

## Russia Says Disagreements Still Hamper Peace Deal with Japan

MOSCOW - Russia still has significant disagreements with Japan, which stand in the way of clinching a peace deal to end a decades-old territorial row, Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Monday.

Russia and Japan have been in dispute since World War Two over islands captured by Soviet troops in the last days of the war. The islands are known as the Southern Kuriles to Russia and the Northern Territories to Japan. "I won't hide that we still have significant divergences. To start with the positions were diametrically opposed and we have said this more than once," Lavrov told reporters in Moscow after talks with Japan's Foreign Minister Taro Kono. "But the political will of our leaders to fully normalize between Russia and



Japan prompts us to activate this dialogue," he said. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is

making a push for a treaty with Russia over the islands. He is due to hold peace talks with Rus-

sian President Vladimir Putin this month. (Reuters)

### EU Offers UK 'Legal' Pledge Irish Backstop Seen as Temporary

BRUSSELS - The European Union told Theresa May on Monday that it stood by commitments to find ways to avoid triggering the controversial "Irish backstop" in their Brexit deal and that this pledge had legal weight.

In a joint reply to questions from the prime minister who is struggling to get the British parliament to back her withdrawal agreement, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and European Council President Don-

ald Tusk said the EU stood by its commitment to try and reach a post-Brexit trade deal by the end of next year in order to avoid using the unpopular "backstop". While stressing that nothing in their letter could be seen as changing or being inconsistent with the draft treaty agreed with May last month, they said a commitment to speedy trade deal made by EU leaders had "legal value" which committed the Union "in the most solemn manner". (Reuters)

WASHINGTON - The White House's national security team last fall asked the Pentagon to provide it with options for striking Iran after a group of militants aligned with Tehran fired mortars into an area in Baghdad that is home to the U.S. Embassy, a source familiar with the matter said on Sunday. The source said that the Pentagon drew up options in response to the request, which was first reported by the Wall Street Journal and which originated from the White House National Security

Council led by John Bolton.

Citing current and former U.S. officials. The newspaper reported that the request sparked deep concern among Pentagon and State Department officials.

The Wall Street Journal also reported that it was not clear whether the options were provided to the White House, whether President Donald Trump knew of the request or whether serious plans for a U.S. strike against Iran took shape at that time. The decision was prompt-

### White House Asked for Options to Strike Iran



later, unidentified militants fired three rockets that hit close to the U.S. consulate in the southern city of Basra but caused no serious damage. (Reuters)

## Neighbor News

### Malaysian Company Intends to Create Fish Farming Cluster in Uzbekistan

TASHKENT - A Farm Agrotech Sdn Bhd, one of the leading Malaysian fish farming companies, plans to implement a project to create a cluster in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan, Trend reports citing the Uzbek media.

The intensive fish farming cluster will specialize in the integrated farming of fish and fry, the production of fish food with high protein content, as well as the processing and storage of fish products. It should be noted that A Farm Agrotech Sdn Bhd has a modern energy-efficient technology that provides the production

of more than 10 species of fish and fry. The company's weekly fish production is more than 10 tons. The products are exported to China and Southeast Asia. The innovative approach of the company is the production of special fish food made of fruit and vegetables with the addition of minerals essential for the effective and fast development and growth of fish. On January 24, it is planned to hold negotiations with the fish industry companies of Uzbekistan to discuss further plans for the implementation of this investment project. (Trend)

### Turkmenistan Attracts Investments for Production of Mineral Fertilizers

ASHGABAT - In order to bring Turkmenistan among the world leaders in the export of chemical products, it is necessary to attract investments for the construction of new enterprises and the modernization of existing ones, Trend reports, referring to the speech of the President of the country Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov published in the local media during the working meeting.

The president instructed to expand the range of products of the state concern "Turkmenkhimiya" by inculcating advanced technologies, said the report of the "Neutral Turkmenistan" newspaper. "Turkmenistan produces various types of

mineral fertilizers such as nitrogenous, phosphorus and potash, which are also exported abroad. The production of a new variety of highly effective fertilizers was mastered by adding sulfur carbamide to the composition," said the report.

