

Chinese State Media Warns G7 Against South China Sea 'Meddling'

BEIJING (AFP) - Chinese state media warned the Group of Seven nations not to "meddle" in South China Sea disputes, as leaders from the bloc gathered for talks in Japan.

The commentary came as European Council President Donald Tusk said on the sidelines of a summit in Ise-Shima that the bloc should take a "clear and tough stance" on China's contested maritime claims.

Beijing has angered several Southeast Asian neighbours by claiming almost all of the South China Sea and rapidly building reefs into artificial islands capable of hosting military planes.

China's official Xinhua news agency published an article saying the G7 -- which excludes Beijing -- "should mind its own business rather than pointing fingers at others".

Xinhua writer Chang Yuan

accused Japan of "attempting to take advantage of its G7 summit host status and draw more 'allies and sympathizers' to isolate China".

Both Washington and Tokyo -- which is locked in a separate dispute with Beijing over islands in the East China Sea -- have warned against Beijing stoking tensions in the contested waters.

Chang wrote that such remarks showed "Japan's hidden agenda: to meddle in the South China Sea issue".

Weighing in on the South China Sea "exceeds the G7's current influence and capability. What's more, it reflects a lingering Cold War mindset", Chang added.

The commentary came ahead of a ruling expected within weeks on China's claims brought to the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague by the Philippines.

China has warned outside

parties not to meddle in the South China Sea, but has also attempted to draw nations as far away as Niger, Togo and Burundi into the dispute, insisting that they support its rejection of the tribunal.

British Prime Minister David Cameron warned China that it must abide by the outcome of the international arbitration as he arrived in Japan for the G7 summit, the Guardian newspaper reported.

Beijing summoned top diplomatic representatives from the Group of Seven nations including France and Britain in April to express anger at a joint statement on the South China Sea.

The G7 said at the time: "We are concerned about the situation in the East and South China Seas, and emphasize the fundamental importance of peaceful management and settlement of disputes."

Obama Mourns Dead in Hiroshima, Calls for World Without Nuclear Arms

TOKYO (Reuters) - Barack Obama on Friday became the first incumbent U.S. president to visit Hiroshima, site of the world's first atomic bombing, in a gesture Tokyo and Washington hope will showcase their alliance and reinvigorate efforts to rid the world of nuclear arms.

Even before it occurred, the visit stirred debate, with critics accusing both sides of having selective memories, and pointing to paradoxes in policies relying on nuclear deterrence while calling for an end to atomic weapons.

The two governments hope Obama's visit to Hiroshima, where a U.S. atomic bomb killed thousands instantly on

Aug. 6, 1945, and some 140,000 by the year's end, underscores a new level of reconciliation and tighter ties between the former enemies.

"We come to ponder the terrible force unleashed in the not so distant past," Obama said after laying a wreath at a Hiroshima peace memorial.

"We come to mourn the dead, including over 100,000 Japanese men, women and children, thousands of Koreans and a dozen Americans held prisoner. Their souls speak to us."

Before laying the wreath, Obama visited a museum where haunting displays include photographs of badly burned victims, the tattered and stained clothes

they wore and statues depicting people with flesh melting from their limbs.

"We have known the agony of war," he wrote in the guest book. "Let us now find the courage, together, to spread peace, and pursue a world without nuclear weapons."

After speaking, Obama shook hands and chatted briefly with two atomic bomb survivors. Obama and Sunao Tsuboi, 91, smiled as they exchanged words; Shigeaki Mori, 79, cried and was embraced by the president.

The city of Nagasaki was hit by a second nuclear bomb on Aug. 9, 1945, and Japan surrendered six days later.

Venezuela Opposition Investigates \$69bn in Alleged Corruption

CARACAS (AFP) - Venezuela's opposition-controlled legislature is investigating 89 alleged cases of corruption involving current and former government officials amounting to \$69 billion dollars, lawmaker Freddy Guevara said. "It's possible to buy basic necessities for 900 million people with that money," he said. "It can feed the entire country for 30 years."

Guevara is chairman of the National Assembly's comptroller committee, which conducts inquiries into financial dealings. He brought up Venezuela's major

shortages of food and medicine, the result of a severe economic crisis wracking the country thanks to the drop in global prices for oil, the main national export.

The money has been deposited into accounts abroad, Guevara said, adding that the goal is to "locate where it is" and "repatriate it."

The investigation is examining several sectors, including food and health, as well as irregularities linked to Venezuela's tight currency controls since 2003. Illegal foreign exchange transactions have siphoned off

some \$60 billion, Guevara said. The probe is also looking into state oil company PDVSA, which has diverted at least \$7 billion, he added.

President Nicolas Maduro announced a process of "review and correction," including combating corrupt practices, following his party's crushing defeat in parliamentary elections in December.

But the socialist leader says allegations of inefficiency and corruption are merely part of an opposition maneuver to bring down his government.

Turkey Arming Nusra in Syria: Russia

MOSCOW (Press TV) - Russia's Defense Ministry says the Turkish government continues to supply al-Qaeda-linked al-Nusra Front terrorists fighting in Syria with weapons in a bid to undermine the Syrian army in its fight against foreign-backed Takfiri militants.

"The flow of heavy-duty trucks with weapons and ammunition, which cross the Turkish-Syrian border every day, does not stop from Turkey," Sergei Rudskoy, the head of Russia's General Staff's main operations command, said at a news conference on Friday.

"This constant supply of man power and weapons has allowed Jabhat al-Nusra [al-Nusra Front] terrorists to continue their provocative strikes and conduct an offensive on Syrian government forces, thus immobilizing their efforts against terrorists of ISIL (Daesh) in other areas," he added.

