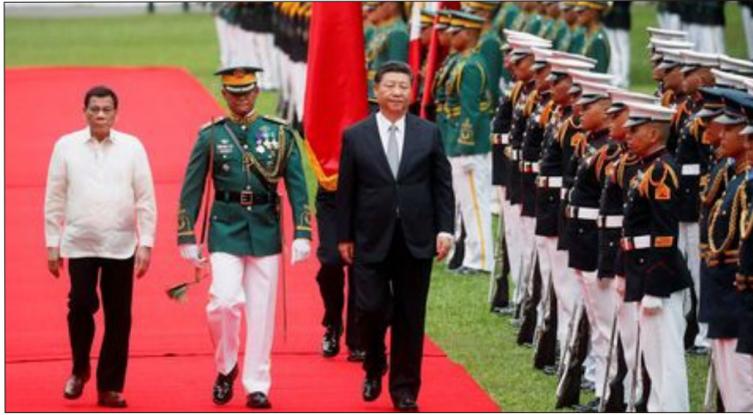


## China's Xi Visits Philippines as Duterte Pressed to Take Tougher Line

MANILA - Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in the Philippines for a state visit on Tuesday, aiming to advance strategic gains made under a Manila leadership that has favored Beijing in the hope of receiving billions of dollars of loans and investment. Xi's visit comes two years after Philippine counterpart Rodrigo Duterte declared he was reorienting his foreign policy away from the United States and toward China, despite decades of mistrust and bitter maritime disputes with Beijing. In a commentary in Monday's Philippine Star newspaper, Xi praised Duterte and described ties as being "a rainbow after the rain" and repeatedly called for the "proper handling" of rows over the South China Sea. But Duterte's style of handling



has frustrated nationalists, who say he has been submissive in refusing to criticize China's military buildup, or seek its compliance with a 2016 arbitration award that invalidated its claim to almost the entire waterway.

Public opinion is largely supportive of Duterte's presidency but surveys consistently show reservations about his China policy and disdain for the United States.

A Social Weather Stations survey released late

Monday showed 84 percent of Filipinos felt it was wrong not to oppose China's militarization of its manmade islands, and 86 percent believed it was right to strengthen the Philippine military, especially the navy.

The poll of 1,200 people conducted in late September also showed trust in the United States remained "very good", but China was considered "poor".

A small protest was held outside China's embassy in Manila on Tuesday.

Asked on Tuesday about the survey, presidential spokesman Salvador Panelo, said Duterte's strategy was to avoid a potential "inferno" of conflict while reaping the rewards of improved business. (Reuters)

## Neighbor News

### Cuba Says Interested in Iran-EU Clearing Mechanism

TEHRAN - Cuba has expressed interest in a plan by the European Union to create a mechanism to get round US sanctions against Iran, saying it hopes the mechanism would also help it sidestep the trade embargo that Washington has imposed on it for decades now.

A senior Cuban official was quoted as saying by media that Havana was watching the progress of discussions between Tehran and Brussels over the creation of a "special purpose vehicle" (SPV) which would provide a tentative solution for clearing payments to Iran normally banned under US sanctions.

"There was a mention of this instrument and we of course also raised the interest that we would have in any solution of this kind that would al-

low European companies to become increasingly involved in foreign investment and bilateral trade with Cuba," senior Cuban foreign ministry official Rodolfo Reyes told AFP.

Despite a thawing of ties under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, the US still has a sweeping economic embargo in force against Cuba that dates back to the 1960s, AFP reported.

The SPV would in theory allow Iran to keep selling oil and European companies to continue doing business in the country despite the US sanctions. The EU proposed the mechanism to help protect the economic benefits for Iran from the 2015 nuclear agreement that the members of the Security Council plus Germany sealed with the country. (Press TV)

### Ashgabat Hosts International Oil & Gas Forum

ASHGABAT - International exhibition and conference "Oil & Gas Turkmenistan" (OGT EXPO) was launched in Ashgabat on Tuesday, says the message of its organizers - Turkmenoil state concern and Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Turkmenistan.

The event is attended by 50 companies and 200 representatives from around the world.

"This is another evidence of the intensification of international cooperation in fuel and energy sector. The forum will include talks with representatives of companies on the is-

suues related to the supply of Turkmen energy resources to foreign markets and the implementation of large-scale projects by attracting foreign investors," reads the message.

Special attention will be paid to issues such as diversification of export routes of Turkmen natural gas, attracting investment in the oil and gas industry, introduction of innovative technologies in the search and production of hydrocarbons, as well as the planned projects for the processing of natural gas and production of gas chemical products. (Trend)

### Tajikistan Expected to Grant Tax Exemptions to Some Chinese, Turkmen and Uzbek Companies

DUSHANBE - Tajik government proposes to grant tax exemptions to some Chinese, Turkmen and Uzbek companies financing construction of social facilities in the country, news.tj reports.

