

WORLD

Xi vows closer ties with Africa in shared future

By CAO DESHENG
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China stands ready to join hands with African countries to comprehensively implement the outcomes of the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, and build a much closer China-Africa community with a shared future, President Xi Jinping said.

Xi made the remarks in a message delivered to his Senegalese counterpart Macky Sall, who is also the African co-chair of the FOCAC, on Sunday. The president also extended his congratulations on the 20th anniversary of the establishment of the forum. The message was made public on Wednesday.

Xi said that China is willing to work alongside Senegal to fulfill the responsibility of the co-chairs of the FOCAC, and take the 20th anniversary as an opportunity to

make joint efforts with African countries to secure greater development of the Sino-African comprehensive strategic partnership.

Xi also thanked Sall for the sympathies the Senegalese leader had extended over the epidemic of pneumonia caused by a novel coronavirus and for his support in China's efforts to fight it.

He said that under the leadership of the Communist Party of China, the Chinese people are working together with strong resolve, as well as with scientific and tailor-made measures, to control the outbreak. They have full confidence in the country's capabilities to win the battle against the virus, the president said.

Earlier, in separate letters, Sall congratulated Xi on the arrival of China's Lunar New Year and had expressed his sympathy over, and support for, the country's battle against the coronavirus outbreak.

Iowa's voting status in doubt after delays

By CHINA DAILY

Iowa's coveted position as the first-in-the-nation presidential nominating contest faces its most daunting challenge in light of problems that kept the state Democratic Party from reporting results.

The caucuses were already facing plenty of headwinds amid criticism that the overwhelmingly white state isn't representative of the country's diversity. And the final weeks of the campaign were complicated by US President Donald Trump's impeachment trial, which sidelined several candidates and left Iowa eerily quiet at a pivotal moment.

But the Iowa Democratic Party's failure to release results on Monday night left the contest, long criticized for its complicated rules, one step closer to losing its status.

"With this reporting debacle, it may be the end," said Joe Trippi, a longtime Democratic presidential campaign operative and veteran of multiple Iowa campaigns.

Iowa Democratic Party officials, who run the contest, said on Monday night that results were indefinitely delayed, not because of an outside hack but because of the

malfunction of an app that was intended to ease the reporting of results from almost 1,700 precincts.

Once the app failed, the backup telephone reporting method became bogged down as leaders from the hundreds of precinct caucuses tried reporting to Iowa's 99 counties, then each of those county chairmen to the state party, prompting an epic telephone backlog.

Nevada's Democratic Party said on Tuesday that it will not use the app for its caucus on Feb 22.

Party officials in Iowa had released the results of 71 percent of precincts by late Tuesday.

The results showed former Midwestern mayor Pete Buttigieg had a slight lead over progressive Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders.

It was too early to call a winner based on the initial results, but Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren, former US vice-president Joe Biden and Minnesota Senator Amy Klobuchar were trailing in the tally of State Delegate Equivalents, according to reports.

Agencies, Scott Reeves and William Hennelly in New York contributed to this story.

Game heats up



Rioting Universidad de Chile soccer fans start a fire to vent their anger at the government during a match at the Nacional Stadium in Santiago, Chile, on Tuesday. The team's game with Brazil's Internacional continued as firefighters fought the blaze on the terraces. EDGARD GARRIDO / REUTERS



House Speaker Nancy Pelosi (right) rips up the speech of US President Donald Trump (front) after his latest State of the Union address in the Capitol in Washington on Tuesday. JONATHAN ERNST / REUTERS

Trump speech harps on home economic gains

While key address touts strengths, rivals bristle ahead of impeachment verdict

By HENG WEILI in New York
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US President Donald Trump emphasized the nation's economic strength in his third State of the Union address on Tuesday, saying the country is "stronger than ever before". He also expounded on hot-button issues such as illegal immigration.

"Jobs are booming, incomes are soaring, poverty is plummeting, crime is falling, confidence is surging, and our country is highly respected again," Trump said.

He gave the speech only hours before his expected acquittal on Wednesday in the Senate on two articles of impeachment.

Upon ascending to the lectern for the address in Washington, Trump did not shake hands with House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi. The speaker's Democratic majority in the House made Trump the third president in US history to be impeached.