Rudskoy further said the al-Nusra terrorists have taken advantage of the ceasefire declared in Syria to restore their combat readiness and conduct attacks in a number of Syrian areas.

"Tensions are escalating in a number of Syrian districts, primarily because of the wish of Jabhat al-Nusra leaders to disrupt the reconciliation process," he said.

Rudskoy also criticized the US for "further escalation of the military conflict" in Syria as Washington rejected a Russian proposal to jointly fight against al-Nusra. Moscow began its aerial military campaign against terrorists in Syria on September 30 last year upon a request from the Damascus government.

The senior military official also said that the militant groups have captured a number of Syrian populated areas since the truce came into effect in the Arab

country.

"As a result, militant units have taken the settlements of Al-Eis, Khan Tuman and Zerbah, which were earlier under government forces' control. Militants keep attacking the Sheikh Maqsood and al-Zahraa neighborhoods in the north of the city of Aleppo. An offensive on the settlement of Handarat is under way," Rudskoy added.

Syria has been gripped by a foreign-backed militancy since March 2011. According to a February report by the Syrian Center for Policy Research, the conflict has claimed the lives of some 470,000 people, injured 1.9 million others, and displaced nearly half of the country's pre-war population of about 23 million within or beyond its borders.

Turkey has been among the main supporters of the militant groups operating in Syria, with reports saying that Ankara actively trains and arms the Takfiri terrorists there and facilitates their safe passage into the crisis-hit Arab state.

Ankara has also been accused on numerous occasions of being involved in illegal oil trade with the Daesh. Russia has released pictures and videos purportedly showing the movement of oil tankers from Daesh-controlled areas in Syria toward Turkey.

Since then, it has killed hundreds of Daesh terrorists and other foreign-backed militants, and inflicted heavy material damage on them.

Since September 2014, the US and its allies have also been carrying out airstrikes in Syria purportedly against Daesh positions.

However, the Syrian government has charged that the airstrikes had targeted the country's infrastructure in many instances and done little to stop the advances of terrorists.

World Needs to Act Together on Refugees: Tusk

TOKYO (AFP) - The world needs to act together on the refugee crisis gripping Europe, and not leave the continent to battle the problem alone, European Council President Donald Tusk said Thursday.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Group of Seven summit in Japan, Tusk said European nations needed help in dealing with the tide of people fleeing conflict in the Middle East and Africa.

"We are aware that it is because of geography that the most responsibility is, and will continue to be, placed on Europe," Tusk told reporters at Ise-Shima, 300 kilometers (200 miles) southwest of Tokyo.

"However we would also like the global community to show solidarity and recognize that this is a global crisis."

Last year, some 1.3 million refugees, coming mostly from the conflict-ridden countries of Syria and Iraq asked for asylum in the European Union -- more than a third of them in Germany.

So far this year, the International Organization for Migration says an estimated 190,000 migrants and refugees have entered Europe by sea, arriving in Italy, Greece, Cyprus and Spain. More than 1,300 are known to have died en route.

The European Union has put in place a program aimed at redistributing a first group of 140,000 people throughout the 28 member states.

"The world has been confronted with the highest number of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons since the Second World War," said Tusk.

"Those who criticize Europe should rather think how to increase their assistance because what Europe provides is already massive."

Tusk, who is at the G7 with Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, said he would be asking leaders to get behind a worldwide solution.



NEW DELHI (AFP) - Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi called on doctors Thursday to give up 12 days a year to treating poor, pregnant women free of charge, in a speech to mark the anniversary of his government's second year in power.

With India facing a shortage of doctors and public hospitals, the premier urged private practitioners to dedicate one day a month to helping pregnant women in rural areas, who often die in childbirth due to poor access to health-care.

"Can my doctor friends do one thing? On the 9th of every month, if poor, expectant mothers come to you, can you please treat them, care for them and provide medicines to them for free?" Modi told a cheering crowd at a mass rally in northern Uttar Pradesh state.

MOSCOW (CNN) - The Ukraine has banned Mikhail Gorbachev, the last leader of the Soviet Union, after he came out in support of Russia's annexation of Crimea.

Gorbachev's comments on Crimea are the latest wedge between Ukraine and Russia. The two neighboring nations have been in conflict since 2014 when pro-Russian separatists in Ukraine and Russian forces annexed the Crimean Peninsula following a political crisis in Ukraine.

Ukraine's Security Service told CNN the ban was because of Gorbachev's "public support of military annexation of Crimea."

Gorbachev's spokesman, Vladimir Polyakov, said the former leader knew Ukraine was mulling the ban and had earlier brushed it off, saying he did not travel to the country anyway.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. health officials on Thursday reported the first case in the country of a patient with an infection resistant to all known antibiotics, and expressed grave concern that the superbug could pose serious danger for routine infections if it spreads.

"We risk being in a post-antibiotic world," said Thomas Frieden, director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, referring to the urinary tract infection of a 49-year-old Pennsylvania woman who had not travelled within the prior five months.

Frieden, speaking at a National Press Club luncheon in Washington, D.C., said the infection was not controlled even by colistin, an antibiotic that is reserved for use against "nightmare bacteria."

LONDON (Press TV) - A study has found that Muslim women face a double bind of religious and gender discrimination in the British society, which subjects them to harassment and abuse.

Britain's Faith Matter group and the European Network Against Racism conducted a research about the impact of Islamophobia on Muslim women across the UK.

The study showed that Muslim women have experienced serious barriers at work, such as pregnancy discrimination, pay gap and racial profiling in applications.

Muslim women are less likely to get a graduate level job than Christian women with similar qualifications. They are also less likely to get responses to their job applications when sending CVs, researchers said.