

Russian, Indian Warships Join Chinese Navy's 70th Anniversary Celebrations

BEIJING - Indian and Russian warships have arrived at Chinese shores to take part in celebrations and a parade, marking the 70th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy and showcasing the forces of a dozen naval powers.

A stealth guided-missile destroyer of the Indian Navy, INS Kolkata, accompanied by tanker INS Shakti, reached the port city of Qingdao on Sunday to take part in the four-day celebration commemorating the founding of the Chinese Navy.

The most modern Russian frigate, the Admiral Gorshkov, equipped with Caliber cruise missiles, also made a triumphant entry to the Chinese port, firing a 21-gun salute.



The festivities will culminate with a PLA Navy grand parade on April 23, that will

feature around two dozen vessels from over 10 countries, including Japan, Australia, and the Philippines. However, Pa-

kistan, a close Chinese ally yet an arch foe of New Delhi, reportedly will not have its vessels participate.

Beijing plans to debut some of its newest vessels, in an apparent show of growing naval power and amid ongoing Sino-American tensions in the Indo-Pacific. Overall, 32 Chinese warships, including an aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, and the latest nuclear submarines, will take part.

China also hopes to use the occasion to foster discussions on the freedom of navigation and other maritime security issues with 'major naval leaders,' as delegations from more than 60 countries are expected to attend. (RT)

Neighbor News

Iranian President Rouhani Declares Joint Border 'Reaction Force' with Pakistan

TEHRAN - Iran and Pakistan to create a joint 'reaction force' on the border between the two countries, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said.

The announcement came during a two-day visit to Iran by Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan, the first of his tenure.

Iran and Pakistan share a 959km land border. Tehran has been complaining for years about recurring attacks by Pakistani militants on Iranian security forces, with the latest episode reported in February. The future force, which was announced by the two leaders during a joint media conference after a meeting, is intended to boost border security and foster bilateral ties.

The remote border area

has many mountains and is difficult to control. Extremist groups, based on both sides of the border, have been causing trouble for Iranians for quite some time, but Pakistani authorities see them as a problem as well, Vladimir Sazhin, senior research fellow at Russia's Institute for Oriental Studies, told RT. So it's quite natural for the two nations to coordinate their efforts in this area. "Both sides would benefit from it," he said. "I don't expect it to be a separate force per se but rather a mechanism for sharing intelligence on what is happening in the area... Iranian border forces won't tolerate a Pakistani command and Pakistani forces won't tolerate an Iranian command. (RT)

China Slams US Plan to Stop Waivers for Iran Oil Imports

TEHRAN - China has slammed US plans to tell it and other countries to stop buying Iranian oil or face sanctions, saying Beijing's cooperation with Tehran is in accordance with law.

"China has always opposed the US imposition of so-called 'unilateral sanctions' and 'long-arm jurisdiction,'" Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a daily news briefing in Beijing on Monday.

China's dealing with Iran is "reasonable and legitimate, which thus deserves respect," he added.

US officials have said the Trump administration is poised to terminate sanctions waivers it granted to some importers of Iranian oil, including China and India late last year.

The Washington Post cited unnamed State Department officials as saying that US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo would announce the decision on Monday.

He would say "that as of May 2, the State Department will no longer grant sanctions waivers to any country that is currently importing Iranian crude or condensate," the paper wrote.

Officials in Asia opposed the expected move, citing tight market conditions and high fuel prices that are harming industry. Global benchmark Brent crude oil futures rose by as much as 3.2 percent to \$74.30 a barrel, the highest since November 1, in early Asian trading on Monday in reaction to expectations of tightening supply. (Press TV)

Qatar Opens Gaza Artificial Limb, Rehab Center after Delays

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip - Qatar is inaugurating the Gaza Strip's first prosthetic hospital and disability rehab center after many delays.

Officials from the oil-rich Arab nation attended the opening Monday in Gaza City.

Qatar built the hospital after its then-emir visited Gaza in 2012. It was the first visit by a head of state since Hamas violently seized control of the territory from the Western-backed Palestinian Authority.

But a lack of qualified staff and funding prevented Hamas from operating the center. Eventually, the Qatar Fund for Development trained the hospital's 150-member staff locally and abroad. It has assumed the project's expenses for now.

