

# Kerry to Hold Talks with Russian President Putin

WASHINGTON - Secretary of State John Kerry will travel to Russia this week for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Kerry's first visit to Russia since the Ukraine crisis began, the State Department announced Monday. Relations between Moscow and the West have been badly damaged over Ukraine, with Western nations accusing Russia of supporting separatists there with arms and manpower — a charge Moscow denies. Russia, meanwhile, has bristled at Washington's pledge to provide Ukraine with military assistance in the form of hardware and



training. The State Department said Kerry will meet Putin and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov at the Black Sea resort of Sochi on Tuesday. It's Kerry's second trip to Russia since

taking office. The announcement said Kerry will "discuss a full range of bilateral and regional issues, including Iran, Syria, and Ukraine." The trip is part of a U.S. effort "to maintain direct lines of communication with senior Russian officials and to ensure U.S. views are clearly conveyed," the State Department said. After his brief stop in Russia, Kerry will travel to Turkey for a meeting of NATO foreign ministers and return to Washington for a summit of Gulf Arab leaders that President Barack Obama is hosting at Camp David. (AP)

## Ukraine Officer Turns 34 Behind Bars amid Calls for Release

MOSCOW - A Ukrainian military officer imprisoned in Russia has turned 34 behind bars amid renewed international clamor for her to be released. Supporters of Nadezhda Savchenko urged social media users to use the hashtag #FreeSavchenko to mark her birthday on Monday. The U.S. ambassador to Ukraine used the hashtag on Twitter and posted a picture of a birthday card addressed to Savchenko. Savchenko has been in

Russian custody since June on charges that she aided a mortar attack that killed two Russian journalists covering the war between Ukrainian troops and separatists. She denies involvement in the reporters' deaths. Ukraine has demanded Savchenko be released in line with a February cease-fire agreement requiring all prisoners captured during the war in Ukraine to be released. Moscow says Savchenko does not qualify for release. (AP)

## UN Official Cancels Visit to South Africa after Delays



JOHANNESBURG - The United Nations' special rapporteur on violence against women on Monday canceled an official visit to South Africa saying the government delayed and ignored requests. Rashida Manjoo has been trying to set up a visit to the country since 2012, her office said in a statement. Manjoo was finally able to secure a formal invitation for a visit earlier this year, but President Jacob Zuma's government then postponed her trip and failed to confirm a new schedule, despite repeated requests, said the statement. Manjoo is a South African national who has worked at the country's Commission on Gender Equality. In her capacity

as special rapporteur, she was meant to lead a fact-finding mission to investigate violence against women in South Africa, which has high rates of domestic violence and sexual assault. The special rapporteur would have met with survivors, civil society groups as well as government officials, her spokeswoman, Nathalie Stadelmann, said. Manjoo ends her second three-year term as special rapporteur at the end of July, and she said she hoped her replacement would continue discussions with South Africa. Manjoo's predecessor, Yakin Erturk, also failed to secure a visit to the country, said Stadelmann. (AP)

## Libyan Military Shells Turkish Cargo Ship, Crew Member Killed

BENGHAZI, Libya/ANKARA - Forces loyal to Libya's internationally recognized government said on Monday they shelled a Turkish ship off the Libyan coast after it was warned not to approach, and one crew member was killed in what Turkey described as a "contemptible attack". Libya is in a state of violent factional chaos with two rival governments backed by various armed groups vying for control of the oil-producing North African state including its ports, four years after rebels overthrew Muammar Gaddafi. The dry cargo

ship was targeted about 10 miles from the coast on Sunday after it was told not to break a ban on approaching the eastern city of Derna, Libyan military spokesman Mohamed Hejazi told Reuters. The forces of Libya's internationally recognized government have said they will hit any ships approaching Derna to stop supplies getting to Islamist militants based there. The Turkish foreign ministry said the vessel was shelled as it approached the nearby Mediterranean port of Tobruk and then attacked from the air as it tried to leave the area....(More on P4)...(27)

