



ELSEWHERE

Erdoğan lays foundation stone for new church

ISTANBUL
President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on Saturday laid the foundation stone for the first new church in Turkey since it became a modern republic in 1923. The church in the Istanbul suburb of Yesilköy will serve the 17,000-strong Syriac Christian community, which is also paying for the new building. AFP

685 detained in Russia crackdown on Opposition

MOSCOW
Russian police detained 685 people attending a protest in Moscow on Saturday to demand free elections, including prominent activist Lyubov Sobol. Police removed Ms. Sobol from a taxi and bundled her into a van minutes before the start of a march. REUTERS

Namibia inaugurates China-built port terminal

WINDHOEK
Namibia has inaugurated a new China-built port terminal, which doubles its container capacity and is also to give tourism a boost. The 40-hectare platform reclaimed from the sea at Walvis Bay, some 400 km west of Windhoek, is to become a strategic gateway to emerging markets of southern and west Africa. AFP

Blat kills 12 regime fighters at Syria airspace

BEIRUT
A blast of unclear origin killed 12 regime forces at a military airport in central Syria on Saturday, a war monitor said. State news agency SANA reported that a "technical fault during the transport of expired ammunition" had killed an unspecified number of victims. AFP

Hong Kong hit by fresh protests

Tens of thousands of anti-govt. demonstrators march through the city's Mong Kok district

REUTERS
HONG KONG

Stores in the heart of Hong Kong's Kowloon shopping area shut their doors on Saturday and black-clad activists blocked thoroughfares as the Chinese-controlled city was again rocked by anti-government protests.

Tens of thousands marched through the crowded Mong Kok district in the afternoon, with many then dispersing to different parts of the Kowloon peninsula, where they defaced police station signs and set up barriers across busy streets.

Targeting police station

Police said a large group of protesters had marked the Tsim Sha Tsui police station, in one of Kowloon's shopping districts, with paint and damaged a vehicle inside the station. The police said in a statement that officers had warned them "to stop their illegal act at once and disperse peacefully".



Unrest spreads: A demonstration by civil servants in Hong Kong on Friday. •AP

Riot police could be seen outside the police stations in Tsim Sha Tsui and Mong Kok. Protests against a proposed Bill allowing people to be extradited to stand trial in mainland China have grown increasingly violent since June, with police accused of

excessive force and failing to protect protesters from suspected gang attacks. Protesters, their faces covered with masks or bandanas and wearing helmets and goggles, have adopted increasingly sophisticated tactics. On Saturday, many carried

hiking sticks and some held home-made shields. "We don't stay in the same place. We are using hit-and-run tactics," said a construction worker who was among protesters in the Mong Kok area of Kowloon and called himself "Water". "If the police

Kim supervised test-firing of rockets, claims N. Korea

ASSOCIATED PRESS
SEOUL

North Korea said on Saturday that its leader Kim Jong-un supervised another test-firing of a new multiple rocket launcher system that could potentially enhance the country's ability to strike targets in South Korea and U.S. military bases there.

The report by Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) came a day after South Korea's military said it detected North Korea firing projectiles twice into the sea off its eastern coast in its third round of weapons tests in just over a week.

Experts say the North's increased testing activity is aimed at ramping up pressure on Washington and Seoul over stalled nuclear negotiations with the U.S. and planned U.S.-South Korea military exercises, and that its weapons displays could intensify in the coming



Military vision: North Korean leader Kim Jong-un supervising the test-launch of a rocket on Thursday. •AP

months if progress in talks isn't made. North Korea said that Mr. Kim supervised the first test of the same rocket artillery system on Wednesday. KCNA said Mr. Kim expressed "great satisfaction" over Friday's tests, which it said confirmed the system's "altitude control level flight performance, track-changing capability, accuracy of hitting a target and warhead explosion power of the guided ordnance rocket."

