Rawalpindi, northern Pakistan, calling on the government not to allow the Saudi prince into the country. Leaders and activists of different parties and organizations as well as political and religious figures attended the rally.

Demonstrators say bin Salman has been behind the killing of thousands of people, including the people of Yemen.

During the visit, the crown prince will hold talks with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, Army Chief Qamar Javed Bajwa and President Arif Alvi, according to Pakistan's foreign office. (Agencies)

Lufthansa Supports Turkmenistan Airlines to Access Compliance to Air Safety Standards

ASHGABAT - Turkmenistan Airlines (Tukmenhowayollary), the flag carrier of its country, has commissioned Lufthansa Consulting to help them to raise their performance in terms of flight safety. In this project, the consultants will evaluate the current status within the airline towards EASA requirements.

Furthermore, they will develop an overall customized and effective action scheme in line with the analyzed EASA TCO requirements and findings.

Turkmenistan Airlines is the flag carrier of Turkmenistan, headquartered in the country's capital Ashgabat. It operates domestic and international passenger and cargo services mainly from its hub at Ashgabat International Airport. (Trend)

WTO Deputy Head to Visit Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - Deputy Director General of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Alan Wolff will visit Uzbekistan on February 19-20, Trend reports with reference to the Uzbek Foreign Ministry.

On February 13, Permanent Representative of Uzbekistan to the UN office and other international organizations in Geneva Ulugbek Lapasov met with Alan Wolff. The ministry stated that the parties discussed the current state and prospects for the development of cooperation between Uzbekistan and WTO.

Moreover, it was noted that Wolff will take part and speak at the international conference "Inter-

Mexican President Visits 'El Chapo's' Home Turf Seeking Reconciliation

BADIRAGUATO, Mexico - Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador visited the birthplace of the country's most infamous drug trafficker, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman, on Friday, calling for peace and reconciliation days after a U.S. jury convicted the kingpin.

Speaking to a crowd in Badiraguato, a mountainous municipality in the northwestern state of Sinaloa long associated with cartels, Lopez Obrador said people must not be "stigmatized."

"(The people of) Badiraguato are good people, they are hardworking people," he told a cheering crowd in a public square. "We must seek reconciliation, we must find peace."

Though warring gang factions have inflicted periodic bloodshed on the municipality, some villagers speak fondly of the largesse of their native son, who was born in the hamlet of La Tuna and whose Sinaloa cartel provided work for marijuana and opium poppy growers. (More on P4)...(14)

No Movement in Russian Missile Talks: NATO Chief

MUNICH (Germany) - Russia gave "no new signals" Friday about saving a landmark Cold War missile control agreement, the head of NATO said, as fears grow of a new arms race in Europe.

Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov brought no breakthrough and no indication that Moscow might be willing to back down over a missile system which NATO says breaches the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty.

The impending collapse of the 1987 agreement - seen as a cornerstone of global arms control - has raised doubts about the future of the fight against proliferation.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said more talks between Russia, the US and European nations were urgently needed to save the deal.

The US began pulling out of the INF treaty earlier this month in response to Moscow's deployment of the 9M729 missile, prompting Russia to announce its own withdrawal.

NATO has been urging Russia to save the treaty by abandoning the missile system, which officials say can hit capital cities throughout Europe as far as London. (More on P4)...(10)



The image shows a large, green, cylindrical missile on display in a museum or exhibition hall.

French to Mark Three Months of 'Yellow Vest' Protests



PARIS - Demonstrators are to hit French city streets again Saturday, marking three months of "yellow vest" protests as a poll now suggests that most of the country wants them to stop.

The number of those attending the weekly rally has dropped since 287,000 turned out on November 17, the first Saturday of protest.

And for the first time, a poll found Wednesday that more than half those questioned felt it was time to end the protests.

On February 9, the 13th weekend of anti-government actions, 51,000 people took to the streets according to police, though protest organisers put the figure at 118,000.

Violence has marred nearly every large-scale rally. In Paris, where 4,000

gathered last week, clashes broke out outside the National Assembly building where one demonstrator lost a hand, reportedly as he tried to bat away a stun grenade.

Masked activists tried to break down barriers protecting the parliament but were repelled by police firing tear gas and grenades.

As the march continued, vandals burned rubbish bins and cars and smashed bus shelters, cash machines and shop windows along the route. (More on P4)...(11)

U.S. Adviser Bolton Promises India Support after Kashmir Attack

NEW DELHI - U.S. National Security Adviser John Bolton spoke to his Indian counterpart promising support to bring those responsible for a deadly car bombing in disputed Kashmir to justice, the Indian Foreign Ministry said on Saturday.

A Pakistan-based militant group, Jaish-e-Mohammad, has claimed responsibility for the attack on a military convoy in which 44 paramilitary police were killed, raising tensions with India.