## Along with Saudi King, Most Gulf Rulers to Skip US Summit

DUBAI, United Arab Emirates - It is not just the Saudi king who will be skipping the Camp David summit of U.S. and allied Arab leaders. Most Gulf heads of state won't be there. The absences will put a damper on talks that are designed to reassure key Arab allies, and almost certainly reflect dissatisfaction among leaders of the six-member Gulf Cooperation Council with Washington's handling of Iran and what they



expect to get out of the meeting. Saudi Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir announced late on Sunday that newly installed King Salman will not be attending. The ostensible reason was because

the upcoming summit on Thursday coincides with a humanitarian cease-fire in the conflict in Yemen, where a Saudi-led coalition is fighting Shiite rebels known as Houthis. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Nayef, who is also interior minister, will lead the Saudi delegation and the king's son, Deputy Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who is defense minister, will also attend....(More on P4)...(23)

## Russia Has Equipped Ukraine Rebels to Attack at Short Notice: NATO

BRUSSELS - NATO's chief said on Monday that Russia had built up forces on the border with Ukraine and sent more military hardware into eastern Ukraine, enabling pro-Russia separatists to launch attacks with little warning if they chose. "There has been a Russian build-

up, both along the borders between Russia and Ukraine but also inside eastern Ukraine, with a steady flow of heavy equipment, tanks, artillery, ammunition, air defense systems and a lot of training," alliance Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told a news conference. "So

they have the capacity, the capability to launch new attacks with very little warning time. But of course no one can say anything with certainty about the intention. "A NATO foreign ministers' meeting in Turkey this week is due to discuss Ukraine.... (More on P4)...(24)

## 72 Dead as Syria Army Battles to Free Loyalists: Monitor

BEIRUT - At least 72 fighters were killed in a single day as the Syrian army battled to relieve some 250 besieged regime loyalists under rebel assault, a monitoring group said Monday. President Bashar al-Assad had personally pledged to rescue the trapped troops and civilians, who are said to include senior figures and have been holed up in a hospital complex since rebels captured the northwestern town of Jisr al-Shughur two weeks ago. As the relief column fought its way to within

two kilometres (just over a mile) of the complex on Sunday morning, the rebels launched an all-out assault, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. At least 40 rebels and 32 government troops were killed in the heavy fighting that erupted inside the complex and with the advancing column, Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP. The clashes continued into the early hours of Monday with the rebels retaking some ground from the advancing troops before being pushed back.

Among the 250 people holed up inside the complex are around 150 government troops, including "high-ranking officers," as well as their family members and some civil servants, Abdel Rahman said. It is unclear how much food and ammunition they have left. The rebels assaulting the complex include fighters of Al-Qaeda affiliate Al-Nusra Front. They seized the rest of Jisr al-Shughur on April 25, extending their gains in Idlib province, where they have also captured the....(More on P4)...(25)

## S.Korea Tells North to Halt 'Worrisome' Sub Missile Project

SEOUL - South Korea on Monday urged North Korea to halt its "worrisome" development of a submarine-launched ballistic missile, as one Seoul official warned Pyongyang could have a functional SLBM capability within two years. The North's state media announced Saturday that a new SLBM had been tested under the personal supervision of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un, who described it as an "eye-opening success" that provided his military with a "world-level strategic weapon". The exact nature of the test has yet to be independently confirmed,



with some experts suggesting it was an ejection test -- with the missile only travelling a few hundred metres -- rather than a full flight test. However, South Korea's defence ministry said the test was "very serious and worrisome" and could undermine regional stability. "We urge the

North to immediately stop development of the SLBM that threatens the security of the Korean peninsula and northeast Asia," ministry spokesman Kim Min-Seok told reporters. A fully developed SLBM capability would take the North Korean nuclear threat to a....(More on P4)...(26)

## Kurdish Forces and Allies 'Broke IS Spine': Kurdish Leader

BUDAPEST - The leader of Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region, Massud Barzani, said on Monday his forces had "broken the spine" of the Islamic State (IS) group with the help of international allies. "Thanks to (the Kurds') opposition and the help of their friends in the coalition, the spine of the Islamic State is broken," Barzani said after talks with Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban in Budapest. Hungary recently joined the fight against IS by committing to send some 150 soldiers to Iraqi Kurdistan's capital, Erbil. Barzani said that although "the danger is not over", he was hopeful the days of the brutal militant organisation were numbered. The Kurdish president is in Budapest on an official state visit after wrapping up a trip to Washington where he met US President Barack Obama to discuss the situation in Iraq. (AFP)

