

# Putin Signs Decree Lifting Ban on Delivering S-300 to Iran

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a presidential decree paving the way for the long-overdue delivery of S-300 missile system to Iran, the Kremlin says. Putin's decree lifts a ban on "the shipment from Russia to Iran" of the S-300 missiles, the Kremlin said in a statement on Monday. The decree lifts the ban on transit through the Russian territory, including by air, the delivery from the Russian territory to Iran and the transfer outside of Russia with the use of vessels and aircraft flying the Russian state flag of S-300 missile air defense systems, the Russian Interfax news agency re-



ported. The decision to lift the ban comes after Iran and the P5+1 group of countries - five per-

manent members of the UN Security Council plus Germany - reached a mutual understand-

ing on Tehran's nuclear program in the Swiss city of Lausanne on April 2. According to the state-

ment, no Iranian nuclear facility will be shut down while all sanctions against the Islamic

Republic will be terminated. Under a contract signed in 2007, Russia was obliged to provide Iran with at least five S-300 defense systems. However, Moscow refused to deliver the surface-to-air missiles to Tehran in 2010 under the pretext that it is covered by the fourth round of the United Nations Security Council sanctions against Iran over its nuclear program, which bars hi-tech weapons sales to Tehran. Following Moscow's refusal to deliver the system, Iran filed a USD four-billion suit against the Russian arms firm, Rosoboroneksprom, with the International Court of Arbitration in Geneva. The S-300 missiles have a 125-mile (200-kilometer) range. (Agencies)

## Neighbour News

### Iran Calls for New Yemeni Government

ASTANA - Iran on Monday urged the formation of a new Yemeni government and offered to assist in a political transition, comments likely to anger Saudi Arabia, which is backing Yemen's president against a rebel force allied with Iran. The Houthi advance towards the Yemeni city of Aden forced President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi to flee to Riyadh last month and triggered a Saudi-led campaign of air strikes to try to drive back the rebels, who share their Shi'ite faith with Iran. "I had the privilege of participating in the Bonn Conference when we created the Afghan government. Actually we didn't do it, the Afghans did... We can do that in Yemen too," Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a speech during a

two-day visit to Kazakhstan. The Bonn Conference was held in 2001 to rebuild the Afghan state after its Taliban rulers were ousted in a U.S. invasion supported by allied Afghan forces, and resulted in an entirely new political system for Afghanistan. Zarif's suggestion of a similar process for Yemen is likely to be seen by Saudi Arabia as an attempt to extend Iran's influence on the Arabian Peninsula, where a Saudi-led coalition of Sunni-ruled Arab states is trying to shore up support for Hadi. The rivalry for influence between Sunni-ruled Saudi Arabia and Shi'ite Iran in countries such as Yemen, Iraq and Syria has fuelled sectarian instability in the Middle East since the Arab Spring uprisings of 2011. (Reuters)

### U.S. Targets Iran's Record on Women's Rights at US

NEW YORK - The United States targeted Iran's record on women's rights on Friday by calling a rare vote on the country's "wholly inappropriate" bid to join the executive board of the United Nations gender equality body. The 54-member U.N. Economic and Social Council held a secret ballot on the uncontested Asia-Pacific regional slate for the board of UN Women, which was created by the United Nations in 2010 as a body for gender equality and empowerment of women. Only 53 council members voted on Friday, using blank ballots on which they had to write in the country names. Sa-

moa and United Arab Emirates got 53 votes, Turkmenistan 52 votes and Pakistan 49 votes. Iran was elected with 36 votes. "The low vote total that Iran received today testifies to the deep concerns U.N. member states have about Iran assuming a position on the board of UN Women," the U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations, Samantha Power, said in a statement. Repression of Iranian women and activists has worsened under President Hassan Rouhani despite his reformist agenda, a U.N. rights investigator said last month. (Reuters)

### Nisar Hits out at UAE Minister for 'Threatening' Pakistan

ISLAMABAD - Pakistani Federal Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar Ali Khan on Sunday hit out at the United Arab Emirates (UAE) for condemning a unanimous resolution by Pakistani lawmakers to stay out of the conflict in Yemen, in a rare display of discord between the two allies. Pakistan's Parliament on Friday passed a resolution backing the government's commitment to protect Saudi Arabia's territory from Houthi rebels, but declined Riyadh's request for Pakistani troops, ships and warplanes inside Yemen. Anwar Gargash, the UAE's minister of state for foreign affairs, lashed out at Pakistan's vote Saturday, terming it "contradictory and dangerous and unexpected", and accusing Islamabad of siding with Iran, which is accused of backing Houthi rebels. Gargash added that Pakistan's stand would come at a "high cost." But Nisar hit back on Sunday night in an unusually strongly-worded statement, accusing the UAE of "levelling threats." "This is not only ironic but a thought-provoking moment that a minister of UAE is hurling threats at Pakistan. The statement of the UAE minister is in stark violation of all diplomatic norms prevalent according to the principals of international relations," Nisar said.