The government proposes amendments to the country's law on the national budget for 2019, under which two Chinese companies, two Uzbek companies and one Turkmen company financing construction of schools and hospitals will be exempted from paying value added tax (VAT), income tax and tax on road users.

The China's Tebian Electric

Apparatus (TBEA Co. Ltd) is financing construction of schools in the village of Elok in the Fayzobod district and the village of Chordara subordinate to Vahdat Township.

Another Chinese company, Sinohydro, is financing construction of schools in Bokhtar, Levakand and Danghara. Two Uzbek companies are financing construction of a school in the Spitamen district and a medical center in the Qubodiyon district. Meanwhile, Turkmen Embassy in Dushanbe is financing construction of a school in the Dousti district. (Trend)

### Pakistan Summons U.S. Envoy as Trump Doubles Down on Criticism

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan summoned the U.S. Chargé d'Affaires in Islamabad on Tuesday to protest President Donald Trump's criticism of Pakistan's role in fighting terrorism and the killing of Osama bin Laden.

Trump's comments over the last few days have angered Pakistan, including Prime Minister Imran Khan, who on Monday hit back by saying on Twitter that few allies had sacrificed or helped the United States as much as Pakistan in its war on terror, suffering 75,000 casualties.

The friction threatens to worsen already fragile relations between Islamabad and Washington, on-off allies which have re-

peatedly clashed over the war in Afghanistan and Pakistan's alleged support for Islamist militants. Foreign Secretary Tehmina Janjua called in U.S. envoy Paul Jones "to register a strong protest on the unwarranted and unsubstantiated allegations made against Pakistan".

Pakistan's Foreign Ministry said in a statement. Over the weekend, Trump said in an interview Pakistan doesn't "do a damn thing" for the United States despite billions of dollars in U.S. aid, and alleged Pakistani officials knew of former al Qaeda leader bin Laden's location before his killing by U.S. troops in a raid inside Pakistan in 2011. (Reuters)

### Trump Likely to Give U.S. Troops Authority to Protect Immigration Agents

WASHINGTON/TIJUANA, Mexico - President Donald Trump is likely to give U.S. troops authority to protect immigration agents stationed along the U.S. border with Mexico if they come under threat from migrants seeking to cross into the United States, a U.S. official said on Monday. Ahead of U.S. congressional elections earlier this month, Trump denounced the approach of a caravan of migrants as an "invasion" that threatened American national security, and he sent thou-

sands of U.S. troops to the border to help secure it. Currently, the troops do not have authority to protect U.S. Customs and Border Patrol personnel. The new authority could be announced on Tuesday, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity. Northbound lanes at the San Ysidro crossing from Tijuana to San Diego, California, were temporarily closed "to position additional port hardening materials," a U.S. CBP spokesperson said. (Reuters)

### Despite UN Call for Yemen Truce, New Clashes Around Key Port

SANAA, Yemen - Fighting between Saudi-led coalition forces and Yemen's Shiite rebels has flared up again around the Red Sea port city of Hodeida, despite U.N. calls for a cease-fire, Yemeni officials and witnesses said Tuesday. The escalation, which followed a lull that had been in place since earlier this month, began late on Monday with coalition airstrikes hitting the rebels, known as Houthis, in and around Hodeida. Street fighting was also underway in the main

Khamsin Str. in the city center and in al-Saleh district. The officials spoke about the clashes on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to reporters; the witnesses did so for fear for their safety. Information Minister Moammer al-Iryani, who is in Yemen's internationally recognized government, said the Houthis shelled the city center and neighborhoods held by government forces. Meanwhile, the rebel-run Al Masirah TV said the rebels attacked govern-



ment forces on a main road linking the capital, Sanaa, and Hodeida. Government forces had captured the road in September. Earlier, the rebels said they'd fired a ballistic missile the previous night into Saudi Arabia in response to an attempted border incursion and another airstrike, and that they reserved the right to respond to attacks. (Fox News)

### Seoul: North Korea Destroys 10 Guard Posts to Lower Tensions



SEOUL, South Korea - North Korea on Tuesday blew up some of its front-line guard posts as part of an agreement to ease tensions along its heav-

ily fortified border with South Korea, Seoul's Defense Ministry said. In September, the Korean militaries agreed at a leaders' summit in

Pyeongyang to eventually dismantle all guard posts inside the 248-kilometer (155-mile)-long, 4-kilometer (2.5-mile)-wide border. They later withdrew weapons and troops from 11 of their guard posts and decided to completely dismantle 10 of them by the end of November. Seoul's Defense Ministry said it confirmed the dismantling of 10 North Korean guard posts on Tuesday. A ministry statement said North Korea had informed the South of its plans in ad-

vance. South Korea began dismantling 10 of its guard posts with dynamite and excavators last week. Ministry officials said Tuesday that they haven't completed the demolitions yet. The Korean border, the world's most heavily armed with an estimated 2 million land mines, has been the site of deadly fighting and bloodshed. Called the Demilitarized Zone, it was originally created as a buffer at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War. (Fox News)

