

World's Richest Gather in Davos to Tackle Global Poverty, But Key Leaders Are Missing

DAVOS - World political and business elites are gathering in Davos, Switzerland, for an annual forum on how to tackle global problems, like the increasing wealth gap between rich and poor. Several key leaders will be missing though. This year the leader of the US, the UK and France will not be attending the World Economic Forum due to domestic troubles.

Donald Trump is busy with his government shutdown. Theresa May is bogged down by Brexit negotiations complete with defiant MPs and unyielding EU officials. Emmanuel Macron has crowds of yellow vest-wearing protesters, outraged at his austerity reforms. Arguably the biggest political name on the guest list is Ger-



man Chancellor Angela Merkel.

On the other hand, Davos will be the first international visit for Brazil's controversial new President Jair Bolsonaro, who is to deliver a speech later on Tuesday. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a fel-

low right-wing strongman is attending too, despite facing corruption allegations and strong competition in the upcoming snap election at home. As the gathering takes place, a new report by the British charity Oxfam, released last week, said the world's

26 wealthiest people own as much as the poorest half of humanity - a new record of inequality for an increasingly economically disparate world. (RT)

Cambodia Leader Says China to Give \$600 Million in Grant Aid

BEIJING - Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, making a four-day visit to China, said Tuesday that Beijing has agreed to provide his nation with nearly \$600 million in grant aid as part of a three-year assistance fund.

Hun Sen announced the aid from Cambodia's most important political and economic ally on his Facebook page before any announcement by Beijing. He said the commitment was made by Chinese President Xi Jinping, whom he met Monday. Hun Sen said the two

countries also agreed to increase their bilateral trade to \$10 billion by 2023 and Xi promised to buy 400,000 tons of rice from Cambodia in 2019 and push more Chinese businesses to invest in Cambodia. Two-way trade was about \$6 billion in 2017.

He said he and Xi agreed to continue their friendship and cooperation in all fields. According to Hun Sen, Xi "said the relationship between China and Cambodia is very crucial, if compared to other countries." (AP)

Macron Promises to Stand for Reforms, Says Lack of Them Led to Louis XVI Execution

PARIS - King Louis XVI's refusal to embrace reforms led to his downfall, Emmanuel Macron told corporate executives gathered at Versailles. The meeting was held in part to alleviate investors' fears after 10 weeks of Yellow Vest protests.

An estimated 150 executives, including Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi, JPMorgan Chase CEO James Dimon, and Coca-Cola CEO James Quincey, met with the French president at the decadent palace outside of Paris.

"A lot of people thought

that it was not a good date to gather here," Macron told his guests, referring to the execution of French King Louis XVI, who was guillotined on January 21, exactly 226 years ago on Monday. "But when you look at French history, if at the end they ended up like that, it's because a lot of leaders decided not to reform."

The comment was likely aimed at alleviating concerns about the Yellow Vest protest movement, which entered its 10th week on Saturday. The nationwide protests have



sometimes turned violent, and according to Macron's office, have caused concern among foreign investors hoping to cash in on Macron's business-friendly reforms. Notably, Macron reas-

sured his CEO guests that he would "not roll back what we have done in the past 18 months" - unpopular labor and tax reforms that have been cited as sparking the Yellow Vest protests. (RT)

South Korea to Launch Its Biggest Investigation of Sex Abuse in Sports



SEOUL - South Korea will hold its largest ever investigation into sexual abuse in sports, its human rights watch-

dog said on Tuesday, after an Olympic speed skating star accused her former coach of abuse triggered a wave

of similar accounts from athletes. The inquiry will aim to address "systematic, sustained" abuse in sports, which had been hushed up for generations by victims afraid of being banished from their sport, said Choi Young-ae, chairwoman of the National Human Rights Commission.

"We will conduct a fact-finding inquiry that will be the largest in scale ever," Choi told a news conference. A commission official said up to about 30,000

people - athletes from all sports, coaches, officials and others - are likely to be interviewed over the course of the year-long investigation.

