



Athletes take part in the women's windsurfing RS:X class competition during a sailing test event for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games, off the coast Enoshima in Kanagawa prefecture yesterday. — AFP

Facebook launches tool to let users...

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Currently, commercial websites visited by a customer who also has a Facebook account may send Facebook details of that visit, prompting the social network to show that person ads related to any product they may have searched for. With the new Facebook tool, users will be able to see a summary of information that other apps and websites have sent Facebook through business tools such as Facebook Pixel or Facebook Login. They then have the option of disconnecting this information, or all future off-Facebook

activity, from their account.

The new feature will be rolled out first in Ireland, South Korea and Spain, and then everywhere else over the coming months, Facebook said. "We expect this could have some impact on our business, but we believe giving people control over their data is more important," it said. Last month, US regulators slapped Facebook with a record \$5-billion fine for data protection violations in a wide-ranging settlement that calls for revamping privacy controls and oversight at the social network.

"We've agreed to pay a historic fine, but even more important, we're going to make some major structural changes to how we build products and run this company," Facebook's CEO Mark Zuckerberg said at the time, adding that "we're going to set a completely new standard for our industry," he said. — AFP

US tests cruise missile after...

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We won't react to provocations," Russia's deputy foreign minister Sergei Ryabkov told state news agency TASS. "We will not allow ourselves to get drawn into a costly arms race," Ryabkov said the test showed Washington had been working on such missiles long before its official withdrawal from the deal.

In Beijing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said: "This measure from the US will trigger a new round of an arms race, leading to an escalation of military confrontation." He warned that the test "will have a serious negative impact on the international and regional security situation". The US should "let go of its Cold War mentality" and "do more things that are conducive to... international and regional peace and tranquility", Geng added.

The missile was launched from the US Navy-controlled San Nicolas Island off the coast of California. Speaking in France Monday before news of the US test

launch broke, President Vladimir Putin said Russia would only deploy medium- or shorter-range missiles in response to similar moves by the US. "If the United States produces such offensive systems, we will also do so," Putin said at a press conference before meetings with French leader Emmanuel Macron. Moscow and Washington have long criticized the treaty but Putin said it was the US that made the decision to "unilaterally" withdraw.

The missile tested on Sunday was a version of the nuclear-capable Tomahawk cruise missile. The ground-launched version of the Tomahawk was removed from service after the INF was ratified. Earlier this month Secretary of Defense Mark Esper said the US had already begun work to develop "mobile, conventional, ground-launched cruise and ballistic missile systems". "Now that we have withdrawn, the Department of Defense will fully pursue the development of these ground-launched conventional missiles as a prudent response to Russia's actions," Esper said.

But he also insisted the US was not embarking on a new arms race. "The traditional sense of an arms race has been in a nuclear context," he said. "Right now, we don't have plans to build nuclear-tipped INF-range weapons. It's the Russians who have developed non-compliant like-ly, possibly nuclear-tipped weapons." — AFP

Yemen separatists drive out govt...

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Meanwhile, the UN's special envoy to Yemen warned yesterday that the war-ravaged country faced the prospect of breaking apart unless an agreement ending the decades-long conflict is found urgently. Martin Griffiths told the UN Security Council that there is "no time to lose" in brokering a peace deal to bring the fighting to a close. "The fragmentation of Yemen is becoming a stronger and more pressing threat," the British diplomat said via videolink from Jordan.

"The stakes are becoming too high for the future of Yemen, the Yemeni people and the wider region. Yemen cannot wait," he added. Griffiths condemned the takeover of Aden by the STC. "We certainly cannot underestimate the risks that these events pose for the future of the country," Griffiths told delegates. "No country can tolerate the stresses of internal conflict indefinitely," he added saying the war must be brought to an end "swiftly and peacefully."

On Aug 10, the Security Belt Forces ousted loyalists of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi from what was the capital of the formerly independent south in clashes that left around 40 people dead. They agreed to a withdrawal under pressure by Saudi Arabia and the UAE - both key to the military coalition supporting the Yemeni government against the Houthis - but retain control of key military sites.

Yemen's Deputy Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-

Hadhrami said the latest flare-up will undermine peace talks. "What Abyan governorate is witnessing is an unjustified escalation by the STC," the Yemeni foreign ministry quoted him as saying. "It is something that is rejected and unacceptable and will undermine mediation efforts by Saudi Arabia. We reject the continued provision of financial and military support by the UAE to outlawed STC forces in Yemen," he added.

In an interview with pan-Arab daily Asharq Al-Awsat, STC spokesman Nizar Haitham said the group was open to dialogue but ruled out any withdrawal from the military posts in Aden. "There will be no dialogue if we were to hand over all the positions... what will there be left to negotiate," he said in remarks published yesterday. South Yemen was a separate state until it merged with the north in 1990. Four years later, an armed secession bid ended in occupation by northern forces, giving rise to resentments which persist to this day. The Saudi-led military coalition sent a delegation to Aden - the Hadi government's base since the Huthi rebels took over Yemen's capital Sanaa in 2014 - on Thursday to discuss the new front in the country's crisis. The UAE is Saudi Arabia's main partner in the coalition fighting the Houthis, but trained and equipped the separatists. Analysts say the break between Hadi's internationally recognized government and the separatists reflects a wider rift between Riyadh and Abu Dhabi. Griffiths said he held a "positive and engaging" meeting with Saudi's deputy defense minister Prince Khaled bin Salman on Monday to discuss the crisis.

