

Globalisation here to stay Says Xi at World Economic Forum in Davos

China's President Xi Jinping yesterday warned against scapegoating globalisation for the world's ills or retreating behind protectionist walls, days before Donald Trump takes office. In what amounted to a rewriting of the global economic order, led for decades by the United States, Xi used his debut speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos to insist that globalisation was irreversible despite a populist backlash in the West.

There is "no point in blaming economic globalisation for the world's problems", he said, saying that the process was not at the root of the Syrian refugee situation or the 2008 financial crisis. Globalisation should be "more inclusive, more sustainable", he added, adding that currently existing global institutions are "inadequate" and should be more "representative".

Xi's keynote address kicked off four days of networking and partying by the global elite in the Swiss ski resort, in a week that climaxes as Trump takes office after a campaign that blamed China and globalisation for the loss of millions of US factory jobs. The Republican property tycoon's signal pledge is to "Make American Great Again" but Xi warned: "No one will emerge as a winner in a trade war."

Trump has repeatedly accused China of carrying out trade policies that have led to massive US job losses. He has threatened to slap tariffs of up to 45 percent on Chinese goods. But addressing a hall packed with government leaders, captains of industry, stars of entertainment and agenda-setting thinkers, Xi issued a rebuke to such thinking.



Brazilian police transfer prisoners from the Baldomero Cavalcanti de Oliveira Prison in Maceio to the new Agreste Maximum Security Penitentiary in the northeastern Brazilian state of Alagoas, on Monday. Several riots and massacres have hit Brazil's overcrowded jails this month, all of them involving suspected drug gangs. Prisons throughout Brazil are often under the de facto control of these gangs, whose turf wars on the outside are also fought out among inmates.

PHOTO: AFP

MIGRANT BOAT DISASTER IN MED 180 more killed

AFP, Rome

Around 180 people are presumed to have died in the first major migrant boat disaster of 2017 in the Mediterranean, officials said yesterday after interviewing a handful of survivors.

Humanitarian workers from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), recounted harrowing details of a capsizing that occurred on Saturday in waters off Libya after talking to four rescued passengers, two Eritreans and two Ethiopians.

The survivors, three men and one woman, arrived on Monday evening in the Sicilian port of Trapani, in a "traumatised and exhausted" state, aid workers said.

They said their two-tier, wooden boat had left Libya on Friday with more than 180 people packed on board, all of them originally from East Africa.

After five hours at sea, the engine cut out and the boat started to take on water. As it slowly sank, more and more of the people on board were submerged under water.

One of the survivors described his desperate effort to find his wife, who had taken a spot in the centre of the ship along with around 70 other women. A number of children were also on board and none of them survived.

After hours in the water, the four survivors were rescued on Saturday 30 nautical miles from the Libyan coast by a French boat operating as part of the European borders agency Frontex's Operation Triton before being transferred to another Frontex ship, the Siem Pilot.

Siem Pilot, provided by the Norwegian coastguard, arrived in Trapani on Monday evening with the four survivors, four recovered corpses and 34 people rescued from another stricken migrant boat.

UK set for 'hard' Brexit PM May unveils blueprint, vows no 'half in, half out' deal

AFP, London

Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday unveiled her Brexit blueprint, announcing for the first time that Britain will leave Europe's single market in order to control EU immigration.

In a highly-anticipated speech, May also warned the EU against imposing harsh terms on Britain's historic divorce from the bloc after more than four decades of membership.

She also revealed that Britain would look to strike a new customs agreement with the EU to be able to carve out its own trade deals with the rest of the world.

In a concession to parliamentary critics, the Conservative party leader said lawmakers would also get a vote on any final Brexit agreement negotiated with Brussels.

EU leaders have insisted that single market membership means accepting free movement -- a key issue in Britain's shock June referendum vote to leave the 28-member grouping.

"Brexit must mean control of the number of people who come to Britain from Europe. And that is what we will deliver," May told foreign ambassadors in London.

"What I am proposing cannot mean membership of the

single market." European Union president Donald Tusk said her speech gave a "more realistic" picture of what London wanted.

"Sad process, surrealistic times but at least more realistic announcement on #Brexit. EU27 united and ready to negotiate after Art 50," Tusk tweeted.

Britain has two years to negotiate a break-up deal once May triggers Article 50 of the Lisbon Treaty, officially declaring the country's intention to quit, or face leaving with no agreement.