Pelosi tore up her copy of the speech as Trump finished speaking. "America's enemies are on the run, America's fortunes are on the rise. ... The years of economic decay are over," he said. "In just three short years, we have shattered the mentality of American decline."

"We're moving forward at a pace that was unimaginable just a short time ago, and we are never, ever going back. Our economy is the best it has ever been. ... Our military is completely rebuilt. ... Our pride is restored."

Trump said: "We are building the world's most prosperous and inclusive society. The average unemployment under my administration is lower than any administration in the history of our country."

Trump said that the wages of low-income workers have risen 47 percent in the past three years of his administration. "This is a blue-collar boom," he said.

"The United States has become the No 1 producer of oil and natural gas anywhere in the world by far. America is now energy-independent."

On business conditions, he said: "Companies are not leaving. They are coming back to the USA, where the action is."

"One of the promises I made to the American people was to replace the disastrous NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) deal. ... Six days ago, I replaced NAFTA and signed the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement into law."

While he said China had an unfair advantage in trade before his administration, the president said: "We have perhaps the best relationship we ever had with China."

The two countries signed a phase one trade deal on Jan 15.

Battle against virus

On the virus threat centered in Wuhan of China's Hubei province, Trump said: "We are coordinating with the Chinese government and working closer together on the coronavirus outbreak in China."

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying confirmed on Wednesday that Beijing and Washington have maintained close communications on the battle against the novel coronavirus epidemic.

Such epidemics have no borders and the fight needs the joint efforts of all countries, she said, adding that China hopes the US will adopt an objective, fair, calm and rational attitude.

Hua said China urged the US to refrain from overreacting, and that it show respect and cooperate with China's prevention and control efforts, while working with the international community to combat the epidemic and safeguard global public health.

Trump also railed against noncitizens receiving free government

healthcare, which all the Democratic presidential candidates have said they would provide. He then referred to his signature 2016 campaign issue — a wall on the border with Mexico.

"This will be a tremendous boon to our already very strongly guarded southern border where, as we speak, a long, tall and very powerful wall is being built," Trump said.

Later in the speech, Trump voiced support for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, or ICE, often a contentious subject in Democratic circles. He also criticized so-called sanctuary cities that do not turn over "criminal aliens" to ICE, and detailed cases in New York City and California.

He said his administration was taking on the pharmaceutical industry and approving more generic drugs. The remarks got Democrats in the well to chant "H.R. 3", in reference to a House bill to reduce prescription drug costs.

"My administration is also taking on the big pharmaceutical companies. We have approved a record number of affordable generic drugs, and medicines are being approved by the FDA at a faster clip than ever before," Trump said.

Trump also said that deaths from opioid overdoses were down by double digits. He called for a ban on late-term abortions.

He commended Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell for helping him get more than 100 federal judges approved. The Kentucky senator also played a significant role in expediting the Senate trial against Trump.

Trump praised the US military and their families and spoke bluntly about the defeat of the Islamic State group. "As we defend American lives, we are working to end America's wars in the Middle East," he said.

Some of the Democrats in attendance began to stream out of the chamber before Trump ended his speech.

of minimal Palestinian demands and would leave sizable chunks of the occupied West Bank in Israeli hands.

Borrell said in the statement that "to build a just and lasting peace, the unresolved final status issues must be decided through direct negotiations between both parties", noting the issues of the borders of a Palestinian state and the final status of Jerusalem were among those still in dispute.

Steps by Israel to annex Palestinian territory, "if implemented, could not pass unchallenged", he said.

The foreign ministers of the 22 member states of the Arab League on Sunday unanimously rejected Trump's proposal, saying the plan "does not satisfy the minimum of the rights and aspirations of the Palestinian people".

However, the United Arab Emirates, Oman and Morocco have sug-

Briefly

RUSSIA Putin, Erdogan to boost Syria channels

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan agreed to take immediate measures to improve coordination of their countries' actions in Syria, the Kremlin said on Tuesday, a day after a Syrian attack on Turkish soldiers in Idlib Province. Putin and Erdogan, in a phone call initiated by Turkey, highlighted the need to follow their agreements relating to Idlib that envisage increasing cooperation to "neutralize extremists", the Kremlin said. In Turkey's account of the phone call earlier on Tuesday, Erdogan told Putin that Turkey will use its self-defense rights in the event of another attack on Turkish military personnel in Syria.