The #MeToo movement has taken off belatedly in male-dominated South Korea where discussion of sexual misconduct has long been taboo. But the issue exploded in the world of sports after Shim Suk-hee, 21, accused her former coach, Cho Ja-beom, of sexual assault. (Reuters)

EU Says Romania Must Avoid Stepping Back from Fighting Corruption

BRUSSELS - The European Commission criticized on Tuesday Romania's plans for an amnesty for corrupt politicians, calling it a step backwards in fighting graft.

Romania's justice minister has drafted an emergency decree that allows politicians and others convicted of graft since 2014 in one of the European Union's most corrupt countries to challenge the verdicts handed down by the supreme court.

The measure would benefit several high-level

politicians, including Liviu Dragnea, the leader of the ruling Social Democrat Party, who was ruled out from being prime minister by a 2015 suspended jail term in a vote-rigging case.

"We are following closely the discussion in Romania on a possible emergency ordinance on extraordinary appeals for criminal cases which we understand comes following the recent constitutional court rulings," Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas said. (Reuters)

Russian and Japanese Leaders Talk about Territorial Dispute

MOSCOW - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe sat down for talks Tuesday with Russian President Vladimir Putin focusing on a decades-long territorial dispute between the two nations.

The Soviet Union took the four southernmost Kuril Islands during the final days of World War II. Japan asserts territorial rights to the islands, which it calls the Northern Territories, and the dispute has kept the countries from signing a peace treaty.

Speaking at the start of the talks, Abe said he would like to discuss the peace treaty issue based on last week's talks between top diplomats of the two countries. (AP)

World Shares Retreat on Fears of Global, Chinese Slowdown

SINGAPORE - World markets fell Tuesday after the International Monetary Fund trimmed its global outlook for 2019 and 2020 and China said its economy grew at the slowest pace in nearly 30 years.

KEEPING SCORE: Germany's DAX gave up 0.5 percent to 11,076 and France's CAC 40 was down 0.7 percent at 4,834. Britain's FTSE 100 was 0.5 percent lower at 6,934. Wall Street, reopening after Martin Luther King Jr. Day, was set for early losses. Futures for the broad S&P 500 index declined 0.7 percent and Dow futures dropped 0.6 percent.

THE DAY IN ASIA: Japan's Nikkei 225 index shed 0.5 percent to 20,622.91 and the Kospi in South Korea sank 0.3 percent to 2,117.77. Hong Kong's Hang Seng lost 0.7 percent to 27,005.45. (AP)

Turkey Set for International Probe into Khashoggi Death

ANKARA, Turkey - Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu says Turkey is preparing to take steps to launch an international investigation into the killing of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

In comments carried by state-run Anadolu Agency late Monday, Cavusoglu said Turkey had prepared the groundwork and would soon take the "necessary steps." He did not elaborate.

The Washington Post columnist, who wrote critically about the



Saudi crown prince, was killed inside the Saudi Consulate in Istanbul in October.

The kingdom has indicted 11 people, including some from the prince's entourage, over the killing and is seeking the death

penalty against five of them.

Turkey has complained of a lack of cooperation by Riyadh to ensure that all those responsible are held to account and has said it could seek an international probe. (AP)

Kremlin 'Optimistic' Ahead of WADA Doping Ruling

MOSCOW - Russia is "optimistic" ahead of a World Anti-Doping Agency ruling on whether the country's authorities met demands to turn over lab data, Vladimir Putin's spokesman said Tuesday.

The WADA executive committee reinstated Russia's anti-doping agency in September - despite protests from many Western athletes and officials - on condition the country turned over data from a Moscow laboratory. The data could help WADA pursue doping cases against many top Russian athletes for past offenses.

WADA representatives left Moscow with the data last week but only after Russia missed a Dec. 31 deadline.

"Our sports authorities have clearly made the maximum effort to arrange the work of the WADA representatives in Moscow, to arrange all the necessary procedures and contacts," said Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov. "So in Moscow everyone is optimistic."

