

## US to Offer Cyberwar Capabilities to NATO Allies

BRUSSELS — Acting to counter Russia's aggressive use of cyberattacks across Europe and around the world, the U.S. is expected to announce that, if asked, it will use its formidable cyberwarfare capabilities on NATO's behalf, according to a senior U.S. official. The announcement is expected in the coming days as U.S. Defense Secretary Jim Mattis attends a meeting of NATO defense ministers on Wednesday and Thursday.

Katie Wheelbarger, the principal deputy assistant defense secretary for international security affairs, said the U.S. is committing to use offensive and defensive cyber operations for NATO allies, but America will maintain control over its own personnel and capabilities. The decision comes on the heels



of the NATO summit in July, when members agreed to allow the alliance to use cyber capabilities that are provided voluntarily by allies to protect networks and respond to cyberattacks. It reflects growing concerns by the U.S. and its

allies over Moscow's use of cyber operations to influence elections in America and elsewhere. "Russia is constantly pushing its cyber and information operations," said Wheelbarger, adding that this is a way for the U.S. to show its con-

tinued commitment to NATO. She told reporters traveling to NATO with Mattis that the move is a signal to other nations that NATO is prepared to counter cyberattacks waged against the alliance or its members. Much like America's nuclear capabilities, the formal declaration of cyber support can help serve as a military deterrent to other nations and adversaries. The U.S. has, for some time, considered cyber as a warfighting domain, much like air, sea, space and ground operations. In recent weeks the Pentagon released a new cybersecurity strategy that maps out a more aggressive use of military cyber capabilities. And it specifically calls out Russia and China for their use of cyberattacks. (AP)

## Neighbor News

### Former Pakistan Finance Minister Stripped of Properties in Graft Case

ISLAMABAD - An accountability court in Pakistan has given the go-ahead to the country's anti-graft watchdog, the National Accountability Bureau (NAB) to auction former finance minister Ishaq Dar's assets and seize his bank accounts. Justice Muhammad Bashir Islamabad of the accountability court ordered on Tuesday the Punjab provincial government to take charge of Mr Dar's assets. The Punjab government can either sell or keep the properties. Mr Dar came under investigation in July 2017 when the supreme court found that both him and former prime minister Nawaz Sharif had hidden assets.

"Accused Muhammad Ishaq Dar who was declared as proclaimed offender did not appear within the time specified in a proclamation, therefore, above said, property as well as bank accounts, shall be at disposal of concerned provincial government within the meaning of section 88 (7) CrPC," Judge Bashir wrote. Mr Dar, who was declared an absconder in December after he failed to appear before the court in a case associated with the Panama Papers - leaked information for hundreds of thousands of offshore entities - declared himself not guilty and dismissed the allegations against him. (Monitoring Desk)

### Iran Vows Full-Throttle Oil Production despite US

TEHRAN - Oil prices remain at four-year highs on rising doubts about the capability of Saudi Arabia and other producers to substitute Iran's crude after the US imposes new sanctions on the country on November 4. International benchmark Brent crude was up 38 cents at \$85.18 a barrel at 0833 GMT Wednesday, after hitting its highest level since November 2004 on Monday at \$85.45.

President Donald Trump has pledged to squeeze Iran's oil exports down to a trickle, with the White House saying Saudi King Salman had promised the US leader that the kingdom had enough spare capacity to replace Iranian barrels. According to Iran's

OPEC Governor Hossein Kazempour Ardabili, the US president has apparently been duped by Saudi Arabia and his view is finding traction with some analysts. "The fact that Saudi Arabia has been timid in its reaction has reinforced the notion there is limited spare capacity available," Olivier Jakob, analyst at Petromatrix, told Reuters. Last month, Saudi Arabia went along with other OPEC members and key producer Russia not to raise output, rebuffing Trump's call on the kingdom to open the spigots. Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar al-Luabi said on Wednesday OPEC has not revised yet its previous decisions on oil production levels. (Press TV)

### Time Running out for Survivors as Indonesia Toll Tops 1,400

WANI (Indonesia) - The death toll in Indonesia's twin quake-tsunami disaster passed 1,400 Wednesday, with time running out to rescue survivors and the UN warning of "vast" unmet needs. Authorities have set a tentative deadline of Friday to find anyone still trapped under rubble, at which point - a week after this devastating double disaster on Sulawesi island - the chances of finding survivors will dwindle to almost zero.