The report didn't include any direct mention of the U.S. or South Korea. South Korea's presidential office had said the U.S. and South Korean militaries shared an assessment that Friday's launches were likely of short-range ballistic missiles. South Korea's military had also concluded that the weapons North Korea tested on Wednesday are ballistic

Short-range missiles

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Trump invited Zarif to U.S.: report

Iran Foreign Minister turned down offer, says magazine

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
WASHINGTON

President Donald Trump invited Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif to the White House last month at the height of tensions between the two countries, a magazine has reported. The invitation, extended by Senator Rand Paul with permission from the President, was turned down, *The New Yorker* reported on Friday.

The report quoted U.S. and Iranian sources and what the magazine called a well-placed diplomat. Mr. Zarif told the magazine he would not want a White House meeting that yielded just a photo opportunity and a two-page statement afterwards, *The New Yorker* said.

Mr. Trump has said publicly several times that he is



Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif. •AP

willing to hold talks with the Iranians even as he lambasted the Iranian state as a corrupt, incompetent and dangerous regime that is a threat to regional security and U.S. interests.

Mr. Paul had been working for weeks on setting up a meeting with Mr. Zarif and on July 15, conferred with him in New York, passing on an invitation from Mr.

Trump for him to come to the White House, the magazine said. At the one hour meeting, Mr. Zarif suggested ways to end the nuclear impasse, said the magazine.

Also, Mr. Zarif said on Saturday that Iran will take another step to reduce its compliance with the landmark 2015 nuclear deal, according to parliamentary news agency ICANA.

"The third step in reducing commitments to (the nuclear deal) will be implemented in the current situation," he said. "We have said that if (the deal) is not completely implemented by others then we will also implement it in the same incomplete manner. And of course all of our actions have been within the framework of (the deal)."

U.S., Taliban begin fresh round of talks in Qatar

Peace deal could be reached by Aug. 13

REUTERS
KABUL

A fresh round of U.S.-Taliban peace talks began in Qatar's capital Doha on Saturday, officials said, describing it to be the "most crucial" phase of negotiations to end the 18-year war in Afghanistan.

Senior officials privy to the talks said a peace agreement could be expected at the end of the eighth round of talks, possibly before August 13, and would enable foreign forces to be withdrawn from the country.

Zalmay Khalilzad, the U.S. peace envoy for Afghanistan, reached Doha on Friday night. "Just got to Doha to resume talks with the Taliban. We are pursuing a

peace agreement not a withdrawal agreement," he tweeted. "A peace agreement that enables withdrawal. Our (U.S.) presence in Afghanistan is conditions-based, and any withdrawal will be conditions-based," he said, adding the Taliban are signalling they would conclude an agreement. Two Taliban spokesmen Suhail Shaheen and Zabihullah Mujahid said a 19-member Taliban negotiation team will represent them in the Doha peace talks. "The issue of forces withdrawal has prolonged the peace talks and delayed the deal," said a senior Taliban commander based in Afghanistan on condition of anonymity.

SUDOKU

5			3				9	
			9	4	6	5	8	
	8	1	2				6	5
					3	9		
					5			
		4	6					
2		7				1	4	6
		8	7	2	4	1		
	1				6			8

DIFFICULTY RATING: ★★★★★

Solution to yesterday's Sudoku

3	7	4	1	8	2	5	6	9
5	1	9	7	3	6	4	8	2
8	2	6	4	5	9	3	7	1
9	5	1	8	4	7	2	3	6
6	3	7	9	2	5	8	1	4
4	8	2	6	1	3	9	5	7
7	6	8	3	9	4	1	2	5
2	4	3	5	6	1	7	9	8
1	9	5	2	7	8	6	4	3

Pak. Opposition fails to oust Senate head

Sanjirani, an independent accused of backing the government, survives motion

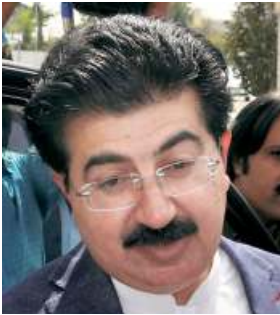
MAHMAL SARFRAZ
LAHORE

Pakistan's Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjirani surprisingly survived the Opposition's no-confidence vote on August 1 by three votes.

