

## China Says It Won't Take Part in Trilateral Nuclear Arms Talks

BEIJING - China on Monday dismissed a suggestion that it would talk with the United States and Russia about a new accord limiting nuclear arms, saying it would not take part in any trilateral nuclear disarmament negotiations.

U.S. President Donald Trump said he and Russian President Vladimir Putin discussed on Friday the possibility of the new accord that could eventually include China in what would be a major deal between the globe's top three atomic powers.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said that the country's nuclear forces were at the "lowest level" of its national security needs, and that they could



not be compared to the United States and Russia.

"China opposes any country talking out

of turn about China on the issue of arms control, and will not take part in any trilateral negotiations on a nuclear disarma-

ment agreement," Geng told a daily news briefing, when asked about Trump's remarks.

China has always advocated the complete prohibition and thorough destruction of nuclear weapons, Geng added.

China believes that countries with the largest nuclear arsenals have a special responsibility when it comes to nuclear disarmament and should continue to further reduce nuclear weapons in a verifiable and irreversible manner, creating conditions for other countries to participate, he said.

The 2011 New START treaty, ...*(More on P4)...(15)*

### Axiata, Telenor in Merger Talks to Create Telecoms Giant

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia - Malaysia's Axiata Group Berhad said Monday it is in talks with Norway's Telenor ASA to merge their Asian operations to create one of the world's top telecommunications giants with some 300 million customers in nine countries.

Axiata said in a statement that Telenor is expected to hold a 56.5 percent stake and Axiata 43.5 percent in the proposed "merger of equals."

Both companies operate in Malaysia, Thailand,

Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan. Axiata also has a presence in India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Cambodia and Indonesia but it said its Bangladesh operation would be excluded. Axiata said merged company could be the largest telecom operator in the region and potentially one of the world's top five mobile infrastructure players. In Malaysia, the union of Axiata's Celcom and Telenor's Digi in Malaysia will form the largest mobile operator in the country. ...*(More on P4)...(21)*

### US Warships Sail Through Disputed South China Sea as Trump Prompts Trade War Escalation with Beijing

BEIJING - Two US warships have sailed through the South China Sea, a move that will likely anger Beijing. The naval maneuver comes a day after Donald Trump threatened China with more tariffs as part of an ongoing trade war.

The US military has confirmed that two of its warships sailed near islands claimed by Beijing in the South China Sea on Monday. China says the waterway is part of its territorial waters, while Washington insists that the sea is open

to international transit under the principle of "freedom of navigation."

The US guided-missile destroyers 'Preble' and 'Chung Hoon' traveled within 12 nautical miles of Gaven and Johnson Reefs in the Spratly Islands, Reuters reported. Commander Clay Doss, a spokesman for the Seventh Fleet, described the maneuver as "innocent," arguing that it served to "challenge excessive maritime claims and preserve access to the waterways as governed



by international law." The move comes hours after US President Donald Trump announced he would hike American

tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods this week and target hundreds of billions ...*(More on P4)...(16)*

### U.S. Deploying Carrier, Bombers to Middle East to Deter Iran: Bolton



WASHINGTON - The Trump administration is deploying a carrier strike group and bombers to the Middle East in response to troubling "indications and warn-

ings" from Iran and to show the United States will retaliate with "unrelenting force" to any attack, national security adviser John Bolton said on Sunday.

With tensions already high between Washington and Tehran, a U.S. official said the deployment has been ordered "as a deterrent to what has been seen as potential preparations by Iranian forces and its proxies that may indicate possible attacks on U.S. forces in the region." However, the official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said the United States was not expecting any imminent Iranian attack. Bolton - who has spearheaded an increasingly

hawkish U.S. policy on Iran - said the decision, which could exacerbate problems between the two countries, was meant to send a "clear and unmistakable message" of U.S. resolve to Tehran.

Though he cited no specific Iranian activities that have raised new concerns, Iran has recently warned it would block the Strait of Hormuz if it was barred from using the strategic waterway. About a fifth of the oil consumed ...*(More on P4)...(17)*

### Turkey's Election Board Begins Evaluating Istanbul Re-Run Appeal

ANKARA - Turkey's High Election Board started evaluating on Monday an appeal by President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party to annul and re-run elections in Istanbul that saw the opposition win control of the country's largest city, local TV broadcasters said.