The U.S. Anti-Doping Agency had called for the Russian agency, known as RUSADA, to be suspended for missing the deadline, though WADA said it preferred to wait for the data. (AP)

Neighbor News

Press TV Anchor to Appear before Grand Jury on Wednesday

TEHRAN - Marzieh Hashemi, the Press TV anchorwoman who has been detained by the FBI in the United States, is to appear before a grand jury on Wednesday.

"On Wednesday, a 23-member jury will be making a decision about my mother," Hashemi's son, Hussein, told the Young Journalists' Club in remarks which the Iranian news agency published on Monday.

"Controversial article in force" "The United States federal government has taken my mother to prison using a very controversial article, which is used very rarely," he added. "Whenever this

article is applied, the person [in question] remains in detention for at most 16 days and then a decision is made about them." He said the court hearings had failed to level any charges against his mother on the two previous occasions, and that she was expected to be freed if the grand jury voted that there was not enough evidence to hold her. Under US law, a grand jury, typically comprising 23 people, has the power to conduct legal proceedings and investigate potential criminal conduct, and determine whether criminal charges should be brought. (Press TV)

Pakistan Prepares New Budget Amid Balance of Payments Squeeze

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Finance Minister Asad Umar is due to announce a package of measures to shore up strained public finances in a "mini budget" on Wednesday that comes only months after the government presented its last finance plan in September.

Measures are expected to include higher taxes on luxury items, mobile phones and large cars as well as cuts in import duty for some machinery and raw materials imports to try to boost local industry and help exporters. But the main thrust of the package will be on creating better conditions for investment in an economy struggling from severe pressure on its public

finances and facing a balance of payments crisis with foreign exchange reserves sufficient to cover less than two months of imports. "This is not just about taxation measures, it is about encouraging investment, whether in the stock exchange, industry, financial sector or other," said Khaqan Hassan Najeeb, a senior adviser at the finance ministry. With economic growth expected to slow this year to 4 percent, from 5.8 percent in 2018, a yawning current account deficit and a fiscal deficit set to hit 6.9 percent of gross domestic product in 2019, according to IMF estimates, Pakistan needs to get control of its public finances. (Agencies)

Turkmenistan Names New Director General of Insurance Organization

ASHGABAT - Dovletmyrat Gulmyradov, deputy director general of the State Insurance Organization of Turkmenistan, has been appointed as director general of the Organization, Trend reports with reference to a Turkmen presidential decree.

Annabibi Amanmedova, who previously held the position, was dismissed due to seri-

ous shortcomings in her work, according to the decree.

The State Insurance Organization of Turkmenistan has a wide network of over 40 branches in the country. At the current stage, the Organization is expanding partnership with leading international insurance and reinsurance companies, as well as insurance brokers. (Trend)

Tajikistan, Kazakhstan Eye to Increase Trade to \$2B

DUSHANBE - Kazakh Foreign Minister Beibut Atankulov met with the Ambassador of Tajikistan Nazirmad Alizoda on the occasion of the completion of his diplomatic mission in Kazakhstan, Trend reports via Avesta News Agency.

The foreign minister thanked the Tajik diplomat for his contribution to the development of Kazakh-Tajik relations and his merits in strengthening the strategic partnership between the two countries.

The press service of the Kazakh Foreign Ministry noted that during Alizoda's term, a number of important documents were signed between Kazakhstan and Tajikistan, including the Strategic Partnership Agreement.

On the same day, Atankulov had a telephone conversation

with his Tajik counterpart Sirodjiddin Muhridin, discussed issues of bilateral cooperation and interaction within international organizations, including within the CICA (Conference on Interaction and Confidence-Building Measures in Asia). Special attention was paid to the implementation of the agreements reached at the level of the heads of state of Kazakhstan and Tajikistan Nursultan Nazarbayev and Emomali Rakhmon on enhancing trade and economic cooperation and increasing bilateral trade.

The gradual growth in commodity turnover between the two countries was noted, as well as the prerequisites for its increase to \$1 billion in 2019 and to \$2 billion in 2020 according to the guidelines of the heads of two states. (Trend)