



U.S. woos Asia with plan to rival China's "Belt and Road"

BANGKOK (AP) — U.S. commerce secretary Wilbur Ross says the U.S. will invest and trade more in Asia as it rolls out an American plan to support "sustainable" projects in Asia. The plan announced at a U.S. business forum in Bangkok is meant to rival China's own multibillion dollar "Belt and Road" infrastructure program. Ross led a high-powered trade mission in Asia and attended a regional summit. As he was talking up U.S. trade and investment, China opened a lavish import expo in Shanghai showcasing its own eagerness to do business. Chinese President Xi Jinping vowed to open Chinese markets further and clinked wine glasses with French President Emmanuel Macron, who urged Beijing and Washington to end the trade war that is clouding an already murky global economic outlook.

Farmers blamed for Delhi's pollution say they are helpless

AMRITSAR, India (AP) — Indian farmers said they're being unfairly criticized for causing the worst air pollution in the capital because of the burning of stubbles in fields. A recent air quality index registered at 273. Authorities had declared a health emergency when the index crossed 500 — 10 times the level considered healthy by WHO standards. Despite a ban on stubble burning, farmers say they have no choice but to set fire to the crop residue. Farmers in Haryana and Punjab states, bordering New Delhi, traditionally resort to stubble burning during the months of October and November as a cheap way of clearing their fields after harvesting the crops. This year's record pollution has also been aggravated by smog from festival fireworks. In an effort to tackle the high pollution levels, the New Delhi government is experimenting at limiting the number of cars on the road and halting construction activity. New Delhi's top elected official, chief minister Arvind Kejriwal, said his government had played its part and blamed farmers for setting the fires. The farmers, reluctant to stop stubble burning, criticize the government for blaming them. "We are helpless," said Balwinder Singh Chabba, a farmer in northern Punjab state. He said he cannot afford any delay in getting his fields clear of stubble from the previous crop before sowing the next one. State and central governments, often led by rival political parties, also blame each other for the pollution crisis.

Angkor temple complex ending elephant rides

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia (AP) — Officials in Cambodia have ordered elephants that serve as tourist attractions at the country's famed Angkor temple complex be moved to a new home in a suitable jungle area. The agency that oversees the Angkor site said in a statement that it is important for the animals to be able to live in their natural habitat, and there are other ways to provide attractions and rides for tourists. Some of the 14 elephants officially at the site are old and in ill health. They have been providing rides for tourists since 2001. A female elephant there died of heart failure in the heat after giving a tourist a ride. The agency said tourists will be allowed to see the elephants at their new location but not ride them.

Vietnam court convicts music teacher of anti-state actions

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — A Vietnamese court sentenced a music teacher to 11 years in jail for "anti-state" Facebook posts, state media reported. The official *Nghe An* newspaper said Nguyen Nang Tinh was found guilty of publishing photos, videos, and comments on his personal Facebook page with messages to instigate demonstrations and oppose the government. The newspaper, published in Nghe An province, where the trial occurred, said Tinh frequently held meetings with members of Viet Tan, an overseas-based political group that the government has branded "terrorist," to discuss "reactionary" activities, although he was not an official member of the group. It said Tinh, as a musical teacher, also taught his students anti-state songs. The New York-based group Human Rights Watch said the half-day trial ended with a predetermined sentence. "This long prison sentence, and the show trial that produced it, demonstrate precisely why Vietnam's courts are the biggest jokes in ASEAN when it comes to justice for the accused," Phil Robertson, the group's deputy Asian director, said in a statement. Vietnam, a member of the 10-country Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), does not tolerate dissent or criticism of its ruling Communist Party. Authorities arrested a human-rights activist at Hanoi's airport as she returned home after four years, Human Rights Watch said. A court in Ho Chi Minh City also sentenced three Viet Tan members, including one Australian, to 10 to 12 years in jail. Viet Tan says it is working for social justice and democratic change through peaceful means.