## Syria Army Pushes towards Jisr Al-Shughur Seeking Morale Boost

BEIRUT - Stung by recent losses, Syria's regime is making a concerted push to reach besieged forces trapped in the rebel-held town of Jisr al-Shughur, hoping to give supporters a much-needed morale boost. The strategic town in northwestern Idlib province fell to rebels including Al-Qaeda's local affiliate just over two weeks ago, but a group of regime loyalists remain trapped inside a hospital complex. In the past few days, army troops have launched a major counteroffensive in a bid to reach the besieged group but....(More on P4)...(28)

## Neighbour News

### Iran Nuclear Team Not to Tolerate Threats: Araqchi

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian negotiator says the country's nuclear team will never allow the opposite side to use the language of threat in the course of negotiations over Tehran's nuclear program. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Seyyed Abbas Araqchi made the remarks on Monday after Iranian lawmakers announced a bill that, if passed, would require a halt to nuclear negotiations between Tehran and the P5+1 group until the United States stops its threatening rhetoric against the Islamic Republic. The bill, with a triple-urgency status, would oblige the government

to halt nuclear talks with the six countries until Washington apologizes to Tehran and puts an end to threats against Iran, according to Javad Karimi Qodussi, a member of the National Security and Foreign Policy Committee of the Iranian Parliament (Majlis). The Iranian nuclear team has never allowed any talk of threat to emerge during the course of nuclear talks and the opposite side has not used the language of threat in the negotiations to date, Araqchi said. The move by Iranian legislators followed Washington's fresh threats of military action against Iran amid the ongoing talks over Tehran's nuclear program. (Agencies)

### China Ready to Strengthen Ties with New British Government: FM Spokesperson

BEIJING - China is prepared to strengthen exchange and cooperation with the new British government, following Prime Minister David Cameron's victory in last week's general election, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Monday. Cameron has formed his first all-Conservative cabinet, the Conservative Party having secured the first Conservative majority in parliament since 1997. China and Britain are

both countries with great influence. Enhancing friendly cooperation is in the fundamental interests of the two countries and peoples as well as world stability and prosperity, Foreign Ministry spokesperson Hua Chunying said. "China is ready to deepen exchanges and cooperation with the new British government for the development of the bilateral comprehensive strategic partnership," she said. (Xinhua)

### Nawaz Recommends Sitara-I-Pakistan for Deceased Foreign Diplomats

ISLAMABAD - Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif on Monday recommended that Sitara-i-Pakistan be conferred upon the diplomats who were killed in the Naltar crash on Friday. Addressing a reference held in Islamabad to honour the victims of the Naltar crash, the premier expressed deep grief and sorrow over the tragic incident. "Our hearts go out to the bereaved families," he added. Nawaz said the government and people of Pakistan stand by entire diplomatic community in the hour of grief. The premier said he has already given instructions for transportation

of mortal remains of the deceased and medical treatment to the injured on immediate basis. Foreign Office has also been directed to liaise with its missions abroad and relevant departments to ensure speedy and timely completion of all formalities. Nawaz announced award of Sitara-i-Pakistan to the deceased ambassadors of Norway and Philippines and deceased wives of ambassadors of Malaysia and Indonesia. The event was attended by members of the federal cabinet and members of the diplomatic corps in Islamabad. (Agencies)

### Member of Salafi Group Convicted in Northern Tajikistan

KHujand - A resident of the Tajikistan's northern province of Sughd has been jailed for being adherent to a banned branch of Islam. The Khujand city court sentenced a resident of the Bobojongahfour district, D.H., to three years in jail on May 7. The sentence reportedly followed his conviction on charges of being member of the outlawed Salafi group and organizing activities of an extremist group. An official source at the Khujand city court says he was arrested by security officers in February this year and subversive literature was found in his home. The Tajik authorities banned Salafism as an illegal group on January 8, 2009, saying the Salafi movement represents a potential threat to national security and the Supreme Court added Salafists to its list of religious groups prohibited from operating in

the country. The movement claims to follow a strict and pure form of Islam, but Tajik clerics say the Salafists' radical stance is similar to that of the Taliban in Afghanistan. Salafists do not recognize other branches of Islam, such as Shi'a and Sufism. The movement is frequently referred to as Wahhabism, although Salafis reject this as derogatory. The overwhelming majority of Tajiks are followers of Hanafia, a more liberal branch of Sunni Islam. On December 8, 2014, the Supreme Court of Tajikistan formally labeled the banned Salafi group as an extremist organization. The ruling reportedly followed a request submitted to the court by the Prosecutor-General's Office. The ruling means that the group's website and printed materials are also banned. (AP)