Military spokesman M. Thohir said the number of confirmed dead has risen to 1,411, while the disaster agency said 519 bodies have already been buried. Government rescue workers seeking survivors are focusing on half a dozen key sites around the seaside city of Palu - the Hotel Roa-Roa where up to 60 people are still believed buried, a shopping mall, a restaurant and the Balaroo area where the sheer force of the quake turned the earth temporarily to mush. (AFP)

BAGHDAD - A veteran Kurdish politician assumed office on Wednesday as Iraq's new president after tapping an independent Shiite politician for the post of prime minister, ending nearly five months of political deadlock. Barham Salih, 58, who previously served as Iraq's planning minister and the prime minister of the self-ruled Kurdish region, was elected president by parliament and sworn in on Tuesday. He then tapped Adel Abdul-Mahdi, 76, an independent Shiite

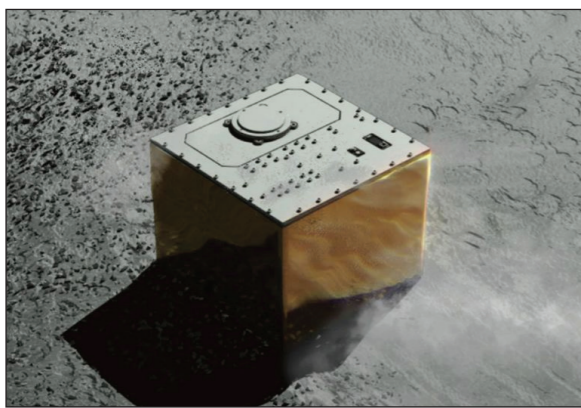
politician and former vice president, to form the next government. Under an unofficial agreement dating back to the 2003 U.S.-led invasion, Iraq's presidency - a largely ceremonial role - is held by a Kurd, while the prime minister is Shiite and the parliament speaker is Sunni. Both Salih and Abdul-Mahdi are longstanding members of the political class that has dominated Iraqi politics since then. On Wednesday, State TV broadcast a formal handover ceremony at the presi-

### Iraq's President Takes Office, Independent Tapped as PM



Abdul-Mahdi emerged as a compromise candidate after two Shiite-led blocs each claimed to have majority support in parliament. (AP)

### Japanese Spacecraft Drops Observation Device onto Asteroid



TOKYO - A German-French observation device safely landed on an asteroid on Wednesday after a Japanese spacecraft released it as part of a re-

search effort that could find clues about the origin of the solar system, Japanese space officials said. The Japan Space Exploration Agency said the

Mobile Asteroid Surface Scout, or MASCOT, was released from the unmanned spacecraft Hayabusa2 and successfully landed on the asteroid Ryugu. The spacecraft went as close as about 50 meters (160 feet) to the asteroid's surface to release the box-shaped lander. Hayabusa2 has been stationed near the asteroid since June after traveling 280 million kilometers (170 million miles) from Earth. About an hour after the separation, the space agency, known as JAXA, said it

had received signals from MASCOT, an indication of its safe landing. JAXA's Hayabusa project manager, Yuichi Tsuda, confirmed the landing at a news conference. JAXA collaborated with the German Aerospace Center and France's Centre National d'Etudes Spatiales in the MASCOT project. The lander's deployment follows the successful landing last month of two MINERVA-III observation rovers that have transmitted a series of images showing the asteroid's rocky surface. (AP)

### French PM in Charge of Security after Minister Quits

PARIS - French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe on Wednesday assumed responsibility for France's domestic security after the interior minister resigned in an apparent act of defiance toward President Emmanuel Macron. In a handover ceremony, Philippe said his main focus would be to ensure "the highest security level" in the country. "We live in difficult times with threats abroad and sometimes on our territory ... It's our role to be up to the task", he said. Philippe is in charge until a successor to Gerard Col-

lomb, until recently one of Macron's closest political allies, is appointed. Macron accepted Collomb's resignation late Tuesday, after initially refusing it the previous day. Collomb insisted he wanted to leave to be able to run for mayor of the city of Lyon in 2020. Collomb, 71, said he regretted leaving the ministry, listing the changes he led over 16 months including passing a counter-terrorism law last year that replaced the state of emergency declared following Nov. 2015 attacks in Paris. (AP)

### UN Court Ruling on US Sanctions Shows Tehran Is 'Right': Iran

TEHRAN - Tehran welcomed on Wednesday a ruling by the UN's top court ordering Washington to suspend sanctions on humanitarian goods, as a "clear sign" that "Iran is in the right". The ruling by the International Court of Justice "once again shows that the US government... is day by day becoming more isolated," the foreign ministry said in a statement. It said the court had found that the crippling sanctions reimposed by Washington after it abandoned a landmark 2015 nuclear deal between major powers and Tehran were illegal. (AFP)

### Indian Foreign Minister Discusses Climate Change with Visiting UN Chief

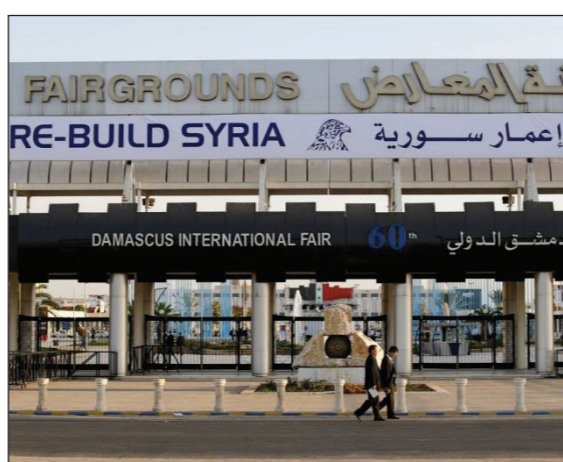
NEW DELHI - Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj Wednesday called on visiting United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and held discussions on the United Nations Security Council reforms, climate change and other issues of mutual interest.

