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MORO ISLAMIC LIBERATION FRONT



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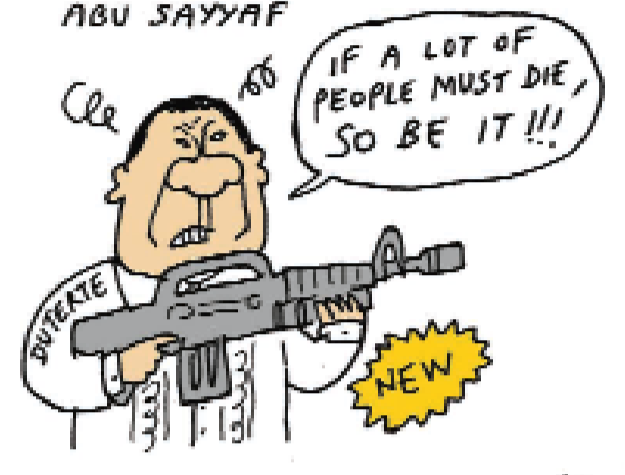
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DAESH FIGHTERS COMING FROM ALL OVER SOUTH EAST ASIA



MORON LIBERATION FRONT

Focus

MODI SEEKING TO MEND RUSSIA TIES ON EUROPE TOUR

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will seek to repair India's drifting partnership with Russia when he meets President Vladimir Putin this week, amid wariness over Moscow's renewed interest in New Delhi's backyard, analysts say.

The two leaders will look to stem a decline in trade between the once robust economic partners and resolve tensions over their shifting global alliances when they meet on Thursday ahead of a summit in Saint Petersburg. The two countries enjoyed a 70-year alliance forged during the Cold War, when the Soviet Union was India's largest trading partner, diplomatic ally and main arms supplier, providing everything from tanks to aircraft.

But the relationship became unmoored following the collapse of the USSR, as India underwent an economic transformation and increasingly sought to build trade ties with Western nations. That process has accelerated in recent years as New Delhi has orbited closer to Washington, and Russia has fostered relationships with India's chief regional rivals Pakistan and China, analysts say.

Russia remains an important partner for India but "the basis for the relationship is, however, very weak," said Dhruva Jaishankar, foreign policy fellow with Brookings India. "People-to-people exchanges are limited, young Indians are less likely to study Russian, and even areas like energy and information technology, where the two countries have comparative advantages, are underdeveloped," he said.

The two leaders are expected to discuss a framework agreement for Moscow to supply more reactors to a nuclear plant in southern India as the country seeks to reduce its reliance on highly polluting coal.

Russia has supplied two reactors to the plant under a long-delayed agreement, and has been pushing to supply more. A revival of two-way trade, which slumped to below \$8 billion in 2015 despite an ambitious bilateral target of achieving \$30 billion by 2030, will be a key priority during Modi's visit.

Pivot to Pakistan

New Delhi, which is the world's top arms buyer, once relied on Moscow for its military hardware, but has increasingly turned to the United States, France and Israel to update its Soviet-era defence equipment in recent years. Furthermore, Modi is now seeking to manufacture military hardware locally, asking foreign firms to work with domestic contractors under his "Make in India" campaign, in a bid to reduce reliance on costly imports.

Although Russia is close to finalizing a deal to build Kamov military helicopters in India, its recent pivot towards Pakistan has not gone unnoticed in New Delhi. Moscow lifted its embargo on arms supplies to India's arch rival in 2014, according to Russia's ITAR-TASS news agency, and was holding talks on supplying Islamabad with combat helicopters. Moscow also rattled India recently with its decision to support the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a project opposed by New Delhi because it runs through the disputed Himalayan region of Kashmir.

The last few years have seen "a parting of the ways on many big issues, in particular on Afghanistan", where Moscow is seeking to broker a peace deal with Taliban insurgents, Jaishankar said.

Moscow-which fought a disastrous military campaign in Afghanistan during the Soviet era-has been increasingly flexing its muscles on the world stage, hosting a regional conference earlier this year that was aimed at facilitating peace talks between the Taliban and Kabul. India has been a key supporter of Kabul's government and has poured more than \$2 billion into the country since the former Taliban regime-which was allied with Pakistan-was toppled in 2001.

