

Russia Rejects US Accusations of Nuclear Treaty Breach

MOSCOW - Russia on Tuesday pledged adherence to a Cold War-era nuclear treaty and rejected U.S. accusations that it had violated it.

Speaking at a briefing, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the U.S. has failed to provide evidence to prove allegations of Russian breaches of the 1987 Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces, or INF, treaty.

He added that Moscow is ready for an "honest but specific dialogue" and said Russia "has no intention to break the treaty." The disagreements over the INF treaty come amid the Ukrainian crisis and may further foment Russia-West tensions.

Asked to comment on U.S. con-



siderations to deploy land-based missiles in Europe as a possible response to the alleged Russian violations, Lavrov warned that "building up militarist rhetoric is absolutely counterproductive and harmful."

He said that Russia had its own grievances regarding the U.S. implementation of the treaty and that mutual concerns could be assuaged through dialogue. The U.S. has accused Russia of flight-testing a ground-launched cruise missile with a range prohibited by the treaty. Russia denied the claim and, in its turn, alleged that some elements of the U.S. missile defense shield violate the treaty. (AP)

NATO Spearhead Troops Practice Fast Deployment in Poland

WARSAW, Poland - Hundreds of NATO troops with heavy equipment began a military exercise in Poland on Tuesday, testing the alliance's rapid response readiness in the face of new security challenges on its eastern flank.

The so-called spearhead force was agreed upon at a NATO summit last year in reaction to Russia's role in the separatist fighting in Ukraine

which has raised security concerns in other nearby nations that were once under Moscow's dominance.

"It is our unconditional priority to have NATO's eastern flank strengthened," Deputy Foreign Minister Henryka Moscicka-Dendys said when asked about the role of the Noble Jump exercises. "I feel safe."

The deployment exercise began with German and



Dutch troops arriving near the southwestern Polish city of Zielona Gora to test the Very High Readiness Joint Task Force. It will soon move to a test range in nearby Zagan, where more than 2,000 troops will train. (AP)

Yemen Rebel Ally Welcomes Swiss Peace Talks

SANAA - The party of Yemen's former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, a key ally of Shiite Huthi rebels, on Tuesday welcomed UN-brokered peace talks due to open in Switzerland at the weekend. The General People's Congress said it had not yet received a formal invitation from the United Nations but the UN envoy met with party representatives in the rebel-held capital in late May as part of his efforts to convene the talks in Geneva. Saleh himself is under UN sanctions for his support for the rebels and did not take

part in the meetings, party sources said. The GPC "welcomes holding the Geneva conference for consultations between Yemeni political components without any preconditions from any group, with goodwill and under the patronage of the United Nations," its almotamar.net website said. Saleh, who ruled for 33 years before being forced from power in 2012 after a bloody year-long uprising, threw the support of his loyalists in the army behind the Huthis in their offensive that forced his successor into exile in March. (AFP)

Hezbollah Repels IS Attack on Lebanon-Syria Border

BEIRUT - Hezbollah gunmen repelled an attack Tuesday by Islamic State group fighters in an area on the Lebanon-Syria border as a major battle between the two groups looms in the rugged mountainous region, the Lebanese group's TV station reported. Al-Manar TV said the IS attack targeted several Hezbollah positions outside the northeastern Lebanese border village of Ras Baalbek. The ensuing battle left several IS fighters dead or wounded and three vehicles, including a

bulldozer, destroyed, the channel said. It did not say whether there were casualties among Hezbollah fighters. Hezbollah has been on the offensive in Syria's Qalamoun mountains for weeks and has captured territory from al-Qaida's branch in Syria, the Nusra Front. With the Nusra Front almost defeated in the area, a major battle is expected between Hezbollah and IS. Hezbollah is deeply involved in Syria's civil war fighting alongside President Bashar Assad's forces. (AP)

French Mother Sues Govt for Letting Son Join Syria Jihad

PARIS - A French mother took the government to court on Tuesday for failing to stop her teenage son leaving the country to join jihadists in Syria. The boy, identified only as "B", was only 16 when he left with three others from the town of Nice in southern France on December 27, 2013, giving no warning to his family.

A recent convert to Islam, the boy took a plane to Turkey before continuing by land to Syria. His mother, who

spoke to him recently by phone, says he is still there. The family's lawyer, Samia Maktouf, said Turkey was "notorious as the route to enter Syria". "The police have committed a grave error ... concerning this unaccompanied minor, who had a one-way ticket to Turkey with no baggage," Maktouf said. The mother is seeking damages of 110,000 euros (\$120,000) from the government for her and her three other children. (AFP)

