

## TRUMP TO PUSH FOR \$1 TRILLION OVERHAUL OF ROADS AND BRIDGES

**WASHINGTON:** President Donald Trump is launching a major push for a \$1 trillion overhaul of the nation's roads and bridges, a key item on his agenda that's been stymied in Congress and overshadowed by White House controversies.

Trump plans a series of events this coming week to highlight his effort to modernize American infrastructure - the highway, waterway, electrical and airway systems on which the nation operates. His campaign for public and private funding for the projects is expected to run from the White House, where he'll speak about upgrading air traffic control, to Ohio on inland waterways and through meetings with mayors, governors and Transportation Department officials.

The Trump administration has struggled to gain traction on many of its economic policies. Job growth has slowed in recent months instead of accelerating as the president predicted. Trump has said he has tax legislation moving through Congress but his effort has been stalled and no bill has been written. His budget plan released during his foreign trip included math errors that enabled the White House to falsely claim that its tax plan would deliver both faster growth and a balanced budget.

Trump's agenda has been overshadowed by ongoing probes into whether Trump campaign officials or associates colluded with Russian officials to influence the 2016 election, as well as scrutiny over Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey - who is scheduled to testify on Capitol Hill on Thursday.

And other policies on the agenda,

such as health care and taxes, come first on a fast-closing legislative calendar. But modernizing the nation's infrastructure remains a challenge with broad public support.

Trump's push to revamp deteriorating roads, bridges, airports and railways aims to unlock economic growth and succeed in an area where his predecessor, former President Barack Obama, was repeatedly thwarted by a Republican-led Congress.

"It doesn't matter who you are, whether you are farmer in the Midwest, or a mother driving your kids to and from school, or a worker or a college kid flying back and forth to school, you're affected by infrastructure," said White House economic adviser Gary Cohn said in a conference call with reporters.

Cohn said the nation was "falling behind and the falling behind is affecting economic growth in the United States. The president wants to fix the problems and he doesn't want to push these liabilities into the future."

**Key priority**

Trump was set to outline his legislative principles for overhauling the air traffic control system, using a White House address to propose separating air traffic control operations from the Federal Aviation Administration, a key priority for US airlines.

The president plans to travel to Ohio on Wednesday to address ways of improving levees, dams and locks along inland waterways that are crucial to agricultural exports. His visit is expected to include a speech likely to touch on partnering with states and local governments.

Cohn said governors and mayors are scheduled to meet with Trump at the White House on Thursday for a listening session focused on the efficient use of tax dollars for infrastructure projects.

On Friday, Trump will visit the Transportation Department to discuss regulatory changes related to roads and railways. Trump has noted that the approval process for permits frequently can drag on for a decade and has pressed to shorten the length of the review process.

Trump's focus on infrastructure follows the government's monthly jobs report, which showed hiring slowing down in May. The economy has added an average of 121,000 jobs over the past three months, down from a monthly average of nearly 187,000 last year despite Trump's promotion of his economic prescriptions.

On infrastructure, the administration has pointed to plans for a package of tax breaks meant to help spur \$1 trillion in new spending on roads, bridges and other construction during the next decade. It also would drastically shorten project approval times. According to Trump's budget proposal, the funding would come from \$200 billion in tax breaks over nine years that would then - in theory - leverage \$1 trillion worth of construction.

A senior White House official has said the infrastructure plan might also incentivize local governments to sell their existing infrastructure to private firms. But Democrats have warned that the Trump budget reduces infrastructure spending elsewhere, including cuts to

Amtrak subsidies, the elimination of an infrastructure investment program started under Obama and a more than \$90 billion drop-off in congressional support for the Highway Trust Fund over 10 years.

Democrats have also been critical of Trump's interest in forging public-private partnerships instead of more traditional spending on infrastructure projects. At the same time, many conservative Republicans have been wary of the idea of a massive government investment.

And with Republicans in control of Congress, Democrats have shown little

appetite for working with the president as he faces inquiries into Russia and takes a combative approach overall, from Comey's firing to the withdrawal from the Paris climate agreement.

"If the obstructionists want to get together with me, let's make them non-obstructionists," Trump said Thursday, discussing his plans to exit the Paris climate pact. "We will all sit down and we will get back into the deal. And we'll make it good, and we won't be closing up our factories, and we won't be losing our jobs." —AP



**BOULDER CITY:** In this May 19, 2017 photo, a man works on the Southern Nevada portion of US Interstate 11 near Boulder City, Nevada. President Donald Trump is planning a major push next week to promote a \$1 trillion rebuilding of the nation's roads and bridges as his agenda has struggled in Congress and been overshadowed by White House controversies. —AP

## KFH HOLDS 20 WORKSHOPS ON CUSTOMER PROTECTION IN 2017

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has organized over 20 workshops during the first half of 2017 to introduce and train various levels of administrative staff on the 'Customers Protection Guide' issued by the Central Bank of Kuwait to highlight general principles used to enhance customer protection in the banking sector.