"Pakistan is an honoured nation and has brotherly emotions for the people of UAE along with Saudi Arabia, but this statement of an Emirati minister is equal to an offence against the ego of Pakistan and its people and is unacceptable." He said Pakistan was the first country to recognise UAE's independence in 1971 and the two Sunni Muslim-majority countries have close economic ties. The UAE is a major investor in Pakistan, while around 1.4 million Pakistani expatriates work in the Gulf state sending home remittances that are vital for the South Asian country's economy. (Monitoring Desk)

### New Round of Libyan Peace Talks Kick off in Algeria

ALGIERS - The second round of a UN-sponsored Libyan dialogue kicked off Monday in the Algerian capital of Algiers in a bid to settle a four-year crisis hitting the North African country. In his opening speech, head of the UN Support Mission in Libya (UNSMIL) Bernardino Leon said "political solution is the only way to restore peace and stability in Libya, urging all Libyan warring parties to join "this UN-sponsored peace process hosted by Algeria." The UN official further hailed Algeria's effort to help the Libyan parties get together in this dialogue process. For his part, Algerian Minister for Maghreb and African Affairs Abdelkader Messahel stressed that "the enemy of Libya is terrorism, chaos and conflict." He asserted that forming a national unity government and reconciliation in Libya are the ultimate goal of this dialogue. Algeria, which shares a common border and history with Libya, has made huge efforts in helping the neighbor to the east find a solution to the years-long crisis, Messahel said earlier during the first round of the dialogue in March. (Xinhua)

### Pakistan Does Not Abandon Friends and Strategic Partners: PM Nawaz

ISLAMABAD - Amidst unsubstantiated rumours that Pakistan will commit troops to Saudi Arabia for the protection of its borders, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in an address today urged a peaceful solution to the Yemen crisis through dialogue with warring factions and reiterated the importance of the Saudi Kingdom as a 'strategic ally'. Nawaz in his speech today upheld Parliament's recent resolution to stay 'neutral' in the Yemen conflict, and repeated the words of the resolution regarding the importance of Saudi Arabia as an ally. "We stand with them shoulder to shoulder," he said. "We are also in touch with Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) to assure that their disappointment was based on an apparent misinterpretation of the Parliament's resolution," said Nawaz. "Pakistan does not abandon friends and strategic partners, specially at a time when their security is under threat." Pakistan firmly believes that President Mansur Hadi's government will be important to maintain peace and stability in Yemen, said Nawaz. (Monitoring Desk)

### Tajikistan Opens Embassy in South Korea

DUSHANBE - Tajik President Emomali Rahmon participated in opening ceremony of the Tajik Embassy to South Korea in Seoul on Monday. According to the presidential press service, the ceremony was also attended by the high-ranking Tajik and Korean officials. Speaking at the ceremony, President Rahmon said that opening of the Tajik Embassy in Seoul

is an important factor for further expansion of cooperation between Tajikistan and South Korea. Tajik president expressed hope that the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) will soon open its office in Tajikistan. President Rahmon arrived in Daegu on Friday for the 7th World Water Forum and an official visit to South Korea. (Avesta)

### Saudi Demands Iran Stop Backing Yemen Rebels

SANAA - The Red Cross on Saturday delivered a second planeload of aid to war-battered Yemen in as many days, as the Saudi-led coalition stepped up air raids on allies of Iran-backed rebels. The aid is urgently needed for hundreds wounded in fighting between pro-government forces and the Shi'ite Houthi rebels, who are allies of troops loyal to ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh. Coalition warplanes on Saturday launched several raids in and around Sanaa, with at least 11 around Sanhan, Saleh's home town. A raid on mili-



tary targets in Amran province north of Sanaa killed eight rebels, medics said on the 18th day of the Saudi-led air campaign. Fighting in and around the southern city of Aden since late Friday between rebels and pro-government forces has

killed 42 people including three civilians, medics and military sources said. The International Committee of the Red Cross said its aircraft landed in Sanaa with medical equipment after weeks of intense fighting across the country. (AFP)

### UN Nuclear Watchdog, Iran to Hold Talks on Bomb Probe

VIENNA - The UN atomic watchdog said Monday it will hold talks on Wednesday seeking to jumpstart its long-stalled probe into Iran's alleged past efforts to develop nuclear weapons, a key part of a hoped-for final deal with major powers. The meeting in Tehran will be the first since Iran and six major powers agreed on April 2 the main outlines of potentially historic deal curtailing Iran's nuclear activities in return for sanctions relief. Western officials say it is crucial for Iran to answer the International Atomic Energy Agency's long-standing questions about the "possible military dimensions" of its activities before any sanctions can be eased. Iran rejects the allegations as false information provided to a gullible and partial IAEA by the Islamic Republic's enemies, complaining that it has not even been given an opportunity to see much of the supposed evidence itself. (AFP)