May said London could accept departing on such terms if Brussels played hardball, but it would hurt the EU more than it would damage Britain.

May has promised to trigger Article 50 by the end of March.

May hinted that Britain might undercut the EU economically if it faces the imposition of trade tariffs.

May said Britain would remain a key intelligence and security partner in Europe.

Scotland's nationalist First Minister Nicola Sturgeon said May's speech had made Scottish independence more likely.

"The UK is heading for a hard Brexit, which threatens to be economically catastrophic," she said.

German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said May had "finally brought a bit more clarity".

MAY'S BREXIT BLUEPRINT

- Britain to leave EU's single market
- British House to vote on final deal
- Scottish leader says independence vote more likely



NEW YEAR NIGHTCLUB CARNAGE IN TURKEY Gunman caught, 'confesses'

AFP, Istanbul

A 34-year-old Uzbek man suspected of slaughtering 39 people at an Istanbul nightclub on New Year's Eve confessed to the massacre yesterday, hours after his capture in a police raid.

Authorities detained Abdulgadir Masharipov, who spent 17 days on the run after the attack claimed by Islamic State (IS) jihadists, along with three women and an Iraqi man during a massive police operation in Istanbul.

"The terrorist confessed his crime," Istanbul governor Vasip Sahin told reporters, saying the suspect's fingerprints matched those of the attacker and confirming he is an Uzbek national.

"He was trained in Afghanistan and can speak four languages. He's a well-trained terrorist," added the governor, saying Masharipov is believed to have first entered Turkey in January 2016.

Police also confiscated 197,000 US dollars (185,000 euros), two firearms and clips during the raid on an apartment, he added.

The arrest lessened the anxiety of

Istanbul residents, already on edge after a string of attacks, who had feared for more than a fortnight that a trained killer was on the loose in the city.

The suspect had apparently slipped into the night following the attack on the glamorous Reina nightclub on the Bosphorus, while police tightened borders to prevent him escaping. But he was hiding in the working-class, densely populated western districts of Istanbul.

Days of police tracking eventually traced him to an apartment in the residential Esenyurt district.

The IS extremist group took responsibility for the blood-bath, the first time it has ever openly claimed a major attack in Turkey.

Of the 39 killed in the Reina attack, 27 were foreigners including citizens from Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Israel, Iraq and Morocco who had been hoping to celebrate a special New Year.

The attack, just 75 minutes into 2017, rocked Turkey which had already been shaken by a series of attacks in 2016 blamed on jihadists and Kurdish militants that has left hundreds dead.



Modi hails multi-polar Asia Says 'a thriving, well connected neighbourhood' is his dream

AGENCIES

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday hailed the rise of multi-polarity in Asia, but went on to say that it was not unusual for powerful neighbours to have their differences.

"I see the rise of India and China as an unprecedented economic opportunity for our two countries, and for the whole world. At the same time, it is not unnatural for two large neighbouring powers to have some differences," PM Modi said in a reference to China.

Addressing over 250 delegates from 65 countries at the second edition of the Raisina Dialogue, PM Modi also had some advice for Pakistan.

"India alone cannot walk the path of peace. It is also a journey for Pakistan to make," he said, underscoring the reports of our western neighbour harbouring terrorists on its soil and resorting to unprovoked firing along the borders.

The PM displayed his willingness to enter into dialogue with Pakistan, but on the condition that it leave the path of terror.

"Pakistan must walk away from terror if it wants to walk

towards dialogue with India," he said. Stressing the importance of dialogue and discussion, Modi said, "In the management of our relationship and for peace and progress in the region, both our countries need to show sensitivity and respect for each other's core concerns and interests."

Referring to his frequent diplomatic visits to foreign countries, Modi said he has been traversing a path of rebuilding connectivity, restoring bridges and rejoining India with its immediate and extended geography.

"A thriving, well connected and integrated neighbourhood is my dream," he said.

At the flagship geo-political conference, Modi commented on the shifting spheres of power in the world. "The multi-polarity of the world and increasingly multi-polar Asia is a dominant fact today. We welcome it, because it captures the reality of the rise of many nations," Modi said.

"It accepts that the voice of many, and not the views of a few, should set the global agenda. Therefore, we need to guard against any inclination that promotes exclusion, especially in Asia," he added.

