

# Kerry Warns 'Provocative' N. Korea of Fresh Sanctions

SEOUL - US Secretary of State John Kerry warned North Korea Monday of possible fresh sanctions as he slammed Kim Jong-Un's "egregious" leadership with its reliance on reckless provocation and "grotesque" executions.

Speaking in the South Korean capital Seoul, Kerry said the recent test of a new submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) showed that North Korea had no genuine interest in engaging with the international community. "Instead, it continues to pursue nuclear



weapons and ballistic missiles, it continues to break promises and make threats, and it continues to show flagrant disregard for international laws," he told a joint press con-

ference with South Korean Foreign Minister Yun Byong-Se.

"That is why it is important for us to ramp up international pressure for North Korea to change its behaviour," he added, adding that the US and China were discussing methods for "boosting sanctions and other things".

The impoverished but nuclear-armed state is already heavily sanctioned following a series of nuclear and missile tests staged in violation of UN resolutions.

Just over a week ago ... (More on P4)...(22)

## US Navy's Japan-Based Aircraft Carrier Heads Home

YOKOSUKA, Japan - China's aircraft carrier ambitions demonstrate the continuing importance of the mammoth ships in the western Pacific, a senior U.S. Navy officer said Monday, as America's Japan-based carrier began a long journey home.

A symbol of American power in the Pacific, the USS George Washington left the U.S. naval base in Yokosuka, south of Tokyo, its home port for the past seven years. It will be replaced by

the USS Ronald Reagan, a newer version of the same ship.

"Everybody asks whether the aircraft carriers are obsolete," Navy Rear Admiral John Alexander said at a dockside news conference before the ship departed. "I would say when other countries are building an aircraft carrier, they're doing it for a reason, and the fact is you can actually have a bigger influence in the region." ... (More on P4)...(27)

## Iran FM Urges Full-Fledged Fight Against Terrorism

TEHRAN - Iran has urged a full and broad-based fight against terrorist groups, particularly the ISIL. Takfiris, saying the militants have expanded their acts of terror not only in the Middle East, but in certain African and European states. "Iran's plans to settle regional conflicts are based on negotiations and peaceful approaches without any foreign interference," Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said in a meeting with Hungarian Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade Peter Szijjarto in Tehran on Monday. Iran believes that other approaches will escalate terrorism, extremism and violence, he added.

Zarif further pointed to historical ties between Tehran and Budapest, saying the two sides should utilize their potential to further strengthen relations. The Hungarian minister, for his part, said European countries are either directly or indirectly affected by the ongoing events in the Middle East. He added that Europeans are determined to reinforce the campaign against terrorism, extremism and violence. Szijjarto said European countries have decided to hold negotiations with Iran given its leading role in the Middle East and to prepare the ground for practical cooperation ... (More on P4)...(28)

## Nigerian Military Claims Fresh Success against Boko Haram



LAGOS - Nigeria's military on Sunday claimed it had overrun 10 Boko Haram camps in the group's Sambisa Forest stronghold, a day after the Islamists struck at a crowded bus station in the northeast, killing seven. Defence spokesman Chris Olukolade said a number of rebels were killed in the offensive in remote Borno state, while one soldier died in a landmine explosion and two others were injured. "The operation to clear the terrorists in Sambisa and other forests is continuing as troops in all fronts have been alerted to be on the look out for fleeing terrorists," Olukolade said in an emailed statement. "The Nigeria Air Force is maintaining an active air surveillance

to track the movement of terrorists for appropriate action as the operation continues."

On Saturday, seven people were killed and scores injured at a bus station in the Yobe state capital, Damaturu, which has been hit repeatedly during the six-year insurgency. The attack again indicated the rebels' ability to strike so-called "soft targets" and its persistent threat to civilians, despite claimed military gains in seizing captured towns and territory. Nigerian troops have been seen as having the upper hand since February because of assistance from armies in neighbouring Chad, Niger and Cameroon. But on Friday, the deputy governor of ... (More on P4)...(29)

## 'Terrorists' May Use Migrant Cover to Get to Europe: NATO

BRUSSELS - NATO head Jens Stoltenberg warned Monday that fighters from Islamic extremist groups may hide among the flood of migrants seeking refuge in Europe, increasing the need for an effective response.

Stoltenberg's comments came as he attended a meeting of EU foreign and defence ministers which was set to approve the bloc's plan for a naval operation to tackle people smug-



glers operating mainly out of Libya. "First of all this is a human tragedy, people are losing their lives trying to cross the Mediterranean," Stoltenberg said when asked about re-

ports the Islamic State group was trying to smuggle fighters into Europe by hiding them on migrant boats.

