

Russian president honors Gorbachev on 80th birthday

MOSCOW, — President Dmitry Medvedev awarded former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev with Russia's highest state order on his 80th birthday Wednesday.

Medvedev told Gorbachev during a meeting that he would be awarded the Order of St. Andrew for his service as the last Soviet leader. Medvedev said leading the Soviet Union during a "very complex, dramatic period" was a tough job.

"It can be assessed differently, but it was a heavy load," Medvedev said, adding that he will invite Gorbachev to the Kremlin to give him the award.

"We all remember (the period Gorbachev led the country). This is an adequate evaluation of your work and a tribute of respect from the country, which you headed," Medvedev was quoted by Itar-Tass news agency as saying.

Gorbachev replied that his



heart "started beating louder" upon accepting the order.

Prime Minister Vladimir Putin also congratulated

Gorbachev in a telegram Wednesday, praising him as "one of the great statesmen of modern times, who have made a significant impact on the course of world history." Putin also hailed Gorbachev's charity activities.

Earlier in the day, Gorbachev expressed concern with present-day Russia.

"I view the current situation in the country as uneasy, which can be explained in large part by social problems," Gorbachev was quoted by local media as saying.

Gorbachev took over Soviet leadership in April 1985 and resigned in December 1991, following the country's disintegration.

Gorbachev is celebrating his birthday with family and friends in Moscow on Wednesday.

On March 30, he plans to attend a charitable gala concert in London's Royal Albert Hall to help raise money for treating patients with blood cancer, the disease that killed his wife Raisa in 1999. (Xinhua)

China likely to launch first probe to explore Mars' surface in 2013: chief scientist

BEIJING, — China is likely to launch its first probe to explore the surface of Mars in 2013, a chief scientist said here Wednesday.

"Mars is the first choice for mankind's interplanetary explorations as it is the closest Earth-like planet to Earth and could have life and be turned into a habitable place," Ye Peijian, chief scientist of deep space exploration at the China Academy of Space Technology, told Xinhua.

The mission will use China-made rockets, observation device and detector, said Ye, member of the 11th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, before the annual session of the country's top political advisory body, which is sched-

uled to open Thursday.

China will update and modify its lunar probes to develop a Mars probe, he said.

The probe should either be launched in November 2013 when Mars and Earth are closest to each other, or failing that in 2016, he said, adding that the probe will be equipped with the latest developed detector.

However, the plan needs government approval first, he added.

China's Mars explorer, Yinghuo-1, is scheduled to be launched from a Russian rocket in November this year to probe the space environment and magnetic fields of Mars. (Xinhua)

Russia to deploy cruise missiles on Kuril Islands

VLADIVOSTOK, — Russia will deploy anti-ship cruise missiles and an advanced air defense system on the Kuril Islands, including the four Russian-held Southern Kurils claimed by Japan, Interfax reported Wednesday.

Russia will set up Yakhont anti-ship missiles and the Tor-M2 missile shield, Interfax news agency quoted an official of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces as saying.

The cruise missiles could be deployed in Iturup and Kunashir, two of the four disputed Pacific islands which have major military sites in the Kuril Islands, a move likely to rouse indignation in Japan.

A military buildup plan for the Kuril Islands has already been submitted to Russian Defense Minister Anatoly Serdyukov, presumably including the deployments of the Yakhont missiles and the Tor-M2 system.

Russia will continue consolidating its military presence on the Kuril Islands seen as a strategic region. (Xinhua)

Katti and partners successfully conclude a massive N\$5 Billion merger..



Knowledge Katti, a young Namibian businessman, and Director in UNX Energy Corp. concluded a massive and unprecedented investment into Namibia's oil and gas sector valued at N\$5 Billion. The merger deal was concluded last week in New York, between HRT of Brazil (HRT PARTICIPAÇÕES EM PETRÓLEO S.A.) and UNX Energy Corp. It effectively combines the two companies. Katti is a holder of oil exploration assets in Namibia, including PEL 2137, situated off Namibia's Atlantic Coast. UNX energy Corp. in involved the development of that concession. The company recently announced possible oil reserves in their concession amounting to approximately 10 billion barrels of recoverable resources. HRT is

listed on the Bovespa Exchange in Brazil.

At N\$5 Billion, this is the biggest investment by a foreign investor into the Namibian oil and gas sector to date. Katti was very upbeat about the deal, saying that it is a major investment into a Namibian oil and gas sector and that it takes the search for oil in Namibia to another level.

According to Katti, this is the first deal of its kind involving Namibians and with a real potential for oil discovery, backed by an experienced company. He says that the deal demonstrates the confidence that a well-established company like HRT has in the real possibility of discovering oil in Namibia. Katti further reiterated his commitment by saying that "we will work closely with our Brazilian partners not only to find oil in Namibia but to make sure that we contribute towards the advancement of the Namibian nation, to create wealth, especially for the youth, the majority of whom are currently hurting because of the high rate of unemployment in our country. I believe that as Namibians we must use our ingenuity and skills to help government combat the high level of unemployment. Our international partners will help us to achieve this goal".

UNX Chairman, Duane Parnham commented: "In combining the two companies, the resulting entity forms a South Atlantic Margin powerhouse controlling impressive exploration and development concessions in both Namibia and Brazil. This transaction delivers an immediate and significant premium to our shareholders, and provides them with the opportunity to participate in the enormous potential of HRT's prospects. We are delighted that a company with the financial and technical strength of HRT, and which has been a long-term partner of UNX, is going to take our world-class Namibian prospects to the discovery stage. The UNX Board of Directors believes this is a very attractive transaction for our shareholders."

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