

# US Rejects Nuclear Disarmament Document over Israel Concerns

UNITED NATIONS - The United States on Friday blocked a global document aimed at ridding the world of nuclear weapons, saying Egypt and other states tried to "cynically manipulate" the process by setting a deadline for Israel and its neighbors to meet within months on a Middle East zone free of such weapons. The now-failed final document of a landmark treaty review conference had called on the U.N. secretary-general to convene the Middle East conference no later than March 2016, regardless of whether Israel and its neighbors agree on an agenda. Israel is not a party to the Nuclear Non-Pro-



liberation Treaty and has never publicly declared what is widely considered to be an extensive nuclear weapons program. A conference might force Israel to acknowledge it. Since adopting a final document requires consensus, the rejection by the United States, backed by Britain and Canada, means the entire blueprint for global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation for the next five years has been

blocked after four weeks of negotiations. The next treaty review conference is in 2020. That has alarmed countries without nuclear weapons, who are increasingly frustrated by what they see as the slow pace of nuclear-armed countries to disarm. The United States and Russia hold more than 90 percent of the estimated 16,000 nuclear weapons in the world today. Amid a growing movement that stresses the humanitarian impact of nuclear weapons, Austria announced that 107 states have now signed a pledge calling for legal measures to ban and eliminate them. (AP)

## Neighbour News

### US West PH Sea Actions 'Irresponsible, Dangerous': China

BEIJING - China the U.S. action a security threat to China's islands and reefs. "Such action is likely to cause an accident, it is very irresponsible and dangerous and detrimental to regional peace and stability. We express our strong dissatisfaction, we urge the U.S. to strictly abide by international law and international rules and refrain from taking any risky and provocative actions," he told a news conference. "China will continue to closely monitor the relevant area and take the necessary and appropriate measures to prevent harm to the safety of China's islands and reefs as well as any sea and air accidents." A Pentagon spokesman called the mission "routine" and said such flights occurred "every few days." (Reuters)

### IS Poised to Become 'Serious Threat' in Libya: UN Envoy



SOUTHERN SHUNEH, Jordan - Islamic State extremists can pose "a very serious threat" to divided Libya if rival governments there fail to reach a unity deal quickly, the United Nations envoy to the North African country said Saturday. Bernardino Leon, who is mediating political talks,

told a regional conference of the World Economic Forum that he hopes for a deal before the start of the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan in mid-June. Libya has fragmented since the capital of Tripoli was overrun last year by Islamist-allied militias who set up their own government and parliament

there while Libya's internationally recognized government withdrew to the east of the country. The U.N. mediator said his latest draft for a unity deal has been accepted by the eastern-based government, while some in the Tripoli camp have recently come out in support of a national dialogue. (AP)

### Iraq Forces Move to Anbar Front As Anti-IS Fightback Nears

BAGHDAD - Iraqi forces retook territory from the Islamic State group east of Ramadi Saturday, commanders said, in their first counterattack since the jihadists' capture of the Anbar provincial capital last week. The UN Security Council, meanwhile, condemned the deadly suicide bombing of a Shiite mosque claimed by IS and called for the group to be defeated. In Iraq, a mosaic of anti-IS forces have massed in the Euphrates Valley to ready for an offensive aimed at turning the tide on the rampant jihadists. The May 17 takeover of Ramadi was Baghdad's worst defeat in almost a year, while the capture three days later of the historic Syrian city of Palmyra has put its archaeological treasures in peril



and positioned IS for a possible drive on Damascus. Security officials said an operation was launched early Saturday to retake Husaybah, a town seven kilometres (4.5 miles) east of Ramadi in the Euphrates Valley, that IS had seized earlier in the week. "The Husaybah area is now under full control and the forces are now advancing to liberate neighbouring Jweibah," a police colonel told AFP from the front.