The head of state stressed the need to expand the production of various types of mineral fertilizers in the context of ensuring the food security of the country. In comparison the amount of mineral fertilizers produced in the country will increase in 1.6 times and will amount to 3 million 825,000 tons in 2024. At the same time, 74.5 percent of these products will be exported. (Trend)

### Iran Taking First Steps to Design 20% Modern Nuclear Fuel: Nuclear Chief

TEHRAN - Head of the Atomic Energy Organization of Iran (AEOI) Ali Akbar Salehi says the country has broken new ground in the field of nuclear technology and is now taking preliminary steps toward production of 20-percent modern nuclear fuel.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with the IRIB News Agency on Sunday, Salehi said the new nuclear fuel produced by domestic specialists will be able to keep all kinds of reactors similar to the Tehran Research Reactor running.

"Preliminary steps have been taken to design modern 20-percent fuel and we are on the

threshold [of producing it]. This [new] product is different from the previous 20-percent fuel and we can supply fuel to any reactor similar to the Tehran [Research] Reactor," Salehi said. Iran's nuclear chief added that the Tehran Research Reactor has been operating on older types of nuclear fuel so far, but the new modern fuel will boost its productivity. He said Iranian scientists have made such remarkable advances in the field of nuclear technology that instead of reverse engineering, they are now capable of designing new fuel, which is a major achievement for the country. (Press TV)

### Pakistan Unlikely to be Placed on FATF Blacklist: Miftah

LAHORE - Former finance minister Miftah Ismail believes that it was unlikely Pakistan would be placed on the blacklist of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) despite US and India's plot to blacklist the country. "The money laundering in a single season during Indian Premier League alone was more than the total volume of money laundering in Pakistan," he said while speaking along with former finance ministers Dr Salman Shah and Hafeez Pasha during a talk on "Growth, IMF and Pakistan's Economy" on the final day of a two-day ThinkFest Conference held under the aegis of Information Technology University's Centre for Governance and Policy's Afkar-e-Taza here at the

Alhamra Art Centre on Sunday. He said that Pakistan had won through vote in the FATF but the US, on the insistence of India, acted to redo the exercise. "Although, Pakistan remained on FATF blacklist in 2008-09 but now it won't occur again," he said while also complimenting the present government for taking the right steps to stop money laundering out of the country. Miftah Ismail said that the federal government was running in deficit as it was left with only Rs1,400 billion out of total revenue of Rs5,700 billion after distribution to the provinces, Gilgit-Baltistan and Azad Jammu & Kashmir under divisible pool as well as debt servicing. (Agencies)

### Integrity Initiative Faces Setback in Norway: Public 'Skepticism' of US Hinders Anti-Russia Info war



OSLO - Integrity Initiative's crusade to create a lockstep anti-Russia narrative in Europe and the US has hit a roadblock:

According to the shadowy organization, Norwegians are too skeptical of US politics and not adequately anti-Russia.

A series of leaks have revealed that Scotland-based Integrity Initiative, which bills itself as a non-partisan warrior against disinformation and propaganda, received £2.5 million from the UK government to manufacture a seemingly organic anti-Russia consensus across the Western world. To accomplish this task, the organization enlisted "clusters" of individuals working in entertainment, politics, media, and academics to help push the desired narrative. Unfortunately, this simple but elegant strategy

has faced unforeseen obstacles. According to a leaked internal report detailing the organization's activities in Norway, the Norwegian public are too "soft" on Russia - which is obviously unacceptable. To make matters worse, some Norwegians don't blindly trust the United States: "Although the public can be hard-nosed about Putin and Moscow's policies, their skepticism of US/Western politics can lead to their being less critical of Russia's position at times," the report states. (RT)

### China Says It Exchanged Data with NASA on Far Side Landing

BEIJING - China exchanged data with NASA on its recent mission to land a Chinese spacecraft on the far side of the moon, the Chinese space agency said Monday, in what was reportedly the first such collaboration since an American law banned joint space projects with China that do not have prior congressional approval.

