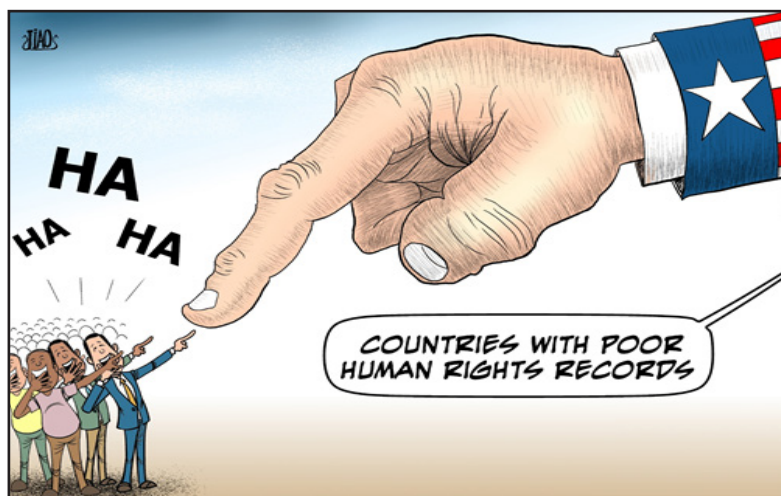


China Slams U.S. Hypocrisy on Human Rights



Nobody is listening anymore by Jiao Haiyang.

BEIJING (Dispatches) -- China lambasted the United States on Tuesday for hypocrisy and its own rights problems such as racism and political scandals, in its annual rebuttal to criticism from Washington about China's human rights record.

The United States labeled China, Russia, Iran and North Korea on Friday as "morally reprehensible" gov-

ernments that it said violated human rights within their borders on a daily basis, in the State Department's global human rights report for 2017.

In the annual Chinese response to the U.S. report, China's State Council, or Cabinet, said the United States "hurled abuse" at other countries with its falsehoods.

"It seems that in this world only the

United States' human rights situation is perfect," it said. "Looking back on 2017, those with even the slightest sense of justice can see that the United States' own human rights record is, as usual, notorious for its misdeeds, and continues to worsen."

African Americans are seven times more likely to be mistakenly jailed for murder, and violent crime keeps rising, according to the report, which was carried by the state-run Xinhua news agency and cited international media including the BBC and CNN for its sources.

It even took aim at what the report described as "serious abuses in the U.S. style of democracy".

"U.S. money politics keeps fermenting, and the rich guide the direction of politics. The weak face increasingly harsh restrictions on voting, and scandals involving politicians are frequent."

Human rights have long been a source of tension between the world's two largest economies, especially since 1989.

China routinely rejects criticism of its rights record and has pointed to its success at lifting millions out of poverty.

Prosecutors Seek Life Sentence for Karadzic



Former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic appears in a courtroom before the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (MICT), which is handling outstanding war crimes cases for the Balkans and Rwanda, in The Hague, Netherlands, April 23, 2018.

THE HAGUE (Reuters) -- Prosecutors appealed to a United Nations court in the Hague Tuesday to convict former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic of genocide for the killing of Croats and Muslims across Bosnia during the 1992-95 war.

They also appealed to the judges to increase the 40-year prison sentence handed to him on 10 other genocide counts to life behind bars.

Karadzic, 72, was found guilty of genocide in May 2016 from 10 counts of war crimes, including the siege of Sarajevo and the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in

which about 8,000 Bosnian Muslim men and boys were killed by Bosnian Serb forces.

But that court acquitted him on a charge of genocide related to attacks for pursuing the destruction of Muslim and Croat populations in other parts of Bosnia.

Karadzic's appeal against the conviction opened Monday at the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (MICT), which took over cases from a UN court for the former Yugoslavia when it closed last year. He asked for a retrial.

Prosecutors Tuesday appealed his acquittal on the 11th count, saying he should face an addi-

tional genocide conviction.

They said in their opening statement that Karadzic, who insists he is innocent, played an "essential and leading role" in atrocities.

"(Karadzic) abused his immense power to spill the blood of countless victims. Justice requires that he receive the highest possible sentence, a life sentence," Katrina Gustafson told the judges.

Karadzic, the political leader of the breakaway Bosnian Serb Republic during the war, told the court: "Nothing that is alleged in these proceedings is true."

He said the Bosnian Serbs had acted defensively in the war.

The original trial judges had ruled that prosecutors fell short of the proving genocide, which would have required showing an intent to destroy Muslim and Croat populations, rather than merely slaughtering many to drive them out.