In this regard, KFH's head of customer's complaints unit, Abdullatif Saad Al-Fadhli said that the workshops and training programs were attended by top officials and employees from various levels.

Al-Fadhli added that the guide includes very important set of regulations that had been previously issued by the Central Bank, making KFH up-to-date. These instructions are to introduce new measures to train employees as well as boost customers' awareness about the guide that was uploaded on KFH's website.



**TOKYO:** A woman looks at an electronic stock indicator of a securities firm in Tokyo yesterday. Asian stock markets were mixed yesterday following the London attack over the weekend and a private survey showing improvement in China's service sector. —AP

## ECONOMISTS EXPECT SLOWER US GROWTH, SAYS SURVEY

### US SERVICES FIRMS EXPANDED, BUT SLOWER PACE IN MAY

**DETROIT:** Forecasts for US economic growth are coming in slightly lower after a weak first quarter, according to a survey of business economists released yesterday.

The National Association for Business Economists says it's expecting gross domestic product growth of 2.2 percent this year and 2.4 percent in 2018. Those forecasts are down 0.1 percentage points from a survey in March. The survey is based on responses from 52 professional forecasters.

The gross domestic product - the broadest gauge of the economy - expanded in the January-March quarter at a 1.2 percent annual rate. That was better than initially forecast, but still weak. Unseasonably warm weather was one reason for the slow growth, since it limited spending on utilities.

Economists forecast GDP growth will rise 3.1 percent in the April-June period and 2.5 percent in the second half of the year. They're forecasting solid hiring and a low, 4.5-percent unemployment rate, which should help boost consumer spending. Inflation also is expected to remain in check.

Most of the economists surveyed believe President Donald Trump will enact an infrastructure plan and cut corporate and individual taxes before the end of 2018. That will have a positive impact on economic growth, but likely not until 2018, the survey said.

There are downside risks. Just

over one-third of the panelists say trade protectionism, a strong US dollar and higher interest rates could pose a risk to the economy in 2018. But 60 percent say there's more chance of an upside risk thanks to expected corporate tax reform, individual tax cuts and infrastructure spending. Nearly all the panelists - 95 percent - think the chance of a recession this year is 25 percent or less.

**Services**

US services companies expanded at a slightly slower pace in May compared with the previous month, a sign that modest economic growth is likely to continue. The Institute for Supply Management, a trade group of purchasing managers, says its services index slipped last month to 56.9 from 57.5 in April. Any reading above 50 indicates expansion.

Sales and new orders grew more slowly, while a measure of employment showed companies stepped up hiring. Growth has likely picked up in the April-June quarter after a sluggish start to the year.

Americans are spending a bit more, which boosts services firms, such as retailers, restaurants and hotels. Economists forecast growth will reach an annual pace of 3 percent, up from just 1.2 percent in the January-March quarter. —AP



**NEWPORT BEACH:** Rock Cod fresh from the Pacific Ocean are sold at Dory's Fleet Fish Market in Newport Beach, California, early on Sunday. Once filled with many different types of fish, the increase in global overfishing has threatened the supply in the world's oceans and according to the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, 90 percent of the world's fisheries are either being fully exploited, or are at risk of collapsing. —AFP

## ELECTION JITTERS AND CONSUMER SQUEEZE HIT BRITISH SERVICES

**LONDON:** Britain's services sector grew less than expected and car sales dropped last month, as businesses and consumers put off big decisions before this week's national election, dampening expectations of a strong rebound from a weak first quarter.

British economic growth slowed to just 0.2 percent in the first three months of this year - the weakest among the world's top advanced economies - as the cost of the pound's fall following last year's Brexit vote caught up with consumers. Many economists have said they expect growth in the current quarter to partially rebound to around 0.4 or 0.5 percent, but some said that weakness in yesterday's services purchasing managers' index (PMI) made this less likely.

"The pullback in the services PMI in May from April's four-month high is a setback to widespread hopes that the economy's slowdown in the first quarter will be fleeting," said Samuel Tombs, chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics. Financial data company IHS Markit, which published the survey, said the services PMI hit a three-month low of 53.8 in May, down from 55.8 the month before and at the low end of forecasts in a Reuters poll of economists.

"Optimism about the year ahead is running below the long-run average, weighed down principally by concerns over Brexit, political uncertainty and weaker spending by households," IHS Markit economist Chris Williamson said. Separate figures from British car dealers and manufacturers showed new registrations last month were more than 8 percent lower than a year before. The Society of Motor Manufacturers and Traders said this reflected pre-election uncertainty, as well as tax rises that took effect in April.