"Tireless role under Khaled bin Salman's leadership to restore order and stability in south Yemen," he tweeted yesterday. "We agreed on the need for continuous dialogue." — AFP

Tearful Tlaib says grandma advised...

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Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, the first two Muslim women ever elected to the US Congress, had planned a trip last week to the Jewish state and Palestinian territories, where they expected to meet with activists and officials on both sides. But on Thursday Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government bowed to urging from President Donald Trump and barred them, accusing them of supporting a boycott against Israel. Shortly after that, the Israelis partially reversed course and offered Tlaib alone permission to visit her grandmother if she accepted restrictions and promised not to promote the boycott.

Speaking together in Omar's hometown of St Paul, Minnesota in their first public appearance since the trip's cancellation, Tlaib and Omar accused Israel of bowing to

Trump and trying to hide the reality of the Palestinian situation. Tlaib pointed out that it is common for US lawmakers to visit Israel and meet a wide range of activists.

"What is not common occurrence is members of Congress being barred from entering a country on these fact-finding missions unless they agree to strict set of rules," she said. "It is unfortunate that Prime Minister Netanyahu is apparently taking a page out of Trump's book, and even direction from Trump, to deny this opportunity," she said.

Omar called the decision to ban the two of them "nothing less than an attempt by an ally of the United States to suppress our ability to do our jobs as elected officials." Referring to the \$3 billion in aid the US gives to Israel each year, Omar said, "this is predicated on their being an important ally in the region and the only democracy in the Middle East. But denying visit to duly elected members of Congress is not consistent with being an ally." She blasted Trump for using the visit as a political cudgel against them and the Democrats. "We know Donald Trump would love nothing more than to use this issue to pit Muslims and Jewish Americans against each other," Omar said. — AFP

India's Moon probe enters...

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launch due to a technical glitch. India's first lunar

mission in 2008 — Chandrayaan-1 — did not land on the Moon, but carried out a search for water using radar. A soft landing on the Moon would be a huge leap forward in India's space program, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi determined to launch a manned mission into space by 2022. India also has ambitions to land a probe on Mars. In 2014, India became only the fourth nation to put a satellite into orbit around the Red Planet. — AFP

Rebels withdraw from key area...

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And in recent weeks, regime forces have inched forward at the southern edges of the bastion.

In the early hours of yesterday, anti-Assad fighters pulled back from the town of Khan Sheikun and the countryside to its south, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group said. The withdrawal means a key Turkish observation point in the nearby town of Morek, as well as a string of surrounding villages, are effectively surrounded by government forces. Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP. All roads leading out of the area are either controlled by government forces or within range of their guns, he said.

Turkey's Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said his country had no intention to move the post from Morek. "We will do whatever is necessary to ensure the security of our soldiers and observation posts," he said. An HTS spokesman, meanwhile, denied its forces had withdrawn from the countryside around Morek, adding they had regrouped in the south of Khan Sheikoun after heavy bombardment.

Russia claimed rebel attacks against a key Russian air base to the west of Idlib and on regime-held civilian areas had continued despite the presence of the Turkish posts. "We have warned our Turkish colleagues that we would respond," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said. Assad also hit out at Turkey in a statement, saying "the latest battles in Idlib uncovered... Ankara's clear and unlimited support for terrorists", using his term for both militants and rebels.

Khan Sheikoun lies on the highway connecting Damascus to second city Aleppo, which has long been a key government objective. On Monday, a Turkish

military convoy crossed the border into Idlib and headed south along the highway, drawing condemnation from Damascus. Ankara alleged an air strike had targeted its troops, while a Syrian pro-government newspaper said regime aircraft had targeted a rebel vehicle leading them.

Yesterday, the convoy was at a standstill just north of Khan Sheikoun, after government forces to the south cut the road into the town the previous day. An AFP correspondent said air strikes and machine gunfire from government helicopters peppered the road leading back north. Air raids continued on areas north of Khan Sheikoun yesterday, including in the town of Binin where the AFP reporter saw a man pulled from the rubble alive.

The war has killed more than 370,000 people since it started with the brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011. Successive rounds of UN-backed peace talks have failed to stem the bloodshed, and in recent years have been overshadowed by a parallel negotiations track led by Russia and Turkey, dubbed the Astana process. Under the September deal, Turkish troops were to monitor a planned buffer zone around Idlib after militants had withdrawn from it - but that pullout failed to materialize.

Syria expert Sam Heller said the government's latest advance had shown Turkish monitoring points might complicate its recapture of territory, but could not prevent it. "It's not yet clear what Damascus and Moscow will do next," he said. It is unclear "if they will seize the opportunity to take more areas, or stop to consolidate their new positions and put some pressure on Ankara" to implement its side of the buffer zone deal, he told AFP.

Analyst Samuel Ramani said the government's accusation of Turkish support for its opponents could provide a "pretext for further Syrian army incursions". But "for Russia, holding the Astana coalition together is a chief priority," he said. Aid organizations have warned any large-scale government offensive to retake Idlib would spark one of the worst humanitarian crises of the war. — AFP