But, while New Delhi has traditionally taken a dim view of attempts to negotiate a peace settlement with the Taliban, it does not see Russia's renewed role in Afghanistan as hostile, said Brahma Chellaney from the New Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research. "India appreciates that Russia is re-entering Afghanistan as an important player, and in doing so, not directly working against India's interest," he said. Modi's four-nation tour of Europe will also include stops in Germany and Spain to drum up foreign investment, and a face-to-face with newly-elected President Emmanuel Macron in France. — AFP

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N KOREA MISSILE: TESTING RIVALS, NOT TECHNOLOGY

By Foster Klug and Hyung-jin Kim

North Korea's latest missile test yesterday may have less to do with perfecting its weapons technology than with showing US and South Korean forces in the region that it can strike them at will. South Korean and Japanese officials said the suspected Scud-type short-range missile flew about 450 kilometers (280 miles) yesterday morning before landing in Japan's maritime economic zone, setting off the usual round of condemnation from Washington and the North's neighbors. It's the latest in a string of test launches by North Korea as it seeks to build nuclear-tipped intercontinental ballistic missiles that can reach the US mainland, a drive that puts North Korea high on the list of foreign policy worries for Japan, Washington and Seoul.

North Korea already has an arsenal of reliable short-range missiles. While North Korean scientists could be tweaking them - for instance, developing a new solid-fuel short-range missile - the North tests these shorter-range missiles much less than it does its less dependable, longer-range missiles. This sets up the possibility that North

Korea hopes to use the test to show it can hit US targets near and far and emphasize its defiance of US-led pressure on its missile and nuclear programs, which has included vague threats from President Donald Trump and the arrival in Korean waters of powerful US military hardware. Scuds are capable of striking US troops in South Korea, for instance, and the two newly developed missiles tested earlier this month have potential ranges that include Japan, Guam and even, according to some South Korean analysts, Alaska.

The missile was launched from the coastal town of Wonsan, the South's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement. It landed in Japan's exclusive maritime economic zone, which is set about 200 nautical miles off the Japanese coast, Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga said. He said there was no report of damage to planes or vessels in the area.

North Korea is still thought to be several years from its goal of being able to target US mainland cities with nuclear ICBMs. South Korea says North Korea has conducted nine ballistic missile tests this year, including one in which four missiles were launched on the same day.

'Reckless acts'

North Korea's state-controlled media had no immediate comment yesterday's test, but released a statement, without mentioning the launch, that accused Seoul and Washington of "aggravating the situation" on the Korean Peninsula by conducting joint military drills and other "reckless acts."

On Sunday, North Korea also said leader Kim Jong Un had watched a separate, successful test of a new type of anti-aircraft guided weapon system. The report didn't say when the test happened. The official Korean Central News Agency cited Kim as ordering officials to mass-produce and deploy the system all over the country so as to "completely spoil the enemy's wild dream to command the air."

Trump has alternated between bellicosity and flattery in his public statements about North Korea, but his administration is still working to solidify a policy on handling the North's nuclear ambitions.

Monday's launch was North's Korea's third ballistic missile launch since South Korean President Moon Jae-in was inaugurated on May 10. He has signaled an interest in expanding civilian exchanges with

North Korea, but it's unclear if he'll be able to push anytime soon for major rapprochement while the North continues to make serious advances in its nuclear and missile programs.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters that "North Korea's provocation by ignoring repeated warnings from international society is absolutely unacceptable." Suga, the Japanese Cabinet secretary, said the missile fell about 300 kilometers (190 miles) north of the Oki islands in southwestern Japan and 500 kilometers (310 miles) west of Sado island in central Japan.

Suga said Japanese officials will discuss North Korea with a senior foreign policy adviser to Chinese President Xi Jinping, Yang Jiechi, who was scheduled to visit Japan later yesterday. China is North Korea's only major ally.

Besides its regular ballistic missile test-launches, North Korea carried out two of its five nuclear tests last year - in January and September. Outside analysts believe North Korea may be able to arm some of its shorter-range missiles with nuclear warheads, though the exact state of its secretive weapons program is unknown. — AP

CHINA'S 'SHARING ECONOMY' BOOMS, BUT CAN IT LAST?

By Yawen Chen and Ryan Woo

Fancy shooting some hoops, but don't have a basketball? Caught in the rain with no umbrella? Smartphone run out of juice? China's rapidly expanding "sharing economy", which already provides car rides and bicycle hire on demand, can help.

For just 2 yuan (\$0.30) an hour, Nate Liu, a student at the Beijing Language and Culture University, rents a basketball from a court-side vending machine by scanning a barcode on his smartphone.

