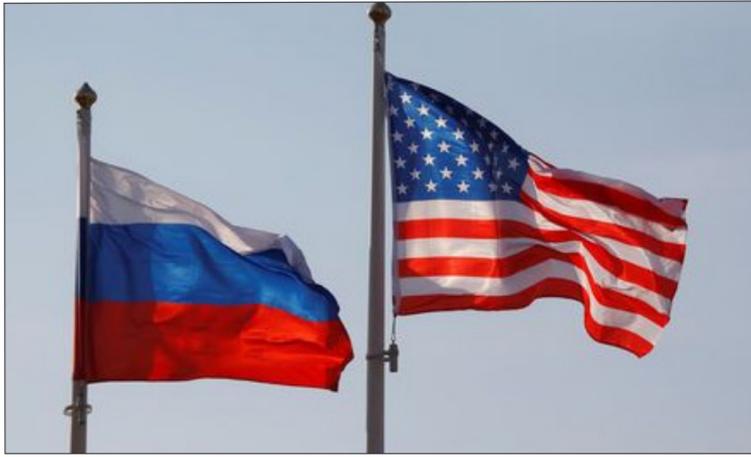


Treaty's End Would Give U.S., Russia Impetus to Make More Nukes: Study

WASHINGTON - The demise of the only U.S.-Russia arms control pact limiting deployed nuclear weapons would make it harder for each to gauge the other's intentions, giving both incentives to expand their arsenals, according to a study to be released on Monday.

The expiration of the New START accord also may undermine faith in the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which calls on nuclear states such as the United States and Russia to work toward nuclear disarmament, as well as influence China's nuclear posture, historically one of restraint.

The study, produced by the CNA Corp non-profit research group and seen by Reuters, is the most comprehensive public examination to date of the con-



sequences of New START's demise. It argues for extending the 2011 treaty, which expires in February 2021 but can be extended for five

years if both sides agree. The Trump administration is deliberating whether to extend the pact, which President

Donald Trump has reviled as a bad deal and his national security adviser, John Bolton, has long opposed. Russia has said it is prepared to extend New START but wants to discuss what it regards as U.S. violations first.

The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the administration's deliberations. Trump has said Washington will withdraw from another arms pact, the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces Treaty, this summer unless Moscow ends its alleged violations, compounding tense ties. Russia denies violating the INF treaty.

The New START treaty required the United States and Russia ...*(More on P4)...(13)*

Neighbor News

Uzbekistan, South Korea to Conclude Free Trade Agreement

TASHKENT - Uzbekistan and South Korea will work on the conclusion of a free trade agreement to expand bilateral economic and trade relations, Trend reports via Uzbek media.

This decision was made following the meeting of Deputy Prime Minister of Uzbekistan Aler Ganiev and Deputy Prime Minister of South Korea Hong Nam-ki. The second meeting of the Deputy Prime Ministers of Uzbekistan and South Korea was held in Seoul. Hong Nam-ki during the meeting noted that countries should consider the possibility of concluding a free trade agreement.

He noted that South Korea will provide assistance to Uzbekistan in the development of various sectors of the economy, for instance, through the program "Official development assistance" of South Korean government.

The Uzbek side noted that it would provide assistance to South Korean companies that are planning to take part in infrastructure projects in Uzbekistan. In late March, the Ministry of Employment and Labor of South Korea increased the quota for 2019 for the citizens of Uzbekistan. The quota has been increased by 100 people and will amount to 3200 people. (Trend)

Turkmenistan, Japan Mull Establishing Direct Flights

ASHGABAT - The Turkmen delegation held talks in Tokyo on the establishment of direct air communication between the two countries, Trend reports via a Turkmen TV channel. Meetings were held with the leadership of the Civil Aviation Bureau of the Ministry of Transport, Infrastructure, Communication and Tourism of Japan and the President of the Association of Travel Agencies of Japan. Following the talks, relevant documents on cooperation in the transport sector were signed.

Representative offices of Turkmenistan Airlines have been estab-

lished in 11 largest cities of Asia and Europe. Flights to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Bangkok, Delhi, Amritsar, Beijing, London, Birmingham, Dubai, Istanbul, Almaty are especially popular.