The main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) won in the capital Ankara and Istanbul for the first time in 25 years in the March 31 local elections, in a major setback for Er-

dogan, who served as Istanbul's mayor in the 1990s.

Erdogan's ruling AKP and its nationalist MHP allies have since called for the vote in Istanbul to be re-run, citing what they say are irregularities that affected the outcome. The parties have also filed appeals to annul results in two Istanbul districts, Buyukcekmece and Maltepe, over the same claims. While those appeals have been pending for weeks, ...*(More on P4)...(20)*

### 'Very Pleased and Delighted': Thai King Wraps Up Three-Day Coronation Events

BANGKOK - Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn greeted thousands of his subjects from a balcony of his Grand Palace on Monday, the third and final day of coronation ceremonies.

The king and queen were greeted with a band playing the royal anthem and a 21-gun salute.

The monarch and new Queen Suthida waved to a large crowd wearing yellow, the color associated with the king, and waving flags in a royal audience, a day after a grand procession through Bangkok.

"I and the Queen are very pleased and delighted to see all the citizens together to express goodwill for my coronation," he told them ...*(More on P4)...(22)*

### North Korea Tests New Missile - and Trump's Resolve

TOKYO - North Korea appears to have tested a new short-range missile - and President Donald Trump's resolve to keep it from doing more of the same in the future.

The test early Saturday was quickly played down by Trump and his top advisers, who noted it was not the kind of long-range missile leader Kim Jong Un has refrained from launching since 2017. But the sudden activity on the North's east coast, complete with fiery photos of a purported bull's eye out to sea, alarmed Washington's regional allies and suggests that Kim's missiles are improving even as the Trump administration wrestles with ...*(More on P4)...(23)*

### Captain of Ill-Fated Superjet Says 'Landing Speed Was Normal', Fire Broke out after Touchdown

MOSCOW - An Aeroflot captain who piloted the Superjet 100 in Moscow has revealed harrowing details of the accident, saying he had to crash-land with full tanks, which possibly led to the jet catching fire right after its bumpy touchdown.

There was "a bright flash and a bang" moments before the pilots began an immediate descent into Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport, Denis Evdokimov, a captain on the ill-fated Aeroflot flight, told Telegram channel Baza. To make matters worse, communication with the



ground failed "because of a lightning strike." The failure left the crew with no option but to perform a manual landing. They finally managed to establish radio contact and "could only say a couple of words" to the air traffic control,

who guided them back to the runway, Evdokimov recalled. While attempting to land, the jet struck the runway several times, probably damaging the fuel tanks and causing a fire to ignite in the rear of ...*(More on P4)...(18)*

### Spanish Courts Allow Puigdemont to Run in EU Elections

MADRID - Catalan regional president Carles Puigdemont and two other separatists who also fled abroad to escape arrest must be allowed to run in this month's European Parliament elections, Spanish courts ruled Monday.

The judgments overruled a decision by Spain's Electoral Board, which had said it would prohibit the three from running in the May 26 race to fill the country's allotted seats at the parliament in Strasbourg.

Three separate courts in Madrid ruled in favor of appeals filed by Puigdemont and his two associates, who argued that their democratic rights were being violated.

All three separatists fled Spain to avoid arrest for participating in Catalonia's failed secession attempt in 2017. Puigdemont and Toni Comin reside in Belgium, and Clara Ponsati in the U.K.

It appears that even if elected they wouldn't ...*(More on P4)...(19)*

### Dissension over Cuba Strains U.S. Ties with Allies

BRUSSELS - The recent discord over intensified sanctions against Cuba is putting relations between the United States and its allies including the European Union (EU) and Canada under strain.

Washington made the decision to activate the full weight of the Helms-Burton Act against Cuba last week, which authorizes U.S. nationals to file lawsuits over properties nationalized or confiscated by Cuba's government.

The Helms-Burton Act, which basically punishes U.S. and foreign companies that do business with Cuba, came into force in 1996, but most U.S. administrations did not apply Title III until recently.

As a proclaimed punishment for Cuba's support of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro, whom the White House is openly seeking to oust from power, Washington's decision to fully activate the act has sparked backlash as it not only prohibits U.S. citizens from doing business with Cuba, but also puts the interests of other nations in the island at risk of lengthy litigation. Many countries including some U.S. allies like Canada, Spain and the EU with large investments in Cuba have condemned Washington's move to protect their own interests. The same day Title III came into force, Federica Mogherini, the EU's foreign policy chief, said in a statement that the bloc deeply regrets such a move by Washington. ...*(More on P4)...(24)*

## Neighbor News

### China Reiterates Support for Iran Nuclear Deal

BEIJING - China commended Iran's strict fulfillment of its obligations under the Iran Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) so far and would continue to maintain and carry out the deal with relevant parties, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said Monday.

