

Japanese Opposition Calls for Resignation of MP Who Suggested War with Russia over Kurils

TOKYO - Japanese legislators are preparing a resolution calling for the expulsion from the lower house of the National Diet of a lawmaker who suggested war was a way for Japan to take the Kuril Islands from Russia.

Hodaka Maruyama MP horrified many in Japanese political circles during his visit to the Kurils earlier this month, when he asked a former Japanese resident of one of the islands if he thought "the Northern territories" - as the islands are known in Japan - "could only be taken back by means of war."

The lawmaker later apologized, claiming he was drunk. But his party - the Nippon Ishin Japan Innovation Party - the third largest opposition



force in parliament, took matters into their own hands. They expelled the politician,

while the party leader apologized to Russia for his remarks.

Maruyama was also urged to give ...*(More on P4)...(7)*

Japan's Top Trade Negotiator Says Auto Exports to U.S. Not to be Capped

TOKYO - Japan's minister for economic and fiscal policy Toshimitsu Motegi said Friday that he has received assurances from the United States that as part of a bilateral deal Japan will not be asked to limit or restrict its exports of automobiles.

Following talks with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer about remarks reportedly made by U.S. President Donald Trump that Japan and the European Union (EU) would have their auto exports to the

United States capped, Japan's top trade negotiator said Lighthizer had said this was not the case.

"Japan has maintained that it is against measures that distort fair and open trade practices," Motegi told a press briefing on the matter. "Of course, that includes restrictions on exports, in other words, volume caps. Lighthizer confirmed that the United States will not seek such measures," Motegi was quoted as saying. ...*(More on P4)...(11)*

Indian Airbases in Kashmir on Alert amid Warning of Terrorist Attacks - Report

NEW DELHI - Two Indian airbases in Kashmir have been placed on high alert in response to a warning of planned terrorist attacks, reports say. One of the sites houses jets that participated in aerial combat with Pakistan in February.

Fresh intelligence data shows that terrorists plan to target two military sites on the Indian-controlled part of Kashmir, New Delhi-based ANI reported on Friday, citing government sources.



The installations mentioned are Srinagar and Awantipora airbases, both in western Jammu and Kashmir State, bordering Pakistan. Security forces in and around the bases have been reportedly put on high alert.

The report did not specify the type of anticipated attacks or the terrorist groups involved. ...*(More on P4)...(8)*

Trump Says He Hopes for No War as US-Iran Tensions Escalate



WASHINGTON - President Donald Trump says he hopes the U.S. is not on a path to war with Iran amid fears that his two most hawkish advisers could

be angling for such a conflict with the Islamic Republic. Asked Thursday if the U.S. was going to war with Iran, the president replied, "I hope not" -

a day after he repeated a desire for dialogue, tweeting, "I'm sure that Iran will want to talk soon."

The tone contrasted with a series of moves by the U.S. and Iran that have sharply escalated tensions in the Middle East in recent days. For the past year, national security adviser John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo have been the public face of the administration's "maximum pressure" campaign against Tehran.

On Friday, an official with Iran's powerful Revolutionary Guard warned that Iranian missiles can "easily reach warships" in the Persian Gulf and elsewhere in the Middle East. The semi-official Fars news agency quoted Mohammad Saleh Jokar as saying that Iran's missiles have a range of 2,000 kilometers - about 1,250 miles - and can attack any target in the region. The escalating rhetoric has rattled lawmakers who are demanding ...*(More on P4)...(9)*

Council of Europe to Allow Russia to Vote Again

MOSCOW - The Council of Europe adopted a declaration Friday that allows Russia to start voting again at the continent's main human rights body following a spat related to its annexation of the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine in 2014.

Foreign ministers from the council's 47 member states voted overwhelmingly to support a declaration that says that all members should be "entitled to participate" in the council's two main organs "on an equal ba-

sis."