"I didn't want to ask around and borrow a ball after losing mine, so I decided to give it a try," Liu told Reuters. Far away, in China's wetter south, some 20,000 umbrellas have been released on to the streets of Shenzhen, and can be rented - unlocked by another smartphone barcode scan - for just half a yuan (\$0.07) for 30 minutes. The umbrellas can be dropped off "wherever convenient", though users are encouraged to keep them, says Zhao Shuping, founder of E Umbrella Sharing, one of a handful of start-ups offering the service.

China's government has taken notice, and expects the "sharing economy" to grow about 40 percent this year to 4.83 trillion yuan (\$705 billion). By 2020, it should account for around one tenth of GDP, illustrating China's aspiration to become a sharing economy leader on a global scale.

PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts five sharing sectors - car sharing, travel, finance, staffing, and music and video streaming - have the potential to increase global revenue to \$335 billion by 2025 from \$15 billion today. Most of the money behind China's ballooning sharing economy comes from angel investors and venture capital firms.

At least 1.69 billion yuan (\$247 million) in mostly series-A, or early stage, funding was invested in April-May in over two dozen start-ups offering sharing services, according to Reuters calculations based on data from Chinese data firm IT Juzi.

Twelve firms renting out power banks - typically compact, mobile battery chargers - secured 1.13 billion yuan, while newer businesses such as basketball and umbrella-sharing took in about 25 million yuan (\$3.65 million) combined. While mobile-savvy, convenience-obsessed Chinese welcome the innovations, some critics question whether the demand is real, or sustainable. They say the low-revenue, capital-intensive model means profitability can be elusive.

"Young people are embracing renting as a way of life instead of possessing things," said Emma Zhu, investment director at Beijing-based Innoangel fund, who has held off investing in any of these start-ups. "But the sharing model won't work in every situation. In some cases, they're trying to meet genuine demand, while in others they're not."

Some investors say the funding frenzy recalls the spectacular boom and bust of hundreds of Chinese Groupon apps in vogue in 2010-12, noting that most ultimately collapsed after fierce price wars, with losses of around \$1 billion. "In China, the only barrier to entry is who can raise the

most capital - that's good and bad," said Xu Miaoqiang, an investment manager at Unity Ventures in Beijing.

"The upside is, there are funds available to launch a bunch of companies. You may not need a lot of specialization or new technology. The downside is a lot of money could be wasted."

"Speed is everything"

Cai Min, founder of basketball rental firm Zhulegeqiu, says he wants to expand nationwide, and quickly, offering the service at all of China's estimated 100,000 basketball courts, and growing into a multi-billion yuan business, eventually offering all "sharable" products.

The Zhejiang-based start-up received 10 million yuan (\$1.46 million) in early funding from Shanghai-based Modern Capital on May 5, less than two months after Cai came up with the idea. "We are expanding at all cost, because speed is everything," Cai told Reuters. "Of course this means costs have been very high at the early stage because we have to make everything in a month."

He declined to give specific figures, but each of the solar-powered basketball rental machines - currently in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou, Tianjin and Chengdu - costs

"a few thousand yuan." "The key to success is to get more money than your competitors and to expand faster than them," he said.

Even some keen players, though, have their doubts, saying balls are only used occasionally, so the need to rent is marginal. All sharing services require a one-time deposit - from 99 yuan (\$14.45) for a shared basketball - that gives sharing companies a one-off financial buffer that critics say won't be sufficient in the longer run if profits are slow to take off. The latest wave of "sharing" entrepreneurs has been largely inspired by the rapid rise of Chinese bike-sharing firms such as Mobike and ofo, which have together raised close to 13 billion yuan in a little over two years, extending their services to more Chinese cities and international markets including London and Singapore.

E Umbrella's Zhao said he came up with the idea after his three young children rushed to try out the rental bikes that mushroomed across Shenzhen early this year. "I thought: they're just normal bikes, if this could work, why can't share umbrellas?" he said. Zhao, who patented his coded lock umbrellas in March, said umbrella and lock manufacturers are fighting for his orders, offering him payment exemption for as long as 30 days. — Reuters



BEIJING: A man transporting two parakeets in a long cage tries to get through a busy junction by an electric scooter in Beijing yesterday. China's rapidly expanding "sharing economy", which already provides car rides and bicycle hire on demand, can help. — AP