The space agency's deputy director, Wu Yanhua, said NASA shared information about its lunar orbiter satellite

in hopes of monitoring the landing of the Chang'e 4 spacecraft, which made China the first country to land on the far side of the moon earlier this month. China in turn shared the time and coordinates of Chang'e 4's scheduled landing, Wu told reporters during a briefing on the lunar mission. He added that while NASA's satellite did not catch the precise moment of landing, it took photographs of the area afterward. (AP)

### Turkey Doing What Is Required to Maintain Peace in Syria's Idlib: Foreign Minister

ISTANBUL - Turkey is doing what is required to maintain peace and prevent violations in Syria's northern Idlib, the last major rebel stronghold in Syria, Turkey's foreign minister said on Monday. Islamist fighters have tightened their control over the area following more than a week of fighting with Turkey-backed Syrian rebels. Speaking in Ankara, Mevlet Cavusoglu also said if Idlib becomes a "nest of terrorism", it is the Syrian government's fault for bussing in terrorists from places as far as Daraa in the south. (Reuters)

### ESCAP-Energy Foundation China Sign Agreement to Boost Low Carbon and Sustainable Energy Targets in Region

BEIJING - The United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) and the Energy Foundation (EF) today signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to deepen their collaboration in promoting sustainable energy for economic development and environmental protection in the region.

Under the agreement, ESCAP and EF will work together to support Asia-Pacific countries in accelerating implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) 7 and 13 as well as the Paris Agreement targets. Both organizations also agreed to jointly promote opportunities to develop sustainable energy in Asia and the Pacific.

The MoU was signed by United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ESCAP Ms. Armida Salsiah Alisjahbana and the President of EF China, Professor Zou Ji in Beijing, China.

"Our organizations hold in common a wish to support countries of the region to pursue low carbon and sustainable development towards achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement targets. We aim to collaborate more closely and utilize the synergies between our organizations to advance these goals," said Ms. Alisjahbana at the signing ceremony.

"Driving clean energy goals and strengthening climate actions in the region and globally is the value that the collaboration aims to bring. With 20 years of experience working in China and in-depth knowledge on the economy-energy-environment nexus, Energy Foundation China endeavours to work with ESCAP and support the decarbonized growth of the region," said Professor Zou Ji.

Energy is an important entry point for many of the development challenges the region is facing.

Strong economic growth, increasing population, expanding industrialization and rapid urbanization have also resulted in the Asia-Pacific facing the highest increase in energy demand globally. ... (More on P4)... (12)

### Jordan King Visits Iraq for First Time in Decade: State TV

BAGHDAD - Jordanian King Abdullah II met Iraqi President Barham Saleh in Baghdad on Monday, according to state television, in the monarch's first trip to Iraq in more than a decade. It is the latest in a string of top-level visits to Iraq in recent weeks, which kicked off with a surprise Christmas trip by US President Donald Trump.

King Abdullah's last visit to Iraq was in 2008, when he became the first Arab leader to go to Baghdad after strongman Saddam Hussein was toppled by the US-led invasion in 2003. Saleh travelled to Jor-



dan in November. The two countries share a 179-kilometre (111-mile) border, and Jordan is a major importer of Iraqi crude oil. In 2013, they agreed on a 1,700-kilometre pipeline linking Iraq's oil-rich Basra province to Jordan's Aqaba port, but the Islamic State group's sweep across nearly a third of Iraq

put a screeching halt to the plan. Last year, Jordan approved a framework to revive it, but did not give a timeframe for the line's construction. The two states have also discussed plans for Iraq to import around 300 megawatts of electricity from Jordan to cope with widespread power shortages. (AFP)

### World Shares Sink after China Reports Slowdown in Exports

BANGKOK - Shares were lower in Europe and Asia on Monday, extending the latest losses on Wall Street after China reported a slowdown in exports.

THE DAY IN ASIA: Hong Kong's Hang Seng index lost 1.4 percent to 26,298.33 while the Shanghai Composite fell 0.7 percent to 2,535.77. The KOSPI in South Korea declined 0.5 percent to 2,064.52 and Australia's S&P ASX 200 was flat at 5,773.40. (AP)

start to the week with the Dow future contract down 1 percent and the contract for the S&P 500 also 1 percent lower.

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