"Of course one of the problems is that there might be foreign fighters, there might be terrorists trying to hide, trying to blend in among the migrants," he added. "And this underlines the importance that we have to respond to this turmoil."

Western officials often ... (More on P4)...(23)

## Assad, Under Pressure, May Need His Friends More Than Ever

QALAMOUN MOUNTAINS, Syria/BEIRUT - When Lebanon's Hezbollah first joined Syria's war on the side of President Bashar Assad, its role was a closely guarded secret. Today, as Hezbollah plants its flag in land won from rebels north of Damascus, its role could hardly be more public.

And for Syria's increasingly embattled presi-

dent, Hezbollah's help is more critical than ever.

In the last week, the Iranian-backed guerrilla group has unleashed its powerful arsenal to drive insurgents from wide areas of the Qalamoun mountain range, a short drive from Assad's seat of power in Damascus.

"We have secured 300 square kilometres between Syria and Leba-

non," the Hezbollah commander leading the operation told journalists during a trip to the area on Friday, as dozens of fighters in desert fatigues combed the barren landscape. Hezbollah's yellow flag fluttered from nearby hilltops seized from fighters identified as members of al Qaeda's Syrian arm, the Nusra Front. "It takes a while ... (More on P4)...(24)

## Iraqi Shiite Militias Get the Order: Retake Ramadi from Islamic State

BAGHDAD - Shiite militias are massing in an attempt to retake the Iraqi provincial capital of Ramadi, which forces of the self-declared Islamic State seized over the weekend in the group's biggest victory of the year to date. A spokesman for the Shiite militias - which have been coordinating with Iraqi forces, the US-led coalition providing air support, and Iranian militias - confirmed that they are preparing to deploy near Ramadi on order of the Iraqi government, Reuters reports. "Now that the [militias have] received the order to march forward, they will definitely take part," the spokesman said. "They were waiting for this order and now they have it." Ramadi, the capital of Anbar Province located about 60 miles west of Baghdad, was overrun by IS troops over the weekend amid heavy fighting. About 500 people were killed and between 6,000 and 8,000 civilians fled the city, the provincial government told Reuters. Anbar provincial council member Athal Fahdawi described the situation as "total collapse."

The city's fall is a major blow to Iraqi government forces and the US. Much like when IS seized Tikrit last year, the group seized a large quantity of military equipment provided to the Iraqi Army by US and Russian backers, reports The New York Times. "ISIS is gaining more weapons, and the battle will be harder in the future," said one Iraqi soldier who had been stationed in Anbar. (Monitoring Desk)

## White House Hopefuls Agree: Iraq War a Mistake

WASHINGTON - A dozen years later, American politics has reached a rough consensus about the Iraq War: It was a mistake.

Politicians hoping to be president rarely run ahead of public opinion. So it's a revealing moment when the major contenders for president in both parties find it best to say that 4,491 Americans and countless Iraqis lost their lives in a war that shouldn't have been waged.

Many people have been

saying that for years, of course. Polls show most of the public have judged the war a failure by now. Over time, more and more GOP politicians have allowed that the absence of weapons of mass destruction in Iraq undermined Republican President George W. Bush's rationale for the 2003 invasion.

It hasn't been an easy evolution for those such as Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Rodham Clinton, who voted for the

war in 2002 while serving in Congress. That vote, and her refusal to fully disavow it, cost her during her 2008 primary loss to Barack Obama, who wasn't in the Senate in 2002 but had opposed the war. In her memoir last year, Clinton wrote that she had voted based on the information available at the time, but "I got it wrong. Plain and simple." What might seem a hard truth for a nation to ... (More on P4)...(25)

## Obama Puts Stricter Controls on Military-Style for Police

WASHINGTON - Nine months after police in riot gear dispelled racially charged protests, President Barack Obama is prohibiting the federal government from providing some military-style equipment to local departments and putting stricter controls on other weapons and gear distributed to law enforcement. The surprise announcement comes after the White House suggested last year that Obama would maintain programs that provide the type of military-style equipment used to respond to demonstrators in last summer in Ferguson, Missouri, because of their broader contribution to public safety. But an in-



teragency group found "substantial risk of misusing or overusing" items like tracked armored vehicles, high-powered firearms and camouflage could undermine trust in police. With scrutiny on police only increasing in the ensuing months after a series of highly publicized deaths of black suspects nationwide, Obama

also is unveiling the final report of a task force he created to help build confidence between police and minority communities in particular. The announcements come as Obama is visiting Camden, New Jersey, one of the country's most violent and poorest cities. Obama plans to visit Camden ... (More on P4)...(26)