"Working in close synergy with the highest organ of multilateralism. EAM @SushmaSwaraj welcomed UNSG @antonioguterres. Had productive discussions on issues related to climate change, UNSC reforms and other areas of mutual interest," Indian External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Raveesh Kumar tweeted. The United Nations Secretary-General arrived in the national capital Monday, his first to India since taking charge, on an official tour. (Xinhua)

### Syria Hopes to Jump start Rebuilding despite Massive Hurdles

DAMASCUS, Syria - With back-to-back trade fairs held in Damascus this month, Syria is hoping to jumpstart reconstruction of its devastated cities by inviting international investors to take part in lucrative opportunities. But the absence of significant Western participants, the challenges posed by international sanctions and the lack of a political solution to the seven-year-old conflict point to massive hurdles ahead.

The government says it will only award contracts to "friendly countries" that have supported Syria throughout the civil war. In an address to the



U.N. General Assembly last week, Syria's foreign minister said Western countries that set political conditions before committing reconstruction funds are "neither invited nor welcome to help." But the relatively small-scale participation of

companies from Syria's allies, Russia and Iran - both under U.S. sanctions - can hardly even begin to cover the enormous reconstruction costs in Syria, estimated to be anywhere between \$250 billion and \$400 billion. (AP)

### Pompeo to Visit China Monday

BEIJING - U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo will travel to China on Monday, Chinese State Television reported on Wednesday, citing a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman, with the two countries embroiled in an escalating trade war. The two governments will exchange views over their bilateral relationship and international and domestic issues

concerning both sides, it reported, without giving details. Pompeo will travel to North Korea at the weekend for denuclearization talks with the country's leader Kim Jong Un, the State Department said on Tuesday, calling this "forward progress", despite negative signals from Pyongyang. Pompeo will also travel to Japan and South Korea. (Reuters)

### Kremlin Says Putin Could Sign Off on Pensions Bill Soon

MOSCOW - Russian senators on Wednesday approved a deeply controversial bill to raise the state pension age as the Kremlin indicated President Vladimir Putin could sign it into law soon.

The upper house of parliament, the Federation Council, passed the bill that had sparked rare street protests with 149 senators voting for the measure, five against and three abstentions.

Putin will then have to sign off on the legislation - which would raise the retirement age for men to 65 from 60 - for it to become law. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov indicated this could happen soon without being more specific. "As soon as the legislation goes to the president, it can be expected that the president will make a decision without putting it on the back burner," Peskov told reporters.

In the face of public anger and following a major fall in his approval ratings, Putin has suggested a raft of concessions, saying women could retire at 60 instead of 63 as had been proposed before.

Putin proposed that women with three or more children retire early, while companies that fire, or refuse to hire those nearing the pension age be punished with fines. His concessions have however failed to pacify ordinary Russians, with most remaining opposed to the reform. (AFP)

### China Experts Note Uzbekistan's Role in Co-Op Development in Central Asia

DUSHANBE - The international conference "China and Eurasia: Towards a New Quality of Cooperation and Development" was held in Shanghai, Uzbek media reported. The event was organized by the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

Various aspects of Eurasian cooperation and future prospects were discussed at the event. The Uzbek side was represented by Deputy Director of the Institute for Strategic and Regional Studies under the President of Uzbekistan Shafoat Nurullayeva.

During the event, an exchange of views of experts and scholars took place, and constructive proposals were made to strengthen cooperation between China and the countries of the Eurasian space.

Chinese experts noted the increased openness in relations among the Central Asian countries in recent years. In their opinion, this also contributes to the strengthening of interaction among the member states of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in the field of trade and other areas. (Trend)

### Heavy Caspian Int'l Forum Underway in Turkmenistan

ASHGABAT - The first international conference "Heavy Caspian: Turkmenistan" is underway in the country's tourism zone "Avaza" near the Caspian Sea, an international company Heavy World, the organizer of the event, said in a message.

The structure of logistics in Turkmenistan, including the ability of the Turkmenbashi International Seaport to receive project cargoes, the state of the road and railway infrastructure and the experience in delivering project cargoes to Turkmenistan are being discussed as part of the event. More than 100 delegates from Turkmenistan, Russia, Austria, Belgium, Bela-

rus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Iran, Poland, Estonia, Saudi Arabia and other countries are taking part in the conference.

In accordance with the program of the forum, an interactive presentation of the renewed seaport in the city of Turkmenbashi was held.

"Built on the Caspian Sea coast, the new port complex is of strategic importance for the international cargo transportation system, providing access to the Black and Mediterranean seas, to the countries of Europe, the Middle East, South Asia and the Asia-Pacific region by optimal routes," the Turkmenistan State News Agency reported. (Trend)