

# US Opposes Russian Move to Sell Missiles to Iran

WASHINGTON - US Secretary of State John Kerry raised Washington's concerns about the end of the sales ban on the S-300 missile system directly with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in an early morning phone call.

The move comes just days after global powers - Britain, China, France, Germany, Russia and the United States - agreed an outline framework of a deal to sharply curtail Iran's suspect nuclear program.

But a full deal still has to be agreed by a June 30 deadline.

"We don't believe it's constructive at this time for Russia to move forward with it," said



State Department acting spokeswoman Marie Harf.

The US military also ex-

pressed concerns. "Our opposition to these sales is long and public. We believe it's unhelpful,"

Pentagon spokesman Colonel Steve Warren told reporters.

Putin signed a decree lift-

ing a self-imposed ban on supplying the missile system to the Islamic republic.

In doing so, he preempted the possible future lifting of sanctions against Iran if it agrees to the deal limiting its nuclear program.

"We think given Iran's destabilizing actions in the region, in places like Yemen or Syria or Lebanon, that this isn't the time to be selling these kinds of system to them," Harf told reporters. But she conceded that the US administration did not believe that any such sales would be in violation of UN sanctions, slapped on Iran for its suspect nuclear program. Asked whether sales would violate the UN Security Council sanctions, she replied: (AFP)

## Neighbour News

### No Plan for Iran Single Forex Rate Now: CBI

The governor of Central Bank of Iran (CBI) has said that there is no plan to unify the country's multi-tier foreign exchange system, an MP says.

TEHRAN - Nasser Ashouri said Valiollah Seif made the remarks in a meeting with the Economic Committee of the parliament (Majlis).

"In this meeting, the CBI governor announced that the single forex rate system would not be implemented for now," he said. Seif also said that this plan would be executed after Iran reaches economic stability, according to Ashouri. Iran's national currency started depreciating sharply three years ago.

The rial is currently traded at two rates with one being decided by CBI and the other one set by money changers. The rate

set by money changers fluctuates even during the day.

On Tuesday, the US dollar traded for IRR 28,258 at official rate and for IRR 33,000 on open market. Iran's economy shrank 9 percent in 2012 and 2013. Iranians hope that the country's national currency would be strengthened after international sanctions imposed upon Iran have been lifted.

Iran and the P5+1 group of countries - the United States, Russia, China, France, Britain, and Germany - reached a mutual understanding on Tehran's nuclear program on April 2 in Lausanne, Switzerland. (Agencies)

## Zarif Outlines Four-Point Peace Plan for Yem

TEHRAN - Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif has put forward the details of a proposed peace plan according to which Tehran seeks to help end the ongoing conflict gripping Yemen. During his visit to the Spanish capital, Madrid, on Tuesday, Zarif proposed a four-point plan, emphasizing the Yemeni nation's right to decide its own future free from foreign interference. The proposal includes hammering out a ceasefire, sending humanitarian assistance to the people affected by violence, launching an intra-Yemeni dialog, and establishing a broad-based government participated by all Yemeni factions, according to Za-

rif. The top Iranian diplomat, once again, called on the Al Saud regime to stop its military campaign against Yemen, saying the deadly attacks on the Arabian Peninsula state could never provide "an answer" to the conflict. "All operations should end on land and from the air," Zarif said, adding, "This issue should be resolved by the Yemenis... Iran and Saudi Arabia need to talk but we cannot talk to determine the future of Yemen." Prior to his visit to Spain, Zarif visited Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, where he declared Iran's readiness to help facilitate a political transition in Yemen. (Monitoring Desk)

## EU Urges More Mediterranean Cooperation to Tackle Terrorism

BARCELONA - EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini called Monday for stepped up cooperation and dialogue between Europe and its Mediterranean neighbours in North Africa and the Middle East to fight terrorism. Mogherini made the appeal at a meeting of foreign ministers and representatives from the 28 European Union member states and delegations from eight North Africa and Middle East nations of the southern rim of the Mediterranean. "It is important to hear from you that your everyday greeting is 'salam alaikum', peace be with you, and this is the main message we Europeans need to

know first of all, to restart intercultural learning that is important for prevention," she told a news conference. "If we want to end jihadist terrorism, we have to go to the root of the question and favour intercultural and interreligious dialogue," she added. "All nations in the region are confronted with a fragile security situation which has worsened due to several armed conflicts, mainly in Syria and Libya." Foreign ministers and representatives from the 28 European Union member states took part in the gathering along with delegations from Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Palestinian Author-

ity and Tunisia. The EU's other two southern partners, Libya and Syria, both torn by conflict, stayed away. It was the first high-level meeting of the 43-nation Mediterranean Union since the body was launched in 2008 with the aim of creating a more equal dialogue between the wealthy EU and the poorer states that line the Mediterranean. Mogherini said she would like to have such a minister-level meeting on a yearly basis. The EU has a budget of around 16 billion euros (\$17 billion) for 2014-2020 for regional development projects and roughly two-thirds had been earmarked for its southern neighbours to curb the conditions that give rise to jihadism, a diplomatic source said. (AFP)