Health officials say the 100-bed hospital is vital for Gaza, where more than 130 Palestinians have lost limbs over the past year during ongoing protests along Gaza-Israel perimeter fence. (Fox News)

Sri Lankan Police Find 87 Bomb Detonators at Colombo's Main Bus Station

COPENHAGEN - Sri Lankan police found 87 bomb detonators at the bus station in the nation's largest city, following horrific bombings which killed 290 people on Easter Sunday.

The detonators were discovered on Monday at a private bus stand located in the Pettah neighborhood of Colombo, police said. The officers initially found just a dozen devices, but later retrieved 75 more while clearing the garbage heap.

Police launched an investigation into the incident. It is unclear whether the devices had anything to do with the multiple coordinated bombings which took place on Easter Sunday. Suicide bombers set off explosives in several hotels and Catholic churches across the country, killing 290 and injuring hundreds more. An apartment complex was also hit. Another bomb was later discovered near Colombo International Airport and successfully de-



fused. A total of 24 people were arrested in connection with the attacks, but no group has claimed responsibility

so far. Some government officials said that the perpetrators were local Islamist extremists aided by international groups. (RT)

TV Actor Wins Ukraine Presidential Vote in A Landslide



KIEV, Ukraine - With nearly all the votes counted in Ukraine, TV star Volodymyr Zelenskyy is projected to win the country's presiden-

tial runoff vote in a landslide. The Central Election Commission says Monday that Zelenskyy has won 73% of the vote

while the incumbent President Petro Poroshenko got just 24% support with more than 96% of the ballots counted.

Unlike in most of the elections in Ukraine's post-Soviet history, Zelenskyy appears to have won both in Ukraine's west and east, areas that have been traditionally polarized. One of the campaign slogans of the popular television comedian who has no previous political experience was to unify Ukraine, which has been

torn by bitter debates over its identity as well as the separatist conflict in the east that is fueled by neighboring Russia. Even with a landslide to give him a powerful mandate for change, Zelenskyy has daunting challenges ahead.

The simmering, deadly conflict in eastern Ukraine and the conundrum over Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea are likely to dominate the agenda of the man who up until now has only played the president in a ... (More on P4)...(13)

Three Children of Danish Billionaire Killed in Sri Lanka Attacks

COPENHAGEN - Denmark's richest man Anders Holch Povlsen and his wife lost three of their four children in the Easter Sunday attacks in Sri Lanka, a spokesman for Povlsen's fashion firm said on Monday.

The spokesman declined to give any further details but Danish media said the family had been on holiday in Sri Lanka.

A string of bombings at churches and luxury hotels across Sri Lanka killed 290 people and

wounded about 500 in Sunday's attacks. A senior investigator said on Monday that seven suicide bombers had taken part in the attacks.

Povlsen is the owner of fashion firm Bestseller, which includes brands like Vero Moda and Jack & Jones, and is the majority stakeholder in online retailer Asos while also holding a big stake in Zalando.

He owns more than 1 percent of all the land in Scotland, according to Forbes. (Reuters)

Cambodian and Thai Leaders Mark Reopening of Rail Link

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia - The leaders of Cambodia and Thailand met Monday at the Thai border town of Aranyaprathet to mark the ceremonial reopening of a rail link that will restore train service between the two countries after more than four decades.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen and his Thai counterpart, Prayuth Chan-ocha, took a brief train ride across the border from Aranyaprathet to Cambodia's Poipet to celebrate the occasion. Each also shoveled some cement to mark the completion of a nearby cross-border bridge for automotive traffic.

Thai officials said regular cross-border rail service is expected to be restored soon. ... (More on P4)...(15)

Sudan Tensions Escalate after Talks with Military Break Down

KHARTOUM, Sudan - Tensions escalated in Sudan on Monday after talks broke down between protesters and the country's military rulers, who called for the reopening of roads blocked by sit-ins established during the uprising that drove President Omar al-Bashir from power.

The protesters, who have been rallying outside the military headquarters in Khartoum since April 6, have demanded a swift handover of power to civilians. A military council has ruled since al-Bashir was forced from office on April 11 after nearly four months of mass protests against his 30-year rule. The military council issued a statement Monday ... (More on P4)...(16)

Egypt Votes for A Final Day on Extending El-Sissi's Rule

CAIRO - Egyptians are voting for a third and final day on constitutional amendments that would allow President Abdel-Fattah el-Sissi to remain in office until 2030.