Bolton told Ajit Doval in a telephone conversation that the United States supported India's right to self-defense against cross-border terrorism, the Indian Foreign Ministry said in a statement.

India has demanded Pakistan act against the Jaish. Pakistan had condemned the attack but denied any complicity.

"The two NSAs vowed to work together to ensure that Pakistan cease to be a safe haven for JeM and terrorist groups that target India, the U.S. and others in the region," the ministry said. (More on P4)...(15)

India's Semi High-Speed Train Breaks Down a Day after Its Launch

NEW DELHI - India's first locally built semi high-speed train broke down early on Saturday on its way back to New Delhi from Varanasi in northern Uttar Pradesh, a day after its inauguration by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The Vande Bharat Express can run up to a maximum speed of 160 km/hour.

"There seems to be disruption [possibly due to] cattle run over. It wasn't a scheduled commercial run," Reuters partner ANI said in a tweet citing the railways ministry.

The train eventually reached New Delhi and will resume a commercial run from Sunday, said the tweet. (Reuters)

Turkey to Press on with Russian S-400 Missile Deal: Erdogan

ANKARA - Turkey will not turn back from its deal to buy S-400 missile systems from Russia despite U.S. opposition, Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan was quoted as saying on Saturday.

Speaking to reporters on the flight back from the Russian resort of Sochi, where a trilateral summit on Syria was held, Erdogan said that Ankara would press on with the S-400 purchases. "We made the S-400 deal with Russia, so it's out of the question for us to turn back," Erdogan said, according to broadcaster CNN Turk.

As a NATO member, Turkey has repeatedly said that it is committed to buying the advanced Russian missile defense system, despite warnings from NATO that the S-400s cannot be integrated into the alliance's air defense system. (More on P4)...(16)

Trump Claims Japan's PM Nominated Him for Nobel Peace Prize

WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump claimed Friday that Japan's prime minister had nominated him for a Nobel Peace Prize for opening a dialogue with North Korea.

Trump also complained about President Barack Obama's Nobel Peace Prize and doubted he would be similarly honored.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe "gave me the most beautiful copy of a letter that he sent to the people who give out a thing called the Nobel Prize," Trump said at a White House news conference when asked about his late February summit in Vietnam with North Korean leader Kim Jong



Un. "He said, 'I have nominated you, respectfully, on behalf of Japan. I am asking them to give you the Nobel Peace Prize.'" The Associated Press could not immediately confirm Trump's claim.

Japan's Foreign Ministry said Saturday that it was aware of Trump's remark but cannot comment on details of the exchanges between Trump and Abe.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in, who also has credited Trump with starting negotiations with the reclusive North, has endorsed the U.S. leader for the Nobel Peace Prize as well. (More on P4)...(12)

Movies from China, Israel Tipped for Berlin Filmfest Gold

BERLIN - A Chinese epic on the impact of the former one-child policy and an adventurous, sexually explicit Israeli drama about an expatriate in Paris looked to be the favorites at the Berlin film festival ahead of awards night Saturday.

A jury led by French Oscar winner Juliette Binoche will select among 16 contenders for the Golden and Silver Bear top prizes at the 69th Berlinale, Europe's first major cinema showcase of the year.

During the last edition led by director Dieter Kosslick after 18 years at the helm, Chinese filmmaker Wang Xiaoshuai moved audiences to tears with "So Long, My Son".

Clocking in at three hours, it is a sweeping allegorical drama about two families whose fates. (More on P4)...(13)

Pence Chastises EU, Rejects Merkel's Call to Work with Russia

MUNICH - U.S. Vice President Mike Pence rebuked European powers over Iran and Venezuela on Saturday in a renewed attack on Washington's traditional allies, rejecting a call by Germany's chancellor to include Russia in global cooperation efforts.

Describing the results of Donald Trump's presidency as "remarkable" and "extraordinary", Pence told senior European and Asian officials the EU should follow the United States in quitting the Iran nuclear deal and recognizing the head of Venezuela's congress, Juan Guaido, as the country's president.

"America is stronger than ever before and America is leading on the world stage once again," Pence told officials at the Munich Security Conference, listing what he described as U.S. foreign policy successes from Afghanistan to North Korea.

Addressing an audience that included Trump's daughter Ivanka, Pence's speech was the latest attempt by a Trump official to put the president's "America First" agenda into a coherent policy plan.

European leaders are troubled by Trump's rhetoric, which they say is erratic and disruptive, citing his decision to pull out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal as undermining an arms control agreement that prevented Tehran from developing a nuclear bomb.

But Pence - who last week during a visit to Poland accused Britain, Germany and France of undermining U.S. sanctions on Iran - repeated his demand that European. (More on P4)...(17)