INDIAN PM AT RAISINA DIALOGUE

- Says not unusual for two powerful neighbours to have differences in reference to China
- Urges Pakistan to leave the path of terror for dialogue




A woman takes a selfie in the frosted winter landscape on the Großer Feldberg in the mountainous Taunus area near Schmitteln, central Germany, on Monday. A powerful winter storm is battering Europe, disrupting travel all across the continent.

PHOTO: AFP

Yemen war death toll hits 10,000

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

The United Nations' humanitarian aid official in Yemen has said that the civilian death toll in the nearly two-year conflict has reached 10,000, with 40,000 others wounded.

The Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs' Jamie McGoldrick said that the figure is based on lists of victims gathered by health facilities and the actual number might be higher.

McGoldrick also said that up to 10 million people need "urgent assistance to protect their safety, dignity and basic rights", according to a separate social media post early yesterday.

'HONOUR KILLING' IN PAKISTAN Mother gets death

AFP, Lahore

A mother who murdered her own daughter and set her alight for marrying the man of her choice has been sentenced to death, officials said yesterday, in a case that had revolted many in Pakistan.

Zeenat Bibi, 16, was doused with kerosene and set alight in June last year in Pakistan's teeming cultural capital Lahore, a little over a week after she wed 20-year-old mechanic Hasan Khan against her family's wishes.

A judge in an anti-terror court in Lahore sentenced her mother Perveen Bibi to death on murder and terrorism charges, prosecutor Mian Mohammad Tufail told AFP. Bibi also received a 14-year jail term and was fined one million rupees (\$9,300) under separate counts related to the killing. Her son Mohammad Anees was jailed for life and fined 1.5 million rupees for his role in the killing, Tufail said. Hundreds of women are killed by their relatives each year after allegedly bringing shame on their families in the deeply conservative Muslim country.



Obama warns Trump not to jettison Iran nuke deal

AFP, Washington

US President Barack Obama on Monday marked the first anniversary of the nuclear deal with Iran by emphasising its "significant and concrete results" and warning against undoing a pact supported by the world's major powers.

In language that seemed clearly directed at incoming president Donald Trump, who is set to take office on Friday, a White House statement said "the United States must remember that this agreement was the result of years of work, and represents an agreement between the world's major powers -- not simply the United States and Iran."

It said the deal had "achieved significant, concrete results in making the United States and the world a safer place" and "verifiably prevents Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon."

Such a diplomatic solution, it added, was "far preferable to an unconstrained Iranian nuclear program or another war in the Middle East."

Trump has often denounced the nuclear

deal, and in a Sunday interview with the Times of London and Bild newspaper of Germany he continued his criticism, saying, "I'm not happy with the Iran deal, I think it's one of the worst deals ever made."

But he declined to say whether he intended to "renegotiate" the deal, as he asserted regularly during the presidential campaign.

Meanwhile, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday there was no chance of Iran renegotiating the nuclear deal with world powers if US President-elect Donald Trump demands it.

"The nuclear deal is finished, it has been approved by the UN Security Council and has become an international document. It is a multilateral accord and there is no sense in renegotiating it," said Rouhani at a news conference.

"Mr Trump, the president-elect, has made various statements that the nuclear deal does not satisfy him, that it was not a good deal or even that it was the worst deal ever," said Rouhani.

SYRIA PEACE TALKS IN ASTANA Moscow invites Trump officials

AGENCIES

Russia's foreign minister says that Moscow is inviting representatives of the incoming US administration to attend upcoming Syria talks in Kazakhstan.

Sergey Lavrov said at a news conference yesterday that Russia is encouraged by President-elect Donald Trump's focus on combating terrorism.

He voiced hope that Russian and US experts could start discussions on "fighting terrorism" in Syria, in Kazakhstan's capital when Syrian government and opposition representatives meet for talks on Monday.

He said: "We hope that the new administration will be able to accept that proposal," adding that the talks in Astana will offer "the first opportunity to discuss a more efficient fight against terrorism in Syria".

Lavrov said that Russia expects that cooperation on settling the Syrian crisis will be more productive than it was with the Obama administration, reports Al Jazeera. "One of the objectives of the meeting in Astana is first of all to consolidate the ceasefire," Lavrov said of the talks due to begin on January 23. Organised by rebel backer Turkey and regime allies Russia and Iran, the Astana meeting is the latest bid to put an end to the brutal conflict raging since March 2011.