MEXICO Children among dead in arcade shootout

Four gunmen killed nine people, including a 12-year-old boy and four teenagers, in a blaze of gunfire at a slot-machine arcade in the central state of Michoacan, part of a wave of violence sweeping the country's avocado heartland. Michoacan's attorney-general said in a statement late on Monday that eight people died during the arcade shootout in Uruapan, the state's second-largest city. The ninth victim died while receiving medical attention, and others were injured. The youngest victims were aged 12 and 13. Others aged 14, 17 and 18 also died, the prosecutor's office said. Footage on social media showed bodies lying in pools of blood on the floor of the arcade.

IRAN Teheran to keep up jet probe cooperation

Iran's Civil Aviation Authority said on Tuesday that it would keep working with other countries investigating the downing of a Ukrainian passenger plane last month and it called on all parties to avoid politicizing the issue. Iran's Revolutionary Guard shot down the airliner on Jan 8, killing all 176 people onboard. It later admitted it had done so by mistake while on high alert hours after the Guard had fired at US targets in retaliation for a US strike that killed Iranian military commander general Qasem Soleimani. On Monday, Iran blamed Ukraine for leaking what it described as confidential evidence and said it would no longer share material with Kiev from the investigation.

NEW ZEALAND Hundreds flee homes to escape flooding

Hundreds of people evacuated their homes and farms on Wednesday to escape flooding in southern New Zealand. Authorities told many residents in the towns of Gore, Mataura and Wyndham that they should leave immediately as rivers continued to rise following heavy rainfall. Several hundred tourists were being evacuated from Milford Sound after getting stuck there earlier this week when flooding and mudslides cut off car access. Many of the tourists were evacuated by helicopters.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

World rejects Washington's Middle East peace plan

By LIU XUAN
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The US peace plan for the Middle East is increasingly looking all but dead, given that the proposal lacks justice and will not gain recognition from the international community, experts said in the wake of mounting opposition.

The European Union on Tuesday rejected parts of US President Donald Trump's plan for the troubled region. Josep Borrell, the EU's foreign policy chief, said the initiative departs from "internationally agreed parameters".

His comments amounted to the latest rejection of the so-called peace plan since its announcement last month. Opposition has already

been voiced by Palestine, Iran and the Arab League, as well as the United Nations.

The response stems from the plan being only a "partial agreement", which only takes Israeli interests into account and ignores the Palestinians' claims, said Shu Meng, a researcher at the Middle East Studies Institute at Shanghai International Studies University.

Citing the key issues between Palestine and Israel — the settlements, the status of Jerusalem and the return of the refugees, Shu said the plan did not seek to balance out the two countries' competing positions.

"Although Israel will not establish new settlements for the time being, recognizing that all existing settlements belong to Israel can be equal

to recognizing that Israel's occupation of Palestine is legal," she said.

Recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital and strictly limiting the number of refugees allowed to return also made the agreement "a tailor-made plan for Israel", Shu added.

"Such an unfair plan will not get the support of the international community, and can also further worsen the situation in the region," she said.

Sun Degang, a researcher from the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, said the plan "fails to fundamentally eliminate the root causes" of the conflicts between Israel and Palestine, and may even cause regional conflicts.

Sun said the plan only provided the obligations that Palestine must assume, rather than outline the equal obligations required of the two sides.

Consensus challenged

He said the plan challenged the consensus of the international community on the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and would not be accepted globally.

The consensus, also known as the two-state solution, envisages an independent state of Palestine alongside the state of Israel, west of the Jordan River, based on the borders before a war in 1967.

Trump's plan, unveiled last week, foresees the eventual creation of a Palestinian state, but falls far short

gested it could be the basis for future talks and applauded Washington's efforts, but they do not think the current iteration is viable.

Russian news agencies cited a Kremlin spokesman as saying on Sunday that the peace plan presented by Trump contravenes several UN resolutions.

"We see the reaction from the Palestinians, we see the reaction of a wide range of Arab states which have sided with the Palestinians in rejecting the plan. This, obviously, makes one think about its feasibility," Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying.

The Palestinian Authority has cut all ties with the United States and Israel, including those relating to security, after rejecting the plan put forward by Trump.

Reuters and AP contributed to this story.