

world

Kim Jong Un calls for 2nd meet

Washington, United States

U.S. President Donald Trump has received a "very positive" letter from North Korean leader Kim Jong Un seeking a follow-up meeting after their historic summit in Singapore, the White House said.

"It was a very warm, very positive letter," White House spokeswoman Sarah Sanders said, adding that the message showed Pyongyang's "continued commitment to focus on denuclearization" on the Korean Peninsula.

"The primary purpose of the letter was to schedule another meeting with the president, which we are open to and are already in the process of coordinating," she said Monday at the first White House press briefing in nearly three weeks.

EU nations urge not to demolish W. Bank village

Jerusalem, Undefined

Five European countries have urged Israel not to raze a Palestinian Bedouin village in the occupied West Bank, where authorities are allowed to move ahead with the demolition as early as Wednesday.

France, Germany, Italy, Spain and Britain on Monday issued a renewed call for Israel not to demolish the village of Khan al-Ahmar, where around 200 people live.

"The consequences a demolition and displacement would have on the residents of this community, including their children, as well as on the prospects of the two-state solution would be very serious," the countries said in a joint statement.

China mulls censoring online religious content

Beijing, China

Chinese authorities have drafted sweeping new regulations that would severely restrict religious content online, including images or even descriptions of religious activities from praying and chanting to burning incense.

The move comes as Beijing tightens the screws on religion, especially for followers of Islam and Christianity.

The new rules would only allow members of officially licensed organizations to post certain kinds of religious content, according to a draft document published online Monday by the bureau of religious affairs.

Russia begins biggest ever military games

The week-long war games dubbed "Vostok-2018" (East-2018) "have kicked off" in far eastern Russia

● Latest addition is Iskander missiles that can carry nuclear warheads.

● Deployed several frigates equipped with Kalibr missiles

Chita, Russia | AFP

Russia launched yesterday what it called its largest ever military drills, with hundreds of thousands of troops taking part along with Chinese soldiers in a show of force NATO condemned as a rehearsal for "large-scale conflict."

President Vladimir Putin is expected to attend the games after hosting an economic forum in Russia's far eastern city Vladivostok where his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping is one of the prominent guests.

The week-long war games dubbed "Vostok-2018" (East-2018) "have kicked off" in far eastern Russia, the defence ministry said.

Taking part in the drills are around 300,000 soldiers, 36,000



Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping cook pancakes while visiting "The Far East Street" exhibition on the sidelines of the Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok

military vehicles, 80 ships and 1,000 aircraft, helicopters and drones. Some 3,500 Chinese troops will take part.

The defence ministry released video footage of military vehicles, planes, helicopters and ships getting into position for the initial stage of the drills.

Putin praised Russia's increas-

ingly close ties with China as he met with Xi at the economic forum in Vladivostok on Tuesday.

"We have trustworthy ties in political, security and defence spheres," the Russian leader said. Xi for his part said the two countries' "friendship is getting stronger all the time."

The drills, which also include

Mongolian soldiers, have been condemned by NATO as a rehearsal for "large-scale conflict".

The military exercises come at a time of escalating tensions between Moscow and the West over accusations of Russian interference in western affairs and conflicts in Ukraine and Syria.



Russia's previous military exercise in the region, Vostok-2014, was almost half the size, with 155,000 soldiers participating.

The Russian army has compared the show of force to the USSR's 1981 war games that saw between 100,000 and 150,000 Warsaw Pact soldiers take part in "Zapad-81" (West-81) -- the largest military exercises of the Soviet era. But Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu said these exercises are even larger.

"Imagine 36,000 military vehicles moving at the same time: tanks, armoured personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles -- and all of this, of course, in conditions as close to a combat situation as possible," Shoigu said.

50 dead as Indian bus plunges into valley

New Delhi, India

Fifty people died when a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims plunged into a valley in southern India yesterday.

The bus carrying 80 people was returning from the famous Hindu temple of Kondagattu Anjaneya Swamy in the hilly southern state of Telangana when it skidded off the road.

Broken glass, slippers and luggage lay scattered next to lifeless bodies that were lined up at the scene, as locals pulled out survivors from the mangled vehicle. They then carried them uphill to get medical attention. Some climbed onto the bus and others tried to reach the injured through the front portion which was completely smashed.

NY commemorates 17th anniversary of Sep 11

New York, United States

New York yesterday honored the nearly 3,000 people killed on September 11, 2001 in a ceremony at Ground Zero, the site where hijacked Al-Qaeda planes brought down the Twin Towers.

The 17th anniversary was commemorated in fog and gentle rain by relatives of those who were killed, police officers, fire fighters and officials, who remembered what remains the



A young boy and his mother looks down into the South Pool during observances at the annual ceremony at the Ground Zero memorial site

deadliest single attack on US soil. They gathered at the National September 11 Memorial and marked moments of silences at 8:46 am and 9:03 am, the exact times that the passenger jets struck the North and South Towers. New York Governor Andrew Cuomo, the US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley and Mayor Bill de Blasio, together with his predecessors, Michael Bloomberg and Rudy Giuliani, were among those who attended.

A million told to flee as Hurricane stalks eastern US

Charleston, United States

More than a million people were under evacuation orders in the eastern United States yesterday, where powerful Hurricane Florence threatened catastrophic damage to a region popular with vacationers and home to crucial government institutions.

The menacing Category 4 storm packed winds of 130 miles (215 kilometers) per hour over the Atlantic.

"This is one of the worst storms to hit the East Coast in



The guided-missile destroyer USS Nitze (DDG 94) departs Naval Station Norfolk on September 10, 2018 in preparation for Hurricane Florence.

many years," President Donald Trump warned on Twitter. "Please be prepared, be careful and be SAFE!"

South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster ordered as many as one million coastal residents to leave their homes ahead of the storm's projected arrival on Thursday. Schools in 26 of the state's 46 counties were ordered closed from Tuesday.

The governor of neighboring North Carolina ordered an evacuation of the Outer Banks, barrier islands that are a popular tourist destination, and parts of

coastal Dare County.

Virginia, home to major government and military facilities, declared a state of emergency and 245,000 coastal residents there were ordered to evacuate by 8:00 am Tuesday including from the Eastern Shore, another popular beachfront getaway destination.

Hurricane Florence has the potential to bring disastrous flooding to areas of the eastern United States already soaked by heavy rain. It may be the strongest storm to hit the region in decades.