

Putin Blasts West on First Trip to EU Country This Year

ATHENS - On his first trip to a European Union country this year, Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday sharply criticized western policy toward Moscow, describing a newly expanded U.S. missile defense system as a threat to his country's security - and vowing to retaliate.

Putin arrived in Athens on a two-day visit and emerged from talks with the Greek government to lash the United States and NATO allies, also accusing them of stifling trade and energy cooperation



with Russia. Earlier this month, the U.S. program was declared operational at a site in Romania,

drawing an angry reaction from Russia. NATO says the system is purely defensive and a response

to a growing capability of ballistic missiles globally. "We keep hearing that it's not a threat against Rus-

sia, that it's not aimed at Russia," Putin said late Friday. "Of course it's a threat to us. It can easily

be modified to have an aggressive capability," he said. "And if yesterday some parts of Romania did not know what it means to be targets, we will now be forced to take certain actions which will guarantee our security," he said, but did not elaborate. Putin has made only a handful of visits to EU countries since sanctions were imposed on Moscow two years ago in response to the Ukraine crisis and Russia's annexation of Crimea following an internationally disputed referendum.(AP)

Japan Shares G-7 Push for Inclusive Growth with Asia, Africa

NAGOYA - Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is sharing a push by the Group of Seven advanced industrial nations to promote inclusive growth across the globe in meetings with leaders of seven developing countries. The bilateral summit meetings with leaders of Bangladesh, Chad, Indonesia, Laos, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and Vietnam in this central Japanese city on Saturday followed a gathering with G-7 leaders after their annual summit, which was held in a near-

by seaside resort. Chad's President Idriss Deby was representing the African Union at the meetings in Japan.

At that session, the leaders agreed to promote infrastructure development to help boost growth, Japanese officials said. They also voiced their support for the G-7's stance on the need for peacefully settling territorial disputes according to law - a reference to frustrations over China's growing presence in areas of the South China Sea also claimed by its neighbors.



Laos, Bangladesh and Papua New Guinea are among the poorest nations in Asia. Vietnam and Indonesia are two of the fastest-growing

developing economies. During the summit, Abe expressed strong concern over slowdowns in China ... (More on P4)...(15)

Ex-NATO Chief, PM Named As Adviser to Ukraine's President

COPENHAGEN - A former NATO Secretary-General and Danish prime minister has been named an adviser to Ukraine's president.

Anders Fogh Rasmussen said on Twitter Saturday that he will do his "utmost to promote security, economic reforms and stronger EU ties."

A statement on Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko's website did not specify on what issues Fogh Rasmussen might concentrate. Fogh Rasmussen described the security situation in

eastern Ukraine "alarming" on his Facebook page. Ukrainian forces have been fighting Russia-backed rebels in eastern Ukraine for two years and more than 9,300 people have been killed.

Ukraine, which wants to join the 28-nation European Union, also "must implement much needed reforms," including "enhanced fight against corruption." The 63-year-old Dane was NATO chief 2009-2014 after his eight years as Danish head of government.(AP)

Brexit Campaigner Boris Johnson could be Next PM: Cameron

ISE-SHIMA - Former London mayor Boris Johnson could be Britain's next prime minister despite heading the campaign to leave the European Union, Prime Minister David Cameron said. Last year, Cameron, who has said he will not stand for a third term at a national election due in 2020, cited Johnson, along with interior minister Theresa May and finance minister George Osborne, as potential successors. Cameron and Johnson now find themselves ri-

vals on opposing sides of an increasingly bitter debate ahead of Britain's June 23 referendum on EU membership.

Many believe Johnson took the gamble that campaigning for "Out" would boost his chances of leading a Conservative Party whose membership is largely euroskeptic.

Asked during a trip to Japan for a G7 summit whether he still believed Johnson could be prime minister, Cameron said he hadn't changed his ... (More on P4)...(16)

UN Environment Assembly Adopts 25 Resolutions to Revitalize Green Agenda

NAIROBI - The second edition of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) adopted 25 broad resolutions late Friday to reactivate green and sustainable development.