There was little move in sterling after the data, which came as markets digested the impact of Saturday's van and knife attack on London Bridge, as well as opinion polls showing Prime Minister Theresa May's lead has continued to shorten.

**Services drag down average**

The large size of Britain's services industry means its decline outweighed last week's stronger-than-expected surveys for manufacturers and construction firms, dragging the all-sector index to its lowest since February as well. Britain was one of the fastest-growing major advanced economies last year, and since then the number of people in work has risen to a record high - a fact May has highlighted as she campaigns for re-election.

But the opposition Labor Party has hoped in on how wages are now rising more slowly than prices, after a pick-up in inflation driven largely by sterling's fall of more than 10 percent since last year's Brexit vote. The services PMI does not cover retailers, who suffered their worst quarter since 2010 in the first three months of the year, and appear to have struggled again last month after a brief respite in April.

The Bank of England has shown little interest in raising interest rates to tackle what it sees as a temporary spike in inflation this year to just under 3 percent, especially as it expects growth to slow next year as Brexit nears.

The services PMI suggested inflation may be starting to ease in the sector. Average prices charged rose at the slowest pace since November, while corporate costs grew at the slowest rate in eight months, despite a pick-up in salaries.

But new orders flowed in at the slowest pace since February. Some businesses said it was probably a temporary lull as customers delayed decisions until after the election. Others said there was heightened concern about the economic outlook as well as "intense competition" for new work due to squeezed consumer budgets. Also yesterday, Britain's main body for manufacturers revised up its forecast for growth in the sector to 1.3 percent this year from 1.0 percent, citing a stronger world economy, but said they expected this to slow to 0.5 percent next year as Brexit nears. —Reuters

## US MULLS POSSIBLE SANCTIONS AGAINST VENEZUELA OIL SECTOR

**WASHINGTON:** The Trump administration is considering possible sanctions on Venezuela's vital energy sector, including state oil company PDVSA, senior White House officials said, in what would be a major escalation of US efforts to pressure the country's embattled leftist government amid a crackdown on the opposition.

The idea of striking at the core of Venezuela's economy, which relies on oil for some 95 percent of export revenues, has been discussed at high levels of the administration as part of a wide-ranging review of US options, but officials said it remains under debate and action is not imminent.

The officials, speaking on condition of anonymity, told Reuters the United States could hit PDVSA as part of a "sectoral" sanctions package that would take aim at the OPEC nation's entire energy industry for the first time.

But they made clear that the administration is moving cautiously, mindful that if such an unprecedented step is taken it could deepen the country's economic and social crisis, in which millions suffer food shortages and soaring inflation. Two months of anti-government unrest has left more than 60 people dead. Another complicating factor would be the potential impact on oil shipments to the United States, for which Venezuela is the third largest oil supplier after Canada and Saudi Arabia. It accounted for 8 percent of US oil imports in March, according to US government figures.

"It's being considered," one of the officials told Reuters, saying aides to President Donald Trump have been tasked to have a recommendation on oil sector sanctions ready if needed.

"I don't think we're at a point to make a

decision on it. But all options are on the table. We want to see the bad actors held to account." The US deliberations on new sanctions come against the backdrop of the worst protests faced yet by socialist President Nicolas Maduro, who critics accuse of human rights abuses in a clampdown on the opposition.

Since Trump took office in January, he has stepped up targeted sanctions on Venezuela, including on the vice president, the chief judge and seven other Supreme Court justices. He has pressed the Organization of American States to do more to help resolve the crisis.

While Trump has taken a more active approach to Venezuela than his predecessor Barack Obama, he has so far stopped short of drastic economic moves that could hurt the Venezuelan people and give Maduro ammunition to accuse Washington of meddling.

The two administration officials said the United States is also prepared to impose further sanctions on senior officials it accuses of corruption, drug trafficking ties and involvement in what critics see as a campaign of political repression aimed at consolidating Maduro's rule.

But broad measures against the country's vital oil sector - for which the United States is the biggest customer - would significantly ratchet up Washington's response. The United States has imposed sectoral sanctions against Russia's energy, banking and defense industries over Moscow's involvement in Ukraine's separatist conflict. The officials declined to specify the mechanisms under consideration and said the timing of any decision would depend heavily on developments on the ground in Venezuela. —Reuters

### For Rent

In a Luxurious and Privileged Compound at Abou Halifa Region Facing the National Park and the Sea

**Duplex & Triplex Villas** 3/4 Bedrooms + 3/4 Bathrooms  
+ Big Salon + Separate pool  
All Master Bathrooms is Marble

Volleyball Court / Basketball Court / Hotel Lobby  
Pools + Jacuzzi / Billiard / 213 Car Parking Areas

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