The referendum is virtually guaranteed to be approved, as the government pushes for high turnout to grant it legitimacy.

Authorities have waged a wide-scale crackdown on dissent since el-Sissi led the military overthrow of an elected but divisive Islamist president in 2013. The referendum is widely seen



as another step toward restoring authoritarian rule eight years after a pro-democracy uprising.

Opposition parties have called on voters to reject the measure, but they have little influence in

parliament, which is packed with el-Sissi supporters and overwhelmingly approved the changes.

Polls reopened at 9 a.m. (0700 GMT) on Monday. The results are expected within a week. (AP)

Turkey Detains Nine People over Attack on Main Opposition Leader

ANKARA - Turkey has arrested nine people, including a member of the ruling AK Party, after the country's main opposition leader was punched and his car was stoned at a soldier's funeral at the weekend, the interior minister said on Monday.

Kilicdaroglu was attacked on Sunday as he attended a funeral in a northern district of Ankara for a soldier killed in clashes with the outlawed Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants. The incident took place after his Republican People's Party (CHP) de-

feated President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party in March 31 mayoral elections in the capital Ankara and Turkey's largest city Istanbul, painful losses for the ruling party.

During campaigning, Erdogan often accused the CHP and Kilicdaroglu of links to terrorism because it had election deals in some constituencies with the pro-Kurdish opposition party HDP, which Erdogan said has ties to the outlawed PKK. The HDP denies links to the PKK, which has ... (More on P4)...(14)

U.S. Will Not Reissue Waivers for Iran Oil Imports: White House

WASHINGTON - U.S. President Donald Trump has decided to eliminate all waivers issued to eight economies allowing them to buy Iranian oil without facing U.S. sanctions, the White House said on Monday, while vowing to ensure global oil market was well supplied.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo is expected to make an announcement on Monday detailing the decision. "The United States, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates ... along with our friends and allies, are committed to ensuring that global oil markets remain adequately supplied," the White House said.

Oil prices spiked after Sunday reports that the waivers would end and remained higher on Monday. International benchmark Brent rose 2.6 percent to \$73.87 a barrel after earlier touching \$74.31, highest since early November. U.S. crude futures gained 2.4 percent, or \$1.52 a barrel, to \$65.52.

It earlier touched a high of \$65.87, a level not seen since late October. The United States reimposed sanctions in November on exports of Iranian oil after Trump unilaterally pulled out of a 2015 nuclear accord between Iran and six world powers. Washington is pressuring Iran to curtail its nuclear program and stop backing militant proxies across the Middle East.

Along with sanctions, Washington granted waivers to eight economies that had ... (More on P4)...(17)

Turkmenistan Introduces Electronic Payments for Water in Ashgabat

ASHGABAT - A digital system for services and calculations of consumers (including for drinking water) is planned to be introduced in the Turkmen capital of Ashgabat, Trend reports referring to the Neutral Turkmenistan newspaper.

An electronic database has been created under the Ashgabat Agyz Suw Association under Ashgabat City Administration, where information on consumers living in the capital, including addresses, the amount of electricity used, and payment terms, is stored. Residents can make payments via cell phones, payment terminals, and Internet provider systems.

"The phased implementation of measures

envisaged by the Digital Economy Development Concept of Turkmenistan, designed to strengthen the managerial capacity and efficiency of the system of state bodies at all levels, will strengthen communication links between various structures and the society," the newspaper writes. Ashgabat Agyz Suw previously notified citizens of the need to obtain the necessary papers for installing a water meter and make all calculations for the use of drinking water. Turkmenistan's law "On Drinking Water" stresses the importance of compliance with the rules for the use of drinking water in residential buildings. (Trend)

First Time in A While Euro Drops More Than USD in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - The Central Bank of Uzbekistan has published new exchange rates, which will be effective from April 23, Trend reports with reference to the Bank. The US dollar this week, after a fairly prolonged rise, sank a little. The US currency dropped by 14 soums 1 tiyin. From tomorrow 1 dollar will cost

8441 soums 36 tiyin. Euro fell this week as well. The cost of the European currency dropped to 9493 soums 15 tiyin, falling by 61 soums 42 tiyin compared to last week.

On the other hand, Russian ruble slightly increased. Its cost increased by 25 tiyin and amounted to 131 sum 78 tiyin. (Trend)