### Spain to Vote Against Brexit Accord If Text on Gibraltar Not Changed: PM

MADRID - Spain will vote against the European Union's draft Brexit deal on Sunday unless it is modified to make clear that the future of the disputed British territory of Gibraltar relies on talks between Madrid and London, Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said. Spain's demands on Gibraltar are the latest push by EU states to obtain more on national interests ahead of Sunday's summit of EU leaders, but diplomats said there was little con-

cern these would scupper prospects for a deal. "As of today, if there are no changes with respect to Gibraltar, Spain will vote no to the agreement on Brexit," Sanchez said during a conference in Madrid on Tuesday. According to EU rules, the withdrawal treaty is adopted by qualified majority and not unanimity. So a single state like Spain cannot block it. The EU's executive said it was aware of Spain's concerns and it expected the issue to be resolved. (Reuters)

### Global Stocks Slide as Futures Point to Wall Street Drop

BEIJING - World stocks slid Tuesday and Wall Street was expected to drop again amid concerns about the tech sector dragged down U.S. indexes the day before.

KEEPING SCORE: In Europe, Germany's DAX index lost 0.9 percent to 11,144 and France's CAC 40 shed 0.9 percent to 4,942. London's FTSE 100 retreated 0.3 percent to 6,983. Futures for the benchmark Standard & Poor's 500 index were off 0.8 percent and those for the Dow Jones Industrial Average were down 0.7 percent. (AP)

### South African President Praises German Investment

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa's president says Germany is an important economic partner which he hopes will expand its investment here.

President Cyril Ramaphosa was speaking Tuesday in Cape Town to mark the end of the three-day state visit of German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. Ramaphosa said Germany is South Africa's third-largest global trading partner and one of the country's largest foreign investors. He said more than 600 German companies operate in South Africa, sustaining approximately 100,000 jobs. Both Germany and South Africa will be non-permanent members of the United Nations Security Council for the year 2019 to 2020 and Ramaphosa said the leaders agreed that their two countries would work together to promote global peace and security as well as to strengthen the multilateralism system. (AP)

### European Court Orders Turkey to Free Ex-Kurdish Party Leader

ANKARA, Turkey - The European Court of Human Rights on Tuesday called on Turkey to release the former head of Turkey's pro-Kurdish opposition from detention. Turkey's president responded by claiming his country was not bound by the court's rulings.

In its ruling on Tuesday, the Strasbourg, France-based court said Turkey had violated Selahattin Demirtas' right to be promptly brought before a judge, his right to a speedy review of his case as well as his right to be elected and to sit in Parliament. Demirtas, the 45-year-old former co-chairman of



the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party, was arrested in November 2016 on terrorism charges. He ran in Turkey's presidential election in June from his high-security prison in Edirne, northwest Turkey. He also campaigned for a constitutional referendum

in 2017 from behind bars. In September Demirtas was sentenced to four years in prison for supporting the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party, or PKK, and engaging in terrorist propaganda in one of several trials against him. (Fox News)

### Critics Urge Interpol to Reject Russian Candidate for Chief

MOSCOW - A growing chorus of critics is calling on Interpol to reject a Russian candidate to lead the organization, over fears Moscow could abuse the role to target political opponents.

The Kremlin has denounced what is says is "interference" in the vote, set for Wednesday at the close of Interpol's annual conference in Dubai. Concerns have been raised over Russia's previous applications for Interpol "Red Notices", or international arrest warrants, for those who have fallen foul

of the Kremlin. Russian interior ministry official and current Interpol vice president Alexander Prokopchuk appears to be the favourite for the position.

In an open letter this week, a bipartisan group of US senators said that choosing Prokopchuk would be like "putting a fox in charge of a henhouse". "Russia routinely abuses Interpol for the purpose of settling scores and harassing political opponents, dissidents and journalists," they wrote. (AFP)

### Northern Irish Kingmakers Send UK PM May a Warning Over Brexit Deal

LONDON - The Northern Irish kingmakers who prop up British Prime Minister Theresa May's government sent her a stark warning over her draft Brexit divorce deal, pulling support in several parliamentary votes on a finance bill. The move breaches the DUP's deal with May and throws further doubt over whether she has the numbers to approve a draft Brexit deal in parliament. Since striking a draft divorce deal with the EU a week ago, some lawmakers in her Conservative Party have tried to trigger a leadership challenge and her Northern Irish allies have said the deal threatens the unity of the United Kingdom.

May vowed to fight on and has repeatedly cautioned her critics that if they topple her, the United Kingdom will be thrust into a potentially disorderly departure from the EU on March 29 or that Brexit could be put off or canceled.

But in an ominous sign for her Brexit deal, which must be approved by the British parliament, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) failed to back her minority government in several votes on a finance bill on Monday.

"We had to do something to show our displeasure," the DUP's Brexit spokesman, Sammy Wilson, said. The votes, he said, were "designed to send a political message to the government: Look we've got an agreement with you but you've got to keep your side of the bargain otherwise we don't feel obliged to keep ours." (Reuters)