Delegates who included ministers, policymakers, industry executives and campaigners from 174 countries endorsed a raft of resolutions to address air pollution, marine litter, chemical waste and wildlife crimes at the end of the five-day meeting in Nairobi.

"The environment will

always be at the heart of humanity's prosperity, and what we have witnessed in the last five days is the same political will and passion for change that brought about the groundbreaking international agreements of 2015," UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner said in a release after the meeting.

He added that attention to pressing environmental challenges will be elevated a notch higher thanks to the adoption of the resolutions.

"We expect to see bold



and decisive commitment observed at UNEA-2 transmitted at national level to drive forward the 2030 agenda and ensure a brighter future for people and planet," said the

UNEP Chief. The theme of UNEA-2 focused on delivering the environmental dimension of sustainable development goals (SDGs) adopted by UN ... (More on P4)...(17)

Argentine FM Says Falklands No Obstacle to Becoming UN Chief

Buenos Aires - Argentina's foreign minister said Friday she believes there's no conflict of interest between her bid to be the next U.N. secretary-general and her work pressing her country's sovereignty claim over the disputed Falkland Islands. Buenos Aires has long claimed as its own the Atlantic archipelago, a British overseas territory it calls the Malvinas. Argentina staged an ill-fated invasion of the islands in 1982 that was repelled by Britain. As foreign minister Susana Malcorra has lobbied for Argentina's claim and recently brought it up when President Mauricio Macri met with British Prime Minister David Cameron at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland. The South American country regularly raises the issue at the U.N.

"What we have been saying regarding the Malvinas is what we have said since the day we took office ... and I see no incompatibility" between that and becoming secretary-general, Malcorra said at a news conference, without explaining further. The secretary-general is chosen by the 193-member General Assembly on the recommendation of the 15-member Security Council, of which the United Kingdom is a permanent member. Traditionally the secretary-general job has rotated among regions, and people from Asia, Africa, Latin America ... (More on P4)...(20)

Arab States Call for More Support to Rebuild Iraq

AMMAN - Arab officials and experts on Saturday called for more support to rebuild Iraq, the state-run Petra news agency reported. Speaking at a pan-Arab conference in Amman on investment projects in Iraq, Arab officials and experts from several countries underlined the need to increase support to rebuild Iraq.

They also called on Arabs to engage more in infrastructure and major construction projects in Iraq, which they said is in need of large rehabili-



tation.

The experts said the potential is huge for more partnerships between Iraq and the Arab world, especially for the private companies.

Stressing that there are more than 21 billion U.S. dollars worth of construction projects in Iraq, they said Arab contractors can play a major role in these schemes.(Xinhua)

IS Unleashes Offensive Against "Revolution Capital" in Northern Syria

DAMASCUS - The Islamic State (IS) group unleashed a wide-scale offensive after midnight against the city of Mare' in the northern countryside of Aleppo province in northern Syria,

a monitor group reported on Saturday. Intense battles are still raging at the outskirts of Mare' between an array of jihadi groups and the IS militants, said the Syrian Observatory for

Human Rights. The UK-based watchdog group said the IS also detonated car bombs in their push toward the city, adding that the terror-designated ... (More on P4)...(19)

Syria Rebels Under Fire from IS Militants, Government Troops

BEIRUT - Islamic State militants entered a Syrian opposition stronghold in the country's north on Saturday, clashing with rebels on the edges of the town as the extremist group builds

opposition-held towns in Aleppo province, putting a further strain on embattled rebels fighting President Bashar Assad's forces. More than 160,000 civilians ... (More on P4)...(21)

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Turkish Army Kills 104 Militants in Attacks Against IS in Northern Syria

ANKARA - Turkish military stroke the Islamic State (IS) positions in northern Syria, 104 IS militants were killed, the Turkish General Staff said in a written statement on Saturday.

The attack was launched late Friday after six rockets fired by IS targeted Turkish border province of Kilis and two military posts, five people were injured.