In their appeals arguments, prosecutors insisted that Karadzic knew the levels of violence needed to carry out "ethnic cleansing" policies amounted to genocide.

"Karadzic and his associates knew that they would need to spill rivers of blood to carve out the ethnically-cleansed territories they sought and embraced this bloody path," Gustafson said.

A verdict is expected by the end of the year.

Trump Hosts Macron at White House, Hails Alliance



U.S. President Donald Trump (L) and French President Emmanuel Macron walk out of the White House on the South Lawn April 23, 2018 in Washington, DC.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) -- Praising the strength of America's oldest alliance, President Donald Trump welcomed French President Emmanuel Macron to the White House Tuesday with a pomp-filled ceremony on the South Lawn. Then they plunged into a day of talks on the future of the Iran nuclear deal and the crisis in Syria.

Trump said the relationship he forged with Macron at the start of his presidency was a testament to the "enduring friendship that binds our two nations." He thanked the French leader for his "steadfast partnership" in the recent missile strike. Macron told Trump that together the U.S. and France would defeat terrorism, curtail weapons of mass destruction and act together on behalf of the planet, a reference to Macron's work to revive a U.S. role in the Paris climate accord.

Macron was expected to lobby Trump to maintain the Iran nuclear deal and reconsider his decision to withdraw the U.S. from the Paris climate agreement. Macron's pomp-filled three-day visit to Washington underscores the importance that both sides attach to the relationship. Macron, who calls Trump often, has emerged as something of a "Trump whisperer" at a time when the American president's relationships with

other European leaders are more strained.

French officials said Paris and other European governments were coordinating efforts to persuade Trump to ease sanctions on Russia, including measures against Russian aluminum producers.

"There are concerns raised by the extraterritoriality effects of the new sets of sanctions," a French finance ministry source said. "Europeans ... have jointly warned the U.S. administration about the economic impact and consequences and the need to find solutions."

The official said France, Germany, Italy and Ireland were working together on the matter. German chancellor Angela Merkel will hold talks with Trump in Washington later in the week.

European calls for exemptions from Trump's plan for 25% tariffs on steel imports are also on their agenda, as well as the U.S. president's desire to withdraw U.S. forces from Syria as soon as practicable. Macron's visit is the first time Trump has hosted a state visit since he took power in January 2017. While the French leader has tried to develop a close relationship with Trump since he took office last May, he has so far seen few tangible results on issues from Iran to climate politics.

India Refuses to Support China's Silk Road Project



Foreign ministers and officials of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) pose for a group photo before a meeting at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, April 24, 2018.

BEIJING (Reuters) -- China failed to get India's support for its ambitious Belt and Road infrastructure project at the end of a foreign ministers' meeting of a major security bloc on Tuesday, ahead of an ice-breaking trip to China this week by India's prime minister.

The Belt and Road is Chinese President Xi Jinping's landmark scheme to build infrastructure to connect China to the rest of Asia and beyond, a giant reworking of its old Silk Road.

India has not signed up to the initiative as parts of one key project, the \$57 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, run through Pakistan-administered Kashmir that India considers its own territory.

Whether or not China will be able to win India round to the Belt and Road will likely be a key measure of the success of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's trip to China to meet Xi for an informal meeting on Friday and Saturday.

But India's foreign minister did not express support for Belt and Road in the communique released after foreign ministers of the China and Russia-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization met in Beijing.

India, along with Pakistan, joined the group last year. All the other foreign ministers - from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan - "reaffirmed support for China's Belt and Road proposal", the statement read. It gave no further explanation. The communique otherwise was a broad

expression of unity by the ministers on issues ranging from their support for the Iran nuclear deal to the need to combat the spread of extremism.

Modi is coming to China as efforts at rapprochement gather pace following a testing year in ties between the two neighbors.

The Asian giants were locked in a 73-day military stand-off in a remote, high-altitude stretch of that boundary last year. At one point, soldiers from the two sides threw stones and punches.

The confrontation between the nuclear-armed powers in the Himalayas underscored Indian alarm at China's expanding security and economic links in South Asia.

Speaking at a daily news briefing, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang said both countries had agreed holding a more relaxed informal meeting was a good idea. "It can provide a comfortable atmosphere for the two countries' leaders to have full and deep exchanges on important issues of mutual concern," Lu said.