## Europe to Replace Asia after Iran Sanctions

TEHRAN - Top European countries are largely expected to replace emerging Asian economies as trading partners of Iran once international sanctions against Tehran are lifted, an Iranian newspaper says. The Persian-language Etemad newspaper said in a report on Tuesday that India, Turkey, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iraq won toehold in Iran's market after Britain, France and Italy stopped trading with Iran due to the sanctions.

"The Lausanne understanding has created this optimism that the lifting of the sanctions would result in the return of Iran's longtime partners," it said. The paper was referring to a recent agreement reached between Iran and six world powers with a view to signing a permanent nuclear deal that would end sanctions on Iran. Etemad said countries like China, Iraq, Afghanistan, the United Arab Emirates and Turkey "are playing with Iran's commercial sector according to their own tastes." (Monitoring Desk)

## China to Strengthen Surveillance, Security in Anti-Terror Push

BEIJING - China will establish a national population database linked to ID information and credit records, state media reported late on Monday, as part of a larger push to beef up surveillance and security in response to violent unrest.

China has already taken a series of measures to prevent attacks by extremists, including plans for an anti-terrorism law that would give the government broader surveillance powers and offering to pay for tips about violent plots. The latest steps also include assigning more

security forces to public transport, including buses, trains and subways, as well as to schools, financial institutions and hospitals, the official Xinhua news agency reported, citing a statement issued by the ruling Communist Party's Central Committee and the State Council, China's cabinet. In addition, China will require identification when registering at hotels, for trade of second-hand goods, for motor refitting and for "recreation services", Xinhua said, without specifying the type of recreation. (Reuters)

## Uzbekistan, Poland Determine Business Areas of Co-op

TASHKENT, Uzbekistan - The entrepreneurs of Uzbekistan and Poland have determined the areas of mutually beneficial cooperation during the business forum in Tashkent, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan told Trend.

The business forum was organized by the Chambers of Commerce and Industry of Uzbekistan and Silesia and aimed at expanding direct contacts between business structures of Uzbekistan and Poland.

The representatives of Polish companies, engaged in the production of railway vehicles, buses and trolleybuses, scientific research in the fields of biomedicine and nanotechnology, production of equipment for cooling and storage of fruits, utilities, production of power transmission systems and conveyors, aluminum profile, household chemicals, dairy products, rendering the services for the mining industry

attended the forum. It was stressed during the event that the Uzbek-Polish relations are being dynamically developed in all spheres, including the trade and economic sphere.

In accordance with the bilateral agreements on the economic cooperation, the trade, economic and investment relations between Uzbekistan and Poland are built on the most-favoured-nation principle.

The forum participants discussed the current status of the foreign economic cooperation between the two countries. Currently, the trade turnover between Uzbekistan and Poland is around \$200 million. Uzbekistan mainly exports the products of cotton processing, textile and chemical industry to Poland. In recent years, Poland has mainly exported products of chemical industry, seedlings of fruit and berry crops and other products to Uzbekistan. (TNA)

## Pakistan Hangs 12 Convicts

ISLAMABAD - Pakistan put 12 male convicts to the rope on Tuesday in the largest mass execution since lifting moratorium on capital punishment following the Peshawar massacre.

Pakistan put 12 male convicts to the rope on Tuesday in the largest mass execution since an unofficial moratorium on capital punishment was lifted in December. The men were terrorists, murderers or guilty of "heinous crimes", an interior ministry spokesman said. The latest executions took place in cities across Pakistan in Multan, Karachi, Faisal-

abad, Rawalpindi, Gujranwala and Jhang, Pakistani media reported.