Chinese company in vaccine scandal declared bankrupt

BEIJING (AP) — A Chinese maker of rabies vaccine that was fined 9.1 billion yuan (\$1.3 billion) in a quality scandal that set off a crackdown on the industry said it has been declared bankrupt. Changchun Changsheng Life Sciences Ltd., which lost its production licenses last year, said in a statement that a court issued the ruling after concluding the company was insolvent and couldn't pay its debts. Revelations that authorities failed to act immediately after finding the company might have falsified production records led to an outcry among a public already upset over deaths and injuries due to fake or shoddy medicines, milk, toys, and other products. The company used expired materials, mixed different batches of products, and failed to test them properly, according to regulators. The company destroyed records to conceal its misconduct, they said. The country's No. 2 leader, Premier Li Keqiang, said the company "violated a moral bottom line." No injuries were reported but authorities recalled the company's products from China and foreign markets. Rabies is endemic in parts of China.



PIG FESTIVAL. Blindfolded men participate in a pig-wrangling competition during the Toba Pig and Pork Festival, in Muara, North Sumatra, Indonesia. Christian residents in Muslim-majority Indonesia's remote Lake Toba region launched a new festival celebrating pigs that they say is a response to efforts to promote halal tourism in the area. The festival features competitions in barbecuing, pig calling, and pig catching as well as music and entertainment. (AP Photo/Binsar Bakkara)

Swine fever: New Indonesian festival celebrates pigs

LAKE TOBA, Indonesia (AP) — Christian residents in Muslim-majority Indonesia's remote Lake Toba region have launched a new festival celebrating pigs that they say is a response to efforts to promote halal tourism in the area.

The festival features competitions in barbecuing, pig calling, and pig catching as well as live music and other entertainment. Organizers say the events are part of the culture of the largely Christian community that lives in the region.

Lake Toba is one of the destinations that the government is promoting under its "10 new Balis" program, which aims to boost tourism and diversify Southeast Asia's largest economy. Indonesia is a secular nation, but it is also the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation.

Christians in the Lake Toba area say they are worried that efforts will be made to

promote the lake as a halal tourism spot. Halal tourism aims to attract Muslim families by meeting their religious and dietary requirements — including no alcohol, certified food, and facilities such as segregated swimming pools.

Pigs are considered unclean animals in Islam and the consumption of pork is prohibited. By starting a festival celebrating the animal, organizers say they can both celebrate their own culture and protest plans for halal tourism.

The event, held for the first time in late October, attracted more than a thousand people from nearby villages and some tourists. Organizers say they plan to make it an annual event. The government has denied it is promoting halal tourism.

Lake Toba, created by a volcanic explosion, is 62 miles long, 19 miles wide, and about 1,640 feet deep.

North Korea calls Biden a "rabid dog" for insulting its dignity

By Kim Tong-Hyung
The Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea — North Korea called former U.S. Vice President Joe Biden a "rabid dog" that "must be beaten to death with a stick" in its latest swipe against foreign and political leaders it sees as hostile to the North's leadership.

The commentary by Pyongyang's official Korean Central News Agency said the U.S. presidential hopeful "reeled off a string of rubbish against the dignity" of the North's supreme leadership, an act it said deserves "merciless punishment."

It referred to him only with his surname and as vice president under Barack Obama, and in some versions spelled his name as "Baiden."

The North correctly spelled Biden's name in May when it labelled him a "fool of low IQ" after he called North Korean leader Kim Jong Un a tyrant during a speech.

North Korea often insults foreign leaders and politicians over what it sees as slanderous remarks toward its leadership or hostile policies against its government. It has made racist or sexist diatribes against Obama and former South Korean President Park Geun-hye, the country's first female leader.

Its frequent insults against Trump, including famously calling him a "dotard," turned to praise after he in 2018 made diplomatic overtures to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un that resulted in their three

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| Units per U.S. dollar as of 11/15 | |
| Bangladesh Taka | 84.6 |
| Cambodian Riel | 4063.2 |
| China Renminbi | 7.0075 |
| Fijian Dollar | 2.1533 |
| Hong Kong Dollar | 7.8261 |
| Indian Rupee | 71.599 |
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| Japanese Yen | 108.79 |
| Laos New Kip | 8846.7 |
| Malaysian Ringgit | 4.1515 |
| Nepal Rupee | 115.16 |
| Pakistani Rupee | 155.2 |
| Papua N.G. Kina | 3.45 |
| Philippine Peso | 50.575 |
| Russian Ruble | 63.76 |
| Saudi Riyal | 3.7501 |
| Singapore Dollar | 1.3603 |
| South Korean Won | 1162.9 |
| Sri Lankan Rupee | 180.23 |
| Taiwan Dollar | 30.49 |
| Thai Baht | 30.26 |
| Vietnam Dong | 23212 |