The Opposition has 64 members in the Senate and it needed 53 votes for the motion to pass in the 104-member House, but when the votes were counted, the Opposition managed to get only 50 votes. How did this happen? Analysts see the government's invisible hands in defeating the Opposition motion.

'Democracy weakened'

The government has embarrassed itself and weakened democracy by illegitimately interfering with the Senate elections, said Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) Senator Musadik Malik. "Such high-handed interventions weaken the spirit of democracy, and the essence of our Constitution," he told *The Hindu*.



Pakistan's Senate Chairman Sadiq Sanjirani. •AP

The PML-N and the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) had submitted a joint resolution in the Senate in July against Chairman Sanjirani, an independent Senator from the Balochistan province, saying he was supporting the government and had lost the confidence of the House. Later the Opposition moved the no-confidence motion. Senator Hasil Bizenjo, leader of the National Party of Pakistan, was the Opposition's candidate.

After the failure of the motion, Mr. Sanjirani is now

poised to continue his three-year term until March 2021.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) Senator Shibli Faraz, who is also Leader of the House in the Senate, told *The Hindu* before the no-confidence move that he had warned the Opposition parties against the move. "I told them that they must refrain from causing instability at the institutional level but they had very short-term objectives in their mind so they sacrificed the long-term objectives like stability and democracy."

However, PML-N's Mr. Malik thinks otherwise. "What has happened in the Senate elections is not surprising. Albeit, it is profoundly sorrowful. The administration is now trying to create a breach in the unity of political parties by churning rumour mills and circulating fake news."

PPP Senator Mustafa Nawaz Khokhar agrees. What happened in the Senate on Thursday was "surprising

for many of us". Sen. Khokhar was the first person from the PPP to submit his resignation to party chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari – all other Senators from the PPP followed suit. "I don't want to go back to the House as it is about my dignity and principles."

Mr. Faraz of the PTI says this defeat in the Senate will not only demoralise the Opposition but it should make them think that what they have started is not going to end here. "They have discredited themselves. They have exposed their weaknesses, they have exposed their incoherence, and they have also allowed themselves to be humiliated at such a juncture where they were about to start a movement against the government and that has terribly destroyed their planning. The first step that they took, first initiative that they took, was badly defeated. This also shows how brittle they are when it comes to a united stand."

China braces for a long trade war

Accuses U.S. of violating 'consensus'

ATUL ANEJA
BEIJING

China is bracing for a long trade war with the U.S. which could last at least 15 years, in tune with Beijing's push to emerge as the world's leading economy by 2035.

On Friday, China made it explicit that it was prepared for the long haul, after U.S. President Donald Trump indicated a 10% tariff hike on Chinese goods worth \$300 billion from September 1.

Taking a hard line

At a Foreign Ministry press briefing on Friday, spokesperson Hua Chunying slammed Washington for backtracking from the "consensus" reached in Osaka on not raising further duties, between Chinese President Xi Jinping and U.S. President Donald Trump on the sidelines of the G20 summit.

"It is a serious violation of the consensus reached by the Chinese and U.S. Presidents in Osaka and runs counter to the right direction. It will not be helpful for resolving the issues. China deplores and firmly opposes that," the spokesperson warned.

Ms. Hua further asserted that in case the U.S. enforced additional tariffs, "China will have to take necessary countermeasures to uphold its core interests and the fundamental interests of the Chinese people. The U.S. will be responsible for all related consequences."