Anbar's most prominent Sunni tribal leader, Sheikh Rafia Abdelkarim al-Fahdawi, deployed his forces, whose knowledge of the terrain is key, alongside fighters from the Hashed al-Shaabi, an umbrella for Shiite militia and volunteers. The police colonel said the Husaybah operation also involved local and federal police, the interior ministry's rapid intervention force as well as the army. (AFP)

### US, UK, Canada to Blame for Failure of NPT Review Conference: Iran Official

TEHRAN - A senior Iranian official has blamed the US, the UK and Canada for the failure of the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) to adopt a final document aimed at achieving a Middle East free of nuclear weapons. "The onus for the failure of the conference is clearly on the US, UK and Canada," Hamid Baedinejad, the director general for political and international security affairs at Iran's Foreign Ministry, wrote in a message posted on his Instagram account. After four weeks of negotiations, the 2015 NPT Review Conference ended without agreement in New York on Friday, after

the United States, Britain and Canada opposed a proposal to set up a nuclear weapons-free zone in the Middle East. The Israeli regime also opposed the proposal. "Whereas after four weeks of round the clock negotiations, it was expected that the conference would succeed in approving the final document of the conference today (Friday), the US, the UK and Canada suddenly announced this afternoon that they cannot agree to the text proposed by the presidency of the conference on account of being unhappy with the segment of the text relating to the creation of a region free of nuclear weapons in the Middle East," Baedinejad said. (Agencies)

### Japan, South Korea Agree to Boost Economic Relations

TOKYO - Finance Ministers of Japan and South Korea agreed here Saturday to improve bilateral economic and financial ties, while also agreeing on the importance to address infrastructure in Asia. Japanese Finance Minister Taro Aso said that he and his South Korean counterpart Choi Kyung-hwan exchanged views on various topics, while Choi said the

meeting had meaningful discussions, according to local media. "We agreed that the finance dialogue is very important to share our experiences and utilize them in future policies," Japan's Kyodo News quoted Aso as reporting, adding that "we also agreed to continue expanding cooperation at various levels and areas between the two ministries." (Xinhua)

### Russia Vows 'Tough' Action if Ukraine Defaults on Debt



MOSCOW - Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said Saturday that his government will adopt a "tough stance" if Ukraine defaults on its debt, which includes a \$3 billion loan from Moscow. Speaking in an interview with state channel Rossiya, Medvedev said Ukraine's failure to repay its debt or a decision to freeze payments could prompt Russia to oppose new IMF loans to the country. The conflict with pro-Russia separatists in Ukraine's industrial east -- which Kiev blames on Moscow -- has greatly exacerbated economic difficulties in the former Soviet republic. Medvedev said recent steps by Kiev toward freezing debt payments are "looking like the denial by Bolsheviks to pay the debt of the tsarist government." "If indeed it will be done this way, that is undoubtedly a default by Ukraine," Medvedev said of the poten-

tial debt freeze. "That will influence the process of their negotiations with the International Monetary Fund. We will take a maximally tough stance in this case and will defend our national interests." Ukraine's parliament this week voted to give the government the right to delay repaying international creditors if necessary, leading to a furious reaction by Moscow, which is waiting for Kiev to repay a \$3 billion loan by the end of the year. Moscow issued the loan in December 2013, just months before the collapse of the regime of ex-president Viktor Yanukovich, who fled to Russia in the wake of mass protests. Kiev's current pro-Western government is racing to agree a debt restructuring deal with its creditors before the next IMF board meeting in June. It is aiming to reach 15 billion euros in savings in order to qualify for the next part of the IMF's \$17.5 billion loan programme. (AFP)