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### US, Europe Demand Libya Ceasefire as Embassies Attacked

TRIPOLI - The United States and European powers pressed Libya's rival factions to set an "unconditional" ceasefire at talks restarting on Monday, as two attacks on foreign embassies were linked to Islamic State militants. A bomb exploded outside the Moroccan embassy in Tripoli, causing no casualties but damaging nearby cars, a security official. Like many others

in the Libyan capital, the embassy is currently inactive. Morocco is hosting a UN-backed dialogue between representatives of the two rival governments controlling the country, separate to talks that were to resume Monday in Algeria. The bombing came hours after gunmen opened fire on South Korea's embassy compound from a passing car on Sunday, killing two Libyan guards

and wounding a third person. An AFP photographer said a vehicle used by the security guards was riddled with bullet holes, while it appeared that the main embassy building had not been hit. The foreign ministry in Seoul confirmed the attack, saying three South Koreans working in the embassy -- including two diplomats -- were unhurt. (AFP)

### ISIL Hackers Post Message on Australian Airport Website

SEYDNY - An Australian airport website has been hacked by a group claimed to be affiliated with the ISIL terrorists and defaced with a statement in support of the Takfiri group. Hackers targeted the web host used by the Hobart International Airport in the southern state of Tasmania on Sunday, according to the state police. "A message placed on the site contained a statement supporting ISIS (ISIL)," police said in a statement on Monday, adding "There were no threats made towards the Hobart Airport or flight operations to and from the airport." The police statement further read that identical messages had appeared on thousands of websites worldwide since late 2014. Police said the hackers appear to "non-discriminately target organizations which use web hosts such as the one used by Hobart International Airport." Australian officials became aware that the website had been defaced on Sunday morning, with the site remaining down on Monday. (Agencies)

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### Turkmenistan Offers to Work out Water Strategy with UN

ASHGABAT - Turkmen President Gurbanguly Berdimuhamedov put forward an initiative to work out the UN water strategy, the government of Turkmenistan said April 13. President Berdimuhamedov was delivering a speech at the seventh World Water Forum, which opened in the South Korean city of Daegu. "Today, water problems can not be considered in isolation from global development plans, environmental and food security, the creation of an integrated sustainable energy system," the president said. "We see the possibility of a systematic and multi-level dialogue in the creation of a new political and diplomatic form of multilateral communication, which could be the "water diplomacy", the president said. (Trend News Agency)

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### China, US to Boost Cooperation on Repatriating Fugitives

BEIJING - China and the U.S. are boosting cooperation in sending home crime suspects amid a Chinese drive to ferret out corrupt officials and fugitives who have fled abroad. The Department of Homeland Security said the sides agreed to streamline the process for identifying and returning fugitives, along with those who have overstayed their visas or entered the U.S. illegally. The agreement came during Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh

Johnson's visit to Beijing last week, during which a range of law enforcement issues were discussed, including counterterrorism and cybersecurity. A department news release Sunday said the sides would share more information on repatriation and fugitive cases and provide regular updates. China also agreed to expedite the return of the more than 39,000 Chinese citizens currently in the United States who are at some stage in the process of being deported. (AP)

### Over 2,048 Somali Refugees Returned Home: UNHCR

NAIROBI - The UN refugee agency said on Wednesday it has so far repatriated 2,048 refugees from Kenya to Somalia under the current voluntary return pilot project which kicked off in December 2014. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said in its bi-weekly update received

in Nairobi that more refugees have expressed their interest to return home. The UNHCR said majority of the refugees returned to southern Somalia's port city of Kismayo and with hopes of greater stability in Somalia, some IDPs and refugees from neighboring countries

are spontaneously returning to their areas of origin. "2,048 individuals (442 households) voluntarily returned to Somalia between the beginning of the return pilot project in December 2014 and March 31. The majority returned to Kismayo," UNHCR said in the update. (Xinhua)

### Iran Urges Close Ties with Russia on Key Regional, Global Issues

TEHRAN - Secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council (SNSC) Ali Shamkhani says Iran and Russia must hold close and effective consultation on important regional and international developments. In a meeting with Secretary of Rus-

sia's Security Council Nikolai Patrushev in Moscow on Monday, Shamkhani criticized certain Western countries and their regional allies for their destructive roles, saying they promote warmongering policies and destroy the regional human and financial

resources by violating moral and legal principles. The SNSC secretary urged independent countries to play an active role in the face of the alarming increase in security crises and the institutionalization of violence and extremism. (Agencies)