Russia will now have to accredit a delegation to the Council of Europe before it can start voting on motions. The council, which is based in Strasbourg, France and is open to all European countries regardless of whether they are in the European Union or not, suspended Russia's voting rights after the annexation of Crimea, which Ukraine and most of the world viewed as illegal. Russia, a member since 1996, then ...*(More on P4)...(12)*

Kremlin Pledges a Response to New U.S. Sanctions on Russian Individuals

MOSCOW - The Kremlin said on Friday it would respond in kind to a new round of U.S. sanctions on Russian nationals, saying its retaliation would be consistent with Russia's national interest. The United States on Thursday imposed sanctions on a Chechen group and five people, including at least three Russians, over allegations of human rights abuses, including extrajudicial killings and the torture of LGBTI people. The sanctions against the Terek Special Rapid Response Team in Russia's southern region of Chechnya and the five people were announced by the U.S. Treasury under the Magnitsky Act. (Reuters)

UAE, Keen to Maintain Safe-Haven Image, Tempers Tanker Attack Response

DUBAI - The United Arab Emirates, though a prominent foe of Iran in the Middle East's power struggles, has tempered its reaction to attacks on oil tankers off its coast in an effort to protect its reputation as a safe and stable business hub.

While its close ally Saudi Arabia unleashed a barrage of tweets accusing their mutual enemy of ordering drone strikes on its oil installations on Tuesday, the UAE held off blaming anyone for Sunday's attacks pending an investigation.

Abu Dhabi pledged restraint and de-escalation during what it called a "difficult situation" caused by Iranian behavior in the region. Iran has distanced itself from the attack, which no-one has claimed. Yemen's Iran-aligned ...*(More on P4)...(13)*

Ukraine Ruling Coalition Breaks Up in Setback for Incoming President

KIEV - Ukraine's ruling coalition broke up on Friday and one of its two constituent parties said it would try to form a new one, annoying President-elect Volodymyr Zelenskiy who is weighing calling a snap parliamentary election to bolster his power.

The decision of the People's Front party to quit the faction of outgoing President Petro Poroshenko triggers a 30-day period for discussions on forging a new coalition. This would probably prevent Zelenskiy from calling an election as it would be too close to the current planned date of the poll in late October.

Zelenskiy, a comedian with no prior political experience, won the



presidency by a landslide last month but his new party has no representation in parliament, making it expedient for him to call a snap poll while his popularity remains high.

His ability to work with parliament will be crucial to his ability to meet the expectations of his voters and also pass reforms needed to keep foreign aid flowing.

"So the current game in parliament is another testimony to the fact that deputies are indifferent to the people who elected them," Zelenskiy's press service said in a statement criticizing the move by the People's Front. "However, we want to remind you that the country needs changes and deep reforms. This is ...*(More on P4)...(10)*

Spanish Government Expects PM Investiture Vote Early July

MADRID - Spain's new parliament will likely vote at the beginning of July on who will become prime minister, acting government spokeswoman Isabel Celaa said on Friday. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's Socialists won a national election at the end of April but failed to gain a parliamentary majority.

Sanchez is for now acting prime minister and is expected to stay in the job, but will need to seek partners to be voted in what is a very fragmented parliament. "We estimate that the investiture may take place end of June or beginning of July, though July is more realistic," Celaa said after a weekly cabinet meeting. (Reuters)

Architect I.M. Pei Dies at Age 102: New York Times

CLEVELAND - I.M. Pei, whose modern designs and high-profile projects made him one of the best-known and most prolific architects of the 20th century, has died, the New York Times reported on Thursday. He was 102.

Pei, whose portfolio included a controversial renovation of Paris' Louvre Museum and the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, died overnight, his son Chien Chung Pei told the newspaper.

Jeoh Ming Pei, the son of a prominent banker in China, left his homeland in 1935, moving to the United States and studying architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. After teaching and working for the U.S. government, he went to work for a New York developer in 1948 and started his own firm in 1955.

The museums, municipal buildings, hotels, schools and other structures that Pei built around the world showed precision geometry and an abstract quality with a reverence for light. They were composed of stone, steel and glass and, as with the Louvre, he often worked glass pyramids into his projects. The Louvre, parts of which date to the 12th century, proved to be Pei's most controversial work, starting with the fact that he was not French. After being chosen for the job by President Francois Mitterrand amid much secrecy, Pei began by making a four-month study of the museum and French history. ...*(More on P4)...(14)*

Neighbor News

Previous Governments, Responsible for Economic Crisis: Firdous

ISLAMABAD - Special Assistant to Prime Minister on Information and Broadcasting Dr Firdous Ashiq Awan Friday said that previous governments were responsible for economic crisis in the country.