### Syria's Assad Pays Tribute to Soldiers

DAMASCUS - Syria's President Bashar al-Assad has paid tribute to his army and a group of soldiers who escaped an almost month-long rebel siege, in comments which follow a series of regime losses. Assad, quoted by state news agency SANA late Friday, saluted the "heroism" of some 150 soldiers and their families who were able to escape a hospital building in the town of Jisr al-Shughur in northwestern Syria. "You represent with your heroism the soldiers of the Syrian army," Assad told their commanding officer, Colonel Mahmud Sabha. "You resisted because you refused failure or capitulation," Assad said. "Your life and those of the soldiers of the army and the national defence

forces (pro-regime militia) are the most important thing for us and what we try always to protect." The group had been besieged inside the building in Jisr al-Shughur since the town in Idlib province fell to rebels including Al-Qaeda's local affiliate, on April 25. On Friday, most of those inside managed to escape just as the hospital was finally overrun by the rebel forces who had surrounded it. The loss of Jisr al-Shughur came after the fall of the provincial capital Idlib city, and has been followed by a string of other regime setbacks. The ancient city of Palmyra fell to the Islamic State jihadist group earlier this week and the government now only retains control of its border posts with Lebanon. (AFP)

### Central Asia Feels Impact of Adverse Shocks: Report

BISHKEK - Economic growth in the Caucasus and Central Asia (CCA) is expected to decline by 2 percent this year as a result of lower commodity prices and the economic slowdown in Russia, says the latest regional forecast by the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The Regional Economic Outlook Update for the Caucasus and Central Asia, released on May 19, predicts growth in the region will reach just over 3 percent this year. This latest forecast represents a downward revision of 2.5 percentage points from the one released by the IMF in

October 2014. "The twin shocks of the economic slowdown in Russia, a key trading partner, and lower oil prices are taking a toll on the region," Juha Kahkonen, Deputy Director of the IMF's Middle East and Central Asia Department told reporters in Almaty, Kazakhstan. "Exchange rate developments—such as the appreciation of the U.S. dollar and the depreciation of the ruble—are compounding the problem. Overall, the outlook for the region has not been this weak since the global financial crisis in 2008-09." ... (More on P4)... (24)

### Freedom of Media Conference held in Tashkent

TASHKENT - Tashkent hosted an international conference on "Strengthening self-reliance and independence of the media - a guarantee of freedom of expression and information". The conference attended by more than 100 experts and professionals from 30 national governments and public agencies, and more than 20 international organizations and foreign embassies, as well as 50 media representatives from all regions of the country. The event was organized by the National Association of Electronic Mass Media of

Uzbekistan (NAEMM), together with the Parliamentary Commission for the management of the assets of the Public Fund for Support of NGOs and other civil society institutions under the Oliy Majlis, representatives of the OSCE, UNESCO and the Foundation n.a. C.Adenauer on Central Asia in our country and others. The main objective of the conference was to discuss the main trends and issues to further strengthen the independence of the media, including the economic, the preconditions for the forma ... (More on P4)... (25)

### Iranian Aid Cargo Boat for Yemen Offloaded in Djibouti: UN

ADDIS ABABA - United Nations officials in the Horn of Africa port of Djibouti said Saturday they had taken charge of the aid cargo carried by an Iranian boat headed for war-torn Yemen. The vessel, the MV Shahed, is carrying 2,500 tonnes of aid including flour, rice, canned food, medical supplies and bot-

tlated water, all urgently needed in the conflict-racked state just across the Gulf of Aden from Djibouti. "The cargo has been handed over to WFP in Djibouti and is currently being offloaded," said UN World Food Programme spokeswoman Aber Etefa told AFP. ... (More on P4)... (23)

### Bomb Attack Kills 3 Pakistani Soldiers

ISLAMABAD - Three Pakistani soldiers were killed and three injured in a roadside bomb attack in North Waziristan tribal region on Saturday, security officials said. The remote control bomb targeted a vehicle of the security forces at remote Datta Khel area near the Afghan border. The injured were taken to a military hospital in Bannu, a main city near North Waziristan. No group has claimed responsibility. The authorities blamed Taliban for such attacks. Security officials said the

security forces were on routine patrolling when their vehicle came under attack. It is the second attack on security forces in the area in two days. One security man was killed and another was injured in an attack on the forces on Friday. The security forces, backed by fighter jets, are battling the Taliban and other militant groups in North Waziristan. The operation was launched in June last year after the rare peace talks with the Taliban collapsed. (Xinhua)