## Neighbour News

### Iran Uses Maritime Confrontations to Project Power in Gulf

ANKARA - Iran is using its sea power in the Gulf to show it will not be cowed by Washington's newly assertive Arab allies, prompting critics to accuse Tehran of destabilizing the region. Iranian ships fired shots at a Singapore-flagged tanker which it said damaged an Iranian oil platform, causing the vessel to flee, and seized a container ship in the Strait of Hormuz, the world's most important oil route, over a debt row. The incidents coincided with a push by Washington to reassure Gulf Arab monarchies that their interests would not be threatened by a nuclear accord that Tehran and world powers are trying to reach by the end of June. In an escalating confrontation with Saudi Arabia over Yemen, Tehran criticized Arab states for reckless-

ness and brutality in that country, where a Saudi-led coalition is attacking an Iranian-allied militia. Iran has also sent an aid ship, the Iran Shahed, to the Yemeni Red Sea port of Hodaida to test a naval blockade enforced by the coalition. Several Iranian military officials have warned of war if the Iran Shahed is attacked by Saudi-led forces. It expected to reach the port by Thursday.

"Iran's recent measures in the Strait of Hormuz have one clear message to Saudi Arabia. No one can ignore Iran's key role," said an Iranian official, who asked not to be named due to the sensitivity of the issue.

"Whether reformist or hardliner, Iranian leaders have consensus on securing Iran's influence in the region," said the official. (Reuters)

### Chinese Vice President Meets Portuguese Guests

BEIJING - Chinese Vice President Li Yuanchao met here Monday afternoon with a delegation from the Socialist Party (PS) of Portugal.

The delegation is headed by PS President Carlos Cesar. Li said since China and Portugal established the all-round strategic partnership ten years ago, bilateral relations have seen rapid development. He expressed the wish that the two sides will maintain the momentum in high-level contact and tap into the potential of cooperation in the areas of sea, environment protection and new energy. He hoped that the two sides

would join effort to play an active role in promoting a long-term and stable growth of China-EU relations. Li said the Communist Party of China is willing to enhance friendly exchanges with the PS so as to advance growth of relations between the two countries.

Cesar said the PS places importance on expanding its relations with China. He expressed the belief that China's growth is in the interests of Portugal. He expressed the readiness to further advance friendly cooperation between the two countries and between EU and China. (Xinhua)

### Pakistani Army is World's Most Accomplished Force: Gen. Raheel

RAWALPINDI - Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Raheel Sharif on Monday said the Pakistani Army was the "most accomplished" force the world now recognised after having "cleansed large remote areas of terrorists in the most treacherous terrain and in the most trying circumstances." Talking to officers and troops after witnessing the conclusion ceremony of the 4th Army Physical Agility and Combat Efficiency System (PACES) Championship at Kharian Cantonment, General Raheel termed the army's performance in recent opera-

tions as "phenomenal." He also expressed satisfaction over objectives of new physical standards achieved through the new fitness regime. "We must continue to train hard in peace time to be able to take on multi-dimensional challenges in future conflicts," said the army chief. Later, the COAS gave away trophies to the winning and runner-up teams and also distributed medals for individual performances. A hundred "Fittest of the Fit" and five "Super Fit" soldiers of Pakistan Army were awarded certificates and insignias. (Agencies)

### EBRD to Reform Tajikistan's State-Owned Energy Company

DUSHANBE - The Government of Tajikistan and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) on signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) detailing the reform agenda which is the precondition to the financing of the landmark regional electricity transmission project, known as CASA 1000. The project, which involves a number of other international financial institutions and donors, including the World Bank and the European Investment Bank, will consist of many elements. The EBRD is considering financing the modernization of Tajikistan's domestic transmission infrastructure, the EBRD said. The EBRD financing will be subject to reform of Tajikistan's state-owned energy

company, Barki Tojik. As part of its modernization agenda, the company will set out third-party access rules for the transmission line and an independent energy regulator will be established. EBRD Managing Director for Energy and Natural Resources, Riccardo Puliti, signed the MoU with Djamoliddin Nuraliev, 1st Deputy Chairman of the National Bank of Tajikistan, who represented the Government of Tajikistan. CASA 1000, which stands for "Central Asia-South Asia", is a planned transmission line which is envisaged to span four countries and to bring hydro-generated electricity from the two Central Asian countries, Tajikistan and the Kyrgyz ... (More on P4)...(30)