In the period up to 2020, the modernization of the air park will make it possible to establish flights from Ashgabat to Jeddah, Medina, Cochin, Ahmedabad, Hanoi, Vienna, Sofia, Budapest, New York, Toronto. In the period of 2021-2030, it is planned to establish air links with Madrid, Jakarta, Muscat, Kuwait, Singapore, Sharm el-Sheikh, Hurghada, Cairo. (Trend)

Alawi Receives Credentials Copy of Tajikistan Envoy

DUSHANBE - Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdallah, Minister Responsible for Foreign Affairs, received a copy of credentials of Zubaydov Zubaydullo, non-resident Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan to the Sultanate, in his office on Sunday, reports Trend citing to Omanobserver.om

The two sides reviewed

means of enhancing bilateral relations and discussed major regional and international issues of common concern. Alawi wished the ambassador success in carrying out his assignments, and bilateral relations steady progress and growth. The meeting was attended by officials at the Foreign Ministry. (Trend)

Iran Marks 40th Anniversary of Islamic Republic Referendum

TEHRAN - Iran has marked the 40th anniversary of the historic referendum in which Iranians overwhelmingly voted for the establishment of an Islamic Republic following the overthrow of the monarchy of the US-backed Pahlavi regime.

In a landmark two-day referendum held on March 30-31, 1979, more than 98.2 percent of eligible Iranians voted "yes" to the establishment of an Islamic Republic in the country.

The vote, which was held less than two months after the victory of the Islamic Revolution, is considered a turning point in the modern history of Iran. Since then, the nation annually celebrates Farvardin 12 (April 1) on the Iranian calendar as the Islamic Republic Day.

The Islamic Revolution, led by late Imam Khomeini, culminated in the overthrow of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi and put an end to 2,500 years of monar-

chic rule in Iran.

Addressing the ceremony at Imam Khomeini's Mausoleum in southern Tehran on Monday, Iranian Intelligence Minister Mahmoud Alavi said the late Founder of the Islamic Republic Imam Khomeini proposed a referendum despite his huge spiritual influence among the Iranian masses in order to give popular legitimacy to the Islamic establishment.

He added that the referendum is a sign of the Islamic establishment's respect for law and people's votes.

On the referendum day, the Iranian nation called for the establishment of a system based on Islamic values and independent of world powers, the intelligence minister added. Alavi emphasized that the late Imam Khomeini never resorted to big powers in order to achieve victory over the monarchical regime and always emphasized people's role in this regard. (Press TV)

Algerian Prosecutors Ban Corruption Suspects from Leaving Country

ALGIERS - Algerian state prosecutors on Monday said they had banned corruption suspects from leaving the country after launching probes into graft and illegal money transfers abroad targeting unnamed individuals.

The moves come amid nationwide protests against President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and follow the arrest of one of the incumbent's key backers, business tycoon Ali Haddad.

Haddad, who Forbes magazine describes as

one of Algeria's wealthiest entrepreneurs, was detained overnight Saturday to Sunday at a border post with neighbouring Tunisia, a security source said, without giving a reason for the arrest. On Sunday, the Algerian authorities also banned all private aircraft from taking off and landing until the end of the month. The North African state has been rocked by weeks of mammoth protests sparked by Bouteflika's decision in February to seek a fifth term in office. (AFP)

BRUSSELS - NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg is playing down differences among member countries as the military alliance marks its 70th anniversary in Washington this week. Stoltenberg concedes there are spats over trade, climate change and the Iran nuclear deal but he insists the 29 allies are united on the need to defend each other, particularly faced with an assertive Russia. He said Monday that "the strength of NATO is that despite these dif-

NATO Chief Plays Down Rows as Allies Mark 70th Anniversary



ferences, we have always been able to unite around our core tasks. That is, to protect and defend each other."

Stoltenberg meets Tuesday with U.S. President Donald Trump and will address Congress before foreign ministers

on Thursday mark the anniversary of the signing of NATO's founding Washington Treaty. (Fox News)

Q&A: What's in A Name for Japan Emperor's New Era?



TOKYO - Japan's government has unveiled an era name, "Reiwa," or "pursuing harmony,"

for soon-to-be Emperor Naruhito, who will succeed the Chrysanthemum throne on May 1.

His father, Emperor Akihito, is abdicating, with his "Heisei" era coming to an end the day before.

A selection of the name was a top secret and the decision comes after highly guarded closed meetings and intense media speculation.

On Monday, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ultra-conservative government chose the name for the first time from an ancient Japanese document, breaking with the tradition of taking them from Chinese classic literature, a step seen as reflecting Abe's attempt to bolster national pride. Some questions and ...*(More on P4)...(14)*

Israeli Researchers - Hundreds of Fake Twitter Accounts Boost Netanyahu

JERUSALEM - Two Israeli researchers said on Monday they had discovered a network of hundreds of fake Twitter accounts that promoted Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and attacked his political rivals, a week before a national election. No direct connection had been found between the network and Netanyahu or his right-wing Likud party, said the report, part of a project aimed at riding social networks of manipulative practices. Opinion polls show Netanyahu and his main

challenger, centrist candidate Benny Gantz, locked in a close race ahead of the April 9 election.