It is estimated there are more than 8,000 Pakistanis on death row. Human rights groups have said that prisoners often do not get a fair trial within Pakistan's obsolete criminal justice system and that poorly-trained police often use torture to force confessions. A moratorium on hangings was lifted for terror-related crimes after a Taliban attack killed more than 150 people, mostly children, at a school in Peshawar in December last year. (Agencies)

## Russian to Supply S-400 Missile Defense Systems to China

MOSCOW - Russia may have just lifted its ban on supplying Iran with S-300s, but it has also reached a deal to supply China with the S-400 Triumf missile defense system. The S-400, an upgraded version of the S-300, had previously only been available to the Russian Ministry of Defense. China will be the first foreign buyer. The S-400, which is manufactured by Almaz-Antey, has been in service in Russia since 2007. The sophisticated air defense system is capable of firing three types of missiles, creating a layered defence, and can simulta-



neously engage 36 targets. The system is able to shoot down aircraft-manned and unmanned-and missile-ballistic and cruise-within a range of 400 km (248.5 miles). It seems Russia has decided to go through with the deal despite these

concerns. The details of the actual deal have not been revealed, but reports in November indicated that China "had signed a \$3 billion contract for at least six S-400 divisions, which have about eight missile launchers each." (Agencies)

## US Trying to Colonize Europe: Top Russian Lawmaker

MOSCOW - Russia's top lawmaker has accused the United States of trying to colonize Europe through its policies, stating Washington has already put Europe's military and political spheres under its control and now trade and finance sectors are being targeted. Sergey Naryshkin, the speaker of Russia's lower house of parliament, made the remarks in an article posted on the Russian business daily Vedomosti's website on Tuesday. Naryshkin said the US

is seeking world supremacy and its geopolitical policy relies on the character of colonizers. "The new conflicts in various regions of the planet that often emerge due to external provocations show that the instincts of colonizers have not disappeared. They are presented with renewed vigor and by some carpetbaggers from the European continent, and they have become the essence of geopolitical strategy for the US," said Naryshkin. (Agencies)

## Malala for Stepped up Efforts to Liberate Nigerian Schoolgirls

LAGOS - Nobel peace laureate Malala Yousafzai on Monday criticised Nigerian and world leaders for not doing enough to help free 219 schoolgirls kidnapped a year ago by Boko Haram militants. "In my opinion, Nigerian leaders and the international community have not done enough to help you," she said

in a letter to the teenagers, on the eve of the first anniversary of their abduction. "They must do much more to help secure your release. I am among many people pressuring them to make sure you are freed," she added, calling the girls "my brave sisters". Ms Yousafzai's letter, which she said was "a

message of solidarity love and hope", comes as events, including marches, prayers and vigils, were being held to mark the girls' 12 months in captivity. Militants kidnapped 276 girls from their school in the remote town of Chibok, in Borno state of northeastern Nigeria, on the evening of April 14 last year. (Monitoring Desk)

## India Signals End of Talks on Larger French Rafale Deal

NEW DELHI - India's future purchase of Rafale fighter jets will only come through direct talks with the French government, the defence minister has said, effectively killing talks on one of the world's largest aviation deals. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced last week that New Delhi had ordered 36 Rafale fighter jets from France in a multi-billion-dollar agreement that has been years in

the making. But Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar said late on Monday that any future deals will be negotiated directly between the two governments, rather than between the manufacturer and Indian bureaucrats. "All deal(s) will be in G2G only," Parrikar told reporters in New Delhi, according to the Press Trust of India news agency. "The reason we have taken 36 directly is to

ensure that they are inducted into the air force at the earliest," he also told the IBN 7 network. The minister said the original negotiations to buy 126 Rafale jets from French manufacturer Dassault Aviation - that have been dragging since 2012 - had gone into a "vortex" or a "loop", with no solution in sight. "The process is stalled. It has hit a wall and is not getting [any] result," he told IBN 7. (Agencies)

## Philippines Warns against China's Expansionist Policy

MANILA - Philippine President Benigno Aquino has warned against China's efforts to claim territory in the South China Sea. In an exclusive interview with AFP, the Filipino leader warned that the territorial claims could turn into a full-out military conflict in the

region. He said, "The question of it [the territorial disputes] escalating to something beyond everybody's control should be at the top of the minds of all world leaders." Aquino warned that China's increasing influence in disputed territories would give

it control over vital international shipping lanes and rich fishing grounds in the sea. Regional countries such as the Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia, Brunei and Taiwan, all have overlapping claims with China over disputed territories in the South China Sea. (Agencies)

## Egypt, Norway, Russia Approved as AIIB Founders

BEIJING - Egypt, Norway and Russia have been approved as prospective founding members of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), China's Ministry of Finance said on Tuesday. This brings the number of prospective founders to 50, the ministry said. Founding members of the AIIB have the right to make the bank's rules, while countries that

applied to join after March 31 will be considered ordinary members with voting rights only and less say in the rule-making process. Founding membership will be finalized on April 15, reports. The AIIB will provide financing for roads, railways, airports and other infrastructure projects in Asia. It is expected to be established by the end of this year. (Xinhua)