China believes the meeting, in the central Chinese city of Wuhan, will reach important new consensus and promote the continued healthy development of ties going forward, he added. Modi will come again to China in June for a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

China will also have to tread carefully to avoid giving its close ally Pakistan cause for alarm. China on Monday reassured Pakistan that relations between the two countries were as firm as ever and would "never rust".

News in Brief

QUETTA (Reuters) -- Three suicide bombers attacked Pakistani police and paramilitary soldiers in the southwestern city of Quetta Tuesday, killing six police and wounding another 15, officials said. One bomber detonated his explosives near a police truck, provincial police chief Moazzam Jah Ansari said. Another seven policemen were wounded in that attack, he said. "It is a suicide attack, and we have a confirmation that six of our police officials are dead," Ansari told Reuters. Half an hour earlier, two suicide bombers tried to attack a paramilitary checkpoint on the city's outskirts, but troops deployed there engaged them, a paramilitary officer said. He requested anonymity because the army was due to issue an official statement. He said the troops had opened fire at the attackers, who detonated their explosives, wounding eight soldiers. No one immediately claimed responsibility for the attacks.

JOHANNESBURG (AFP) -- South African police said Tuesday one of their officers had shot dead a teenager during anti-corruption protests which have forced the president to cut short a foreign trip. Riots over alleged government corruption and poor public services erupted last week in the North West province, where cars were set ablaze and shops looted in the first wave of unrest to face President Cyril Ramaphosa, who came to power in February. "A 16-year-old boy was found dead during a violent protest yesterday evening in Taung," provincial police spokesman Sabata Mkgwabone told AFP. "He was shot dead by the police," police watchdog spokesman Moses Dlamini told AFP, adding that investigators had been dispatched to the town where the situation was "still very volatile". Following a lull over the weekend, new protests broke out Monday - this time in Taung town, 300 kilometres (about 200 miles) from the provincial capital Mahikeng which was the epicentre of last week's protests.

BANGKOK (AP) -- Thailand's foreign minister says his country is willing and able to host a meeting Tuesday on U.S. President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, but says no plans have been made to do so. Foreign Minister Don Pramudwinai was responding to questions Tuesday from reporters who noted that Bangkok was one of several possible venues mentioned for such a summit, which Trump said could take place in early June to discuss North Korea's denuclearization. Don told them Thailand was able to help with such a meeting, and had done so in the past. He said Thailand was following the issue, but there was "no progress yet" and it is a "delicate subject."

MEXICO CITY (Reuters) -- Ministers from the United States, Canada and Mexico meeting in Washington could agree on a revised North American Free Trade Agreement in the next 10 days, a Mexican business leader said Tuesday. Negotiators have said a new NAFTA could be possible by early May, and officials hailed progress on the key issue of new automotive sector rules last week. "In the coming 10 days we can really have a new agreement in principle," said Moises Kalach, head of the international negotiating arm of the CCE business lobby, which represents the Mexican private sector at the NAFTA talks. Even so, differences remain on U.S. demands to change dispute resolution mechanisms and other issues. "As soon as there is political will from the American government to go for a final deal, I think we can close this," Kalach told local radio. Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland, Mexican Economy Minister Ildefonso Guajardo and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer were to meet on Tuesday in Washington. "We've had all our (negotiating) teams in Washington for two weeks and we will continue working all this week, the weekend and into next week," said Kalach.

MINSK (Dispatches) -- Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on Tuesday said the constitution could be "improved" to share some of his powers, but not in the near future. In an annual address to lawmakers that referenced the overthrow of Armenia's prime minister, Lukashenko said he was considering decentralizing some of his authority. "The constitution will be improved. Life changes and we change," he said. "Yes, I can easily hand over some powers to other branches of government." He was speaking a day after Armenian Prime Minister Serzh Sargsyan resigned after almost two weeks of street protests. Lukashenko said he had asked the constitutional court to prepare recommendations on changes to the constitution, but cautioned that the plans were theoretical for now. "Personally, I have not even thought about a referendum yet," he said, referring to the public vote needed to bring any changes into force.

NEW DELHI (AP) -- At least 37 Maoist rebels were killed in two gunbattles between troops and insurgents in western India over the last three days, police said Tuesday. Prashant Divate, a police officer in Maharashtra state's Gadchiroli area, said six rebels were killed overnight, and troops also recovered about 15 bodies of rebels killed in an earlier gunbattle Sunday. Police initially found 16 bodies from that clash but many bodies were washed away into a nearby stream and were found floating in the water Tuesday, he said. Divate said police and paramilitary soldiers have been searching the area for several days.