Researchers Noam Rotem and Yuval Adam said fake names were used in more than 150 accounts in the network and hundreds more might also be bogus.

People, and not automated "bots," were behind the postings, the researchers said, naming one of the alleged operators, who denied through his lawyer involvement in any organized pro-Netanyahu network. (Reuters)

UK Should Have Said Soft Brexit Was Inevitable in 2017: Chief Whip

LONDON - British Prime Minister Theresa May's government should have said in 2017 that a softer Brexit was inevitable after it lost its parliamentary majority in an election, the chief enforcer of her Conservative Party in parliament said.

Chief whip Julian Smith, speaking in an interview with the BBC released on Monday, also criticized senior ministers for "the worst example of ill-discipline in cabinet in British political history".

The BBC said it was unprecedented for a chief whip to publicly criticize the government. It comes as May's ministers are deeply split over how to break Britain's Brexit impasse. (Reuters)

Eurozone Economy Gets Double Dose of Bad News

LONDON - The eurozone economy received a double dose of bad news Monday as inflation fell further away from the European Central Bank's target and a closely monitored survey showed the crucial manufacturing sector shrinking at its fastest rate in six years.

The developments suggest Europe is struggling to cope with global trade tensions and the uncertainty of Brexit, among other things.

They are also likely to cause concern among policymakers at the ECB. In an acknowledgement of the more challenging economic environment, the ECB last month delayed the earliest date for any rate increases and announced plans to offer banks cheap loans. (AP)

New Big Brother? India's 'Project Insight' in Full Force, Searches Social Media for Unpaid Taxes

NEW DELHI - A new computer system, which will monitor the social media activity of people for signs that they don't pay their taxes, goes online in India on Monday. Those who like to brag about their wealth may now think twice.

The system dubbed 'Project Insight' is coming into full force on April 1, but it may be no joke for those who get flagged as tax cheats by it. Commissioned by the nation's Income Tax Department a few years ago at a cost of US\$150 million, it's meant to centralize data from various sources available to the government and crunch it to



identify individuals who live beyond their declared means.

The government touts the system as a highly complicated tool, using machine learning and big data analysis to create something called a "360-degree profile" of each taxpayer. Instagram

pics designed to spark envy - strike that - share the joy of life and inspire followers are only part of what is meant to be analyzed. The system is part of a wider government effort to eradicate so-called 'black money' from the economy and boost tax collection. (RT)

Erdogan Suffers Major Setbacks in Local Elections in Turkey's Big Cities

ANKARA/ISTANBUL - Turkey's President Tayyip Erdogan suffered stunning setbacks in local elections as his ruling AK Party lost control of the capital Ankara for the first time since the party's founding in 2001, possibly complicating his plans to fight back recession.

Both the AKP and the main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) claimed victory in Istanbul, Turkey's largest city and economic hub. The AKP said it had "plenty of" evidence

of voting irregularities in Istanbul. Erdogan, who has dominated Turkish politics since coming to power 16 years ago and ruled his country with an ever tighter grip, campaigned relentlessly for two months ahead of Sunday's vote, which he described as a "matter of survival" for Turkey. But his daily rallies and overwhelmingly supportive media coverage failed to win over voters in the two main cities, as last year's punishing currency crisis weighed heavily on Turks. (Reuters)

New Zealand PM Touts 'Important' China Ties amid Huawei Spat

BEIJING - New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern on Monday played up her country's "critically important" ties with China while President Xi Jinping called for "mutual trust" amid tensions stemming from security concerns over Chinese telecom giant Huawei.

The two leaders made the remarks as they met at Beijing's Great Hall of the People on Ardern's first trip abroad since the Christchurch mosque attacks.

"Your visit to China fully reflects the importance that you and the New Zealand government attach to China-New Zealand relations," said Xi, calling the island nation a "sincere friend and partner".

The trip is also Ardern's first trip to China since she was elected in late 2017 -- an unusually long wait for the leader of a nation that signed a pioneering free-trade deal with Beijing in 2008.

Relations between Beijing and Wellington have been strained in recent months after New Zealand's intelligence agency last November halted plans for Chinese-owned telecom giant Huawei to participate in a proposed 5G network, citing "significant security risks".

But Ardern said Monday her visit to Beijing aims to further her country's "critically important relationship" with China -- New Zealand's largest trading partner, with two-way trade totalling NZ\$27 billion (\$18.4 billion) in 2018. (AFP)