The Chinese side also made it plain that the latest decision had cast doubts on whether the next round of trade talks will take place at all in September, as earlier scheduled. "China does not accept any maximum pres-

China does not accept any maximum pressure, threat or blackmail

HUA CHUNYING
Foreign Ministry spokesperson

sure, threat or blackmail," Ms. Hua stressed.

China's hard line on trade negotiations, with little prospects of an early resolution, signals Beijing's intent to play the long game with the U.S., which is likely to last long after Mr. Trump's exit from the presidency.

China's intent to dig in for a lengthy back-and-forth has been glaring in the past few

NEWS ANALYSIS

months. On May 22, State Council Information Office fielded Zhang Yansheng, chief researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges. During a media conference, he predicted that China and the U.S. will simultaneously "negotiate" and "fight" till 2035. That year is significant, because it aligns with a goal, spelt out during the 19th Party Congress in 2017, of China achieving "socialist modernisation". Analysts say that the term implies China's intent to emerge superior to the U.S., both economically and technologically, by 2035. With no limits set on longevity of Mr. Xi's term in office, it is likely that he will have a much longer time to achieve his goals than Mr. Trump.

Since early May, the message from China has been clear – rather than compromise with a flawed deal, Beijing would prefer a long campaign to win the trade war with Washington.

U.S. wants to deploy missiles in Asia

Defence official says such a move should not surprise China

AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE
SYDNEY

Washington wants to quickly deploy new intermediate-range missiles in Asia, U.S. Defense Secretary Mark Esper said on Saturday in a move likely to anger China.

The new Pentagon chief said the U.S. was now free to deploy the weapons following its withdrawal on Friday from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty with Russia. "Yes I would like to," Mr. Esper said, when asked if the U.S. was considering deploying new medium-range conventional weapons in Asia.

"We would like to deploy a capability sooner rather than later," Mr. Esper told reporters on a plane to Sydney at the start of a week-long tour of Asia. "I would prefer



Defense Secretary Mark Esper. •NPT

months... But these things tend to take longer than you expect."

The plan to deploy new missiles in Asia is likely to anger China which is vying with Washington for influence in the region, but Mr. Esper said Beijing should not be surprised. "That should be no surprise because we have been talking

about that for some time now," he said. "And I want to say that 80% of their inventory is INF range systems. So that should not surprise that we would want to have a like capability," he said.

The INF treaty was considered a cornerstone of the global arms control architecture but the U.S. said the bilateral pact had given other countries – namely China – free rein to develop their own long-range missiles.

Mr. Esper said he chose Asia for his first trip since taking office on July 23 "to affirm our commitment to the region, to reassure our allies and our partners." The Pentagon chief and U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo are due to meet with their Australian counterparts on Sunday.

Sudan factions agree to form transitional govt.

Opposition to appoint Prime Minister

REUTERS
KHARTOUM

Sudan's military rulers and the main Opposition coalition reached an agreement, paving the way for a new transitional government on Saturday, the African Union (AU) said, after lengthy negotiations following the fall of veteran leader Omar al-Bashir.

The agreement, which outlines the shape of the transitional government, was brokered by the AU and neighbouring Ethiopia in talks that were sometimes suspended because of street violence in Khartoum and other cities. The main Opposition coalition, the Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC), welcomed the agreement as a "first step with more to follow" and pledged to complete the journey to "freedom, peace and justice" in Sudan.

The FFC said both sides were expected to sign it on

Sunday. The declaration states that the FFC will appoint a Prime Minister as soon as the document is signed. The Prime Minister will be tasked to form the government in consultation with the FFC. The declaration also envisages the appointment of a 300-member legislative assembly.

The FFC would have 67% of its seats and other political groups not associated with Mr. Bashir would have the rest. Once the transitional government – or sovereign council – starts work, Sudan embarks on a three-year transition period expected lead to elections.

The negotiators agreed last month that the sovereign council would have 11 members – five officers selected by the military council, five civilians chosen by the FFC and another civilian to be agreed upon by both sides. Its first leader will be from the military.