In a tweet, she said that Sharif family did commit economic terrorism

with the country which resulted into the bleeding of the economy.

Reacting on reports that PML-N will launch movement against the government after Eid-ul-Fitr, Firdous Ashiq Awan said the party has no justification to go to the masses after devastating the economy. (Monitoring Desk)

Russia, Turkmenistan Negotiating Five-Year Gas Contract

ASHGABAT - Russia and Turkmenistan are discussing the possibility of concluding a five-year contract for the purchase of Turkmen gas, Trend reports referring to Russian TASS agency.

"The supplies may be launched starting from the second half of the year," the news source said. It refers to the statement made by Russian Deputy Minister of Energy Anatoly Yanovsky on the sidelines of the international conference entitled "Prospects for energy cooperation between Russia and the EU. Gas aspect" in Berlin.

"The negotiations on concluding a medium-term contract for a period of up to five years are under completion/ The sides are discussing the volume of supplies, which will depend on the price of gas," he said.

"The volumes may reach the levels that were until 2016,"

Yanovsky stressed. "The negotiations will end in June."

Turkmenistan resumed the export of natural gas to Russia on April 15, 2019 after a three-year break. Gazprom company intends to purchase up to 1.155 billion cubic meters of natural gas from Turkmenistan till June 30, 2019.

Turkmenistan transports its gas to Russia via the Central Asia-Center pipeline, built during the Soviet period and monopolized by Gazprom. Until 2009, Gazprom was the biggest buyer of Turkmen gas, purchasing up to 40-42 billion cubic meters a year.

Despite the contractual arrangements, at first the volumes decreased to the level of 10-11 billion cubic meters per year within five years. The annual volume decreased by 2.5 times and amounted to four billion cubic meters in 2015. (Trend)

Head of IMF Lagarde: Uzbekistan Needs New Formula for Inclusive Growth and Cooperation

TASHKENT - The Managing Director of International Monetary Fund Christine Lagarde spoke about the conditions that will lead Uzbekistan to prosperity, Trend reports citing Uzbek media.

"Uzbekistan will come to innovation and prosperity through trade and improved relations with neighboring countries," Lagarde said.

As part of her first visit to Uzbekistan, she spoke at the Central Bank with a report on the topic "Reforms of Uzbekistan: A New Formula for Inclusive Growth and Cooperation."

Representatives of the Ministries of Economy and Industry, Finance, Investments and Foreign Trade, the State Statistics Committee, the Agency for Management of State Assets, Central Bank

employees and students of national universities attended the presentation made by Christine Lagarde.

"Uzbekistan was a crossroads of economic reforms in its best times and isolated itself in the worst. Today, the country needs a new strategy for its development. If we find the solution to existing problems together, then those who come here will think not only about the history, but also about its prosperous future," Lagarde noted.

The Head of the IMF commented on the Fund's statement about the need for greater independence of the Central Bank of Uzbekistan. "The Central Bank must be autonomous in setting monetary policy goals, regardless of the political agenda," she stated. (Trend)

Construction Finishes on New Section of China's Longest Coal Rail

XI'AN - China's longest coal transport route, Menghua railway, has completed track laying on its Inner Mongolia-Shaanxi section, the constructor said Friday.

With a total length of 418 km, the section was started in March 2018, linking the city of Ordos in north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region with Yichuan County, northwest China's Shaanxi Province.

Workers overcame a complicated construction environment to lay the tracks across the Maowusu desert and

the Wuding River, an anabranch of the Yellow River.

T-girders, each weighing 300 tonnes, were used in construction for heavy haul railways, said Cai Hongbin from Xinyun Engineering Co. Ltd. of China Railway First Group, the constructor.

The 1,837-km Menghua railway, which ends in the city of Ji'an, east China's Jiangxi Province, will be the longest heavy-loaded railway in the country when completed in October, with an annual delivery capacity of 200 million tonnes. (Xinhua)