According to the statement, 104 IS militants were killed in the retaliation, while four multiple rocket launchers, one howitzer, one mortar position and seven buildings used as headquarters by the IS were destroyed. During the operations, the IS position were hit by 233 howitzers, 40 multiple rocket launcher systems and four tanks.

"Starting from five minutes after the attack, the IS positions have been hit multiple times, including 11 sorties by (U.S.-led anti-IS) coalition jets," the statement ... (More on P4)...(18)

French Fuel Supply Improving, But Crisis Not over: Minister

PARIS - France's fuel supply crisis is not yet over, the transport minister warned on Saturday, while Prime Minister Manuel Valls was quoted as saying he was ready to ride out protests at ports and fuel depots by strikers opposing labor reform plans.

Valls has taken a tough stance against the hard-line CGT union which has spearheaded strikes that have shut down refineries and disrupted fuel supplies in the past two weeks.

Following a meeting between the government and oil industry representatives, Transport Minister Alain Vidalies said the situation at fuel depots was improving though the crisis caused by the strikes was not fully over.

"In some regions the situation is almost back to normal. In other regions we remain attentive, but we cannot say that ... (More on P4)...(22)

Neighbor News

'Pakistan Had the Ability to Conduct A Nuclear Test in 1984'

ISLAMABAD - Abdul Qadeer Khan, the father of Pakistan's nuclear programme, said Pakistan had the ability and had planned to conduct a nuclear test in 1984, but General Zia opposed the idea as it would have curtailed international aid Pakistan was receiving due to the ongoing Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

"We were able and we had a plan to launch nuclear test in 1984 however; then President General Zia had opposed the move," said the father of the country's nuclear programme.

General Zia was of the opinion that the world would stop military aid

if Pakistan opted for the nuclear test, Khan added. He also said that Pakistan is able to target Delhi from Kahuta in five minutes.

Khan was addressing a gathering on the occasion of Youm-i-Takbeer. "Without my services Pakistan would never have been the first Muslim nuclear nation. We were able to achieve the capability under very tough circumstances, but we did it," said Khan.

Referring to the treatment meted out to him during Musharraf's era, Khan said nuclear scientists in the country have not been given the respect that they deserve. (Agencies)

Name, Shame Backstage Terror Sponsors: Iran



TEHRAN - Iranian President Hassan Rouhani calls for collective efforts to counter terrorism across the world, saying covert sponsors of terrorists must be identified to stop the flow of aid to militants.

"In the first step in the fight against terrorism, particularly Daesh, countries sponsoring terrorism and Daesh must be confronted through the identification of the behind-the-scenes elements so that they will not provide this terrorist group with modern arms and financial aid," Rouhani said in a meeting with

Lithuanian Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius in Tehran on Saturday.

He stressed the importance of strengthening bilateral cooperation in the fight against terrorism, extremism and smuggling of narcotics. "Determination and cooperation of all countries are necessary in the fight against terrorism, and certain countries must understand that support for terrorists and using them to advance political and regional objectives is not a good choice and will yield no results," the Iranian president added.(PressTV)

China, Australia Pledge to Enhance Bilateral Relations



SYDNEY - Chinese and Australian leaders have vowed to enhance bilateral relations to achieve a healthy and sustained development.

The pledge was made here Saturday during a meeting between Liu Qibao, head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee, and Australian Governor General Peter Cosgrove. China-Australia relations have achieved a leaping development in the past few years and now have come to a threshold where new opportunities have emerged, Liu said, calling on the two countries to further boost bilateral relations at a strategic level through more communications and enhanced understanding.

Liu said both countries should respect each other's core national

interests and greatest concern, continue to deepen political trust and expand the areas of cooperation. The two countries also should promote people to people communications and cooperation so as to achieve a healthy and sustained development of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between them.

Cosgrove said Liu's visit is expected to promote a better understanding by Australians from all walks of life of the opportunities presented by China's development, especially in the areas of trade, media and tourism. During his visit, Liu attended the dialogue with sinologists in Australia where he suggested that Australian sinologists have more communications with their Chinese counterparts and research institutions.(Xinhua)