Spokesperson Geng Shuang made the remarks at a press briefing when asked for comments about the prospect of the JCPOA and the policy of imposing maximum pressure by the United States after the U.S. government announced its decision to stop issuing sanctions waivers to any country importing oil from Iran in April. However, the European Union, France, Germany and the United Kingdom reiterated their support for the JCPOA, com-

monly known as the Iran nuclear deal.

"The JCPOA is a multilateral agreement ratified by the UN Security Council, which is conducive to upholding the international nuclear non-proliferation regime as well as peace and stability in the Middle East," Geng said, stressing the deal should be implemented in a comprehensive and effective way. China firmly opposes the unilateral sanctions and so-called "long-arm jurisdiction" imposed by the United States on Iran and has reiterated many times that normal energy cooperation under international law between Iran and other countries is totally reasonable, legitimate and legal, and must be respected and protected, said the spokesperson. (Xinhua)

### 'A Lot to Learn from Iran': Tehran Helps Venezuela 'Survive' Under US Sanctions, FM Arreaza Says

TEHRAN - Iran, which has been living under tight US sanctions for several decades, is consulting the crisis-hit Venezuela on how to overcome economic blockade and boost production, Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza revealed.

For several decades, Tehran "has been growing its economy under the [US-imposed] sanctions in a bid to seek independence in various industries," Arreaza told reporters during his visit to Moscow. Explaining further, he said Iran has indispensable experience in defying continuous US pressure. Iran has been suffering from US-imposed

sanctions since the 1979 Islamic Revolution which toppled the pro-Western Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi. The restrictions targeted Iranian finances, exports and imports, as well as energy and the military. Most of the sanctions that crippled Iran's economy were lifted after Iran and the five world powers, the US, the UK, France, China and Russia, plus Germany, signed the 2015 nuclear deal. But the US has unilaterally quit the landmark accord under President Donald Trump who labeled it as "the worst deal ever," and reimposed the sanctions last November. (RT)

### Uzbekistan Becomes World Leader in Gold Sales

TASHKENT - From January to March 2019, the largest sellers of gold were Uzbekistan with 6.2 tons of this precious metal sold, Mongolia - 3.4 tons, and Tajikistan - 1 ton, Trend reports with reference to the latest report by the World Gold Council.

The leader in the purchases of gold was Russia. In the first quarter of this year, the Central Bank of the Russian Federation purchased 55.3 tons of gold bringing the volume of gold reserves to 2,168.3 tons. In the report, this tendency is associated with Russia's intention to reduce its dependence on the US dollar in the case of the introduc-

tion of new sanctions. Furthermore, during this period, large volumes of gold were acquired by the Central Banks of Turkey (40.1 tons), China (33 tons), Kazakhstan (11.2 tons), Ecuador (10.6 tons), Qatar (9.4 tons), India (8.4 tons) and Colombia (6.1 tons).

In total, in 1Q2019, the national banks of the countries world-wide acquired 145.5 tons of gold, which is a record over the past six years and 68 percent more than in the same period last year. According to the report, last year 6.4 tons of gold were extracted in Tajikistan, which became a record volume for the country. (Trend)

### OPEC, IDB Exploring Turkmen Investment Projects in Fishing Industry

ASHGABAT - The Turkmen open joint-stock company Khazar Balyk held talks with the OPEC Fund for International Development and the Islamic Corporation for the Development of the Private Sector (under the IDB), Trend reports with reference to the Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs of Turkmenistan (UIET).

There was a discussion of the prospects for cooperation in the implementation of investment projects, the report said. It was earlier reported that the Turkmen open joint-stock company

Khazar Balyk, which is a member of the UIET, plans to organize a fishing farm in the Karakum desert.

At the second stage, it is planned to build industrial incubators for breeding various types of fish, refrigeration units for storing the fish and sorting the finished fish products.

About 25 species of fish live in the artificial lake "Altyn Asyr". The first phase of the fishing farm construction project was commissioned in 2009. This project is estimated at several billion US dollars. (Trend)