Israel Frees Palestinian Speaker Dweik after Year Behind Bars

OFER PRISON (Palestinian Territories) - Israel released Tuesday the speaker of the Palestinian parliament, an AFP reporter said, after almost a year in prison following an army crackdown over the kidnapping of three Israeli teenagers. Aziz Dweik, speaker of the Palestinian Legislative Council, was arrested on June 16, 2014 as Israel staged a massive manhunt for three teenagers who were snatched from a road in the southern West Bank by Palestinian militants linked to Hamas. During

the search, which lasted until June 30 when their bodies were found, Israel arrested hundreds of Palestinians, most of them members of Hamas. The crackdown -- the biggest in a decade -- triggered a surge of rocket fire from the Gaza Strip, the Islamist movement's stronghold, which ultimately led to a 50-day war in and around the coastal enclave, the third in six years. According to the Ramallah-based Palestinian Prisoners' Club, 12 of the 130 MPs in the PLC are being held by Israel, including Dweik. (AFP)

Britain Drafts U.N. Resolution on Srebrenica Genocide

SARAJEVO - Britain said on Tuesday it was drafting a resolution at the United Nations Security Council to mark next month's 20th anniversary of the Srebrenica massacre in Bosnia, angering the government of Bosnia's Serb Republic.

On July 11, 1995, toward the end of the Bosnian War, Bosnian Serb

forces swept into a U.N.-designated "safe haven", from where they took 8,000 Muslim men and boys to be executed in the days that followed, dumping their bodies into pits in the surrounding forests.

The U.N. tribunal for the former Yugoslavia in The Hague has ruled that the massacre -- the worst mass killing on European soil since

World War Two -- constituted genocide, a term that the Bosnian Serbs still dispute and Serbia studiously avoids.

Zeljka Cvijanovic, the prime minister of Bosnia's autonomous Serb Republic, where Orthodox Christian Serbs dominate, promptly called the move "an attack". (Reuters)

Russia Orders Quicker Build-Up of Military Facilities in Kurile Islands

MOSCOW - Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu on Monday ordered the speeding up of construction of military and civilian infrastructure on a chain of islands in the Pacific Ocean where Moscow and Tokyo have rival territorial claims.



Dispute over the islands, known as the Kuriles in Russia and the Northern Territories in Japan, has strained relations between the

two countries since World War Two, when Soviet forces occupied four islands at the southern end of the chain. Shoigu was speaking in Russia's Far

East city of Vladivostok while inspecting the eastern military district, his ministry said in a statement. It did not provide more detail.

Moscow has angered Tokyo in recent years by having state officials visit the island chain and stepping up military activities there. Japan says the islands are part of its territory and wants Moscow to hand them over. (Reuters)

Russian Security Czar Worried about IS Recruiters

MOSCOW - Russia's security chief says recruiters of the Islamic State group are active in the country and called for closer international cooperation to combat them. Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia's Security Council, pointed to a recent case when a Moscow

State University student tried to go to Syria to join ISIS. The 19-year old Varvara Karaulova was detained in a Turkish border town last week with 12 other Russians. Patrushev said in remarks carried Tuesday by Russian news agencies that "the Russian student's case wasn't the only example of

recruitment of young people by radical Islamists." He said the Islamic State and other terror groups are focusing on youth and ethnic minorities in trying to find supporters. Patrushev said law enforcement agencies should cooperate more closely to counter ISIS recruiters. (AP)

Russian Aggression Requires Stronger US Action: Bush

BERLIN - Republican presidential candidate Jeb Bush is warning Russia's Vladimir Putin that a Bush presidency would mean a more active U.S. role in countering Russian aggression, especially in Ukraine and eastern Europe. In excerpts released before Bush's speech Tuesday to a prominent European economic conference, Bush says: "Who can doubt that

Russia will do what it pleases if its aggression goes unanswered?"

"Our alliance, our solidarity and our actions are essential if we want to preserve the fundamental principles of our international order, an order that free nations have sacrificed so much to build," Bush says, according to remarks provided by Bush's aides. Bush provided no detail for how he would

ensure that "Ukraine, a sovereign European nation, must be permitted to choose its own path." More broadly, Bush called for the deepening of economic and security ties with eastern European nations, vulnerable to potential Russian meddling. Bush is on a three-country visit this week, which also includes former Eastern bloc countries Poland and Estonia. (AP)

Israel Concerned about U.S. Arms to Gulf States to Deter Iran

HERZLIYA, Israel - Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Yaalon voiced concern on Tuesday that Washington's supply of advanced arms to Gulf Arab states to deter Iran could eventually challenge Israel's U.S.-backed regional military supremacy. "Even if there are not now any hostile designs (among them) against us, as we know in the Middle East intentions are liable to change. The capability will without a doubt be there and this must be prepared for," he said. Setting the stage for talks later in the day with General Martin Dempsey, the head

IS Seizes Power Plant Near Libyan City of Sirte

TRIPOLI - Islamic State militants have seized a power plant west of the Libyan city of Sirte which supplies central and western parts of the country with electricity, the group and a military source said on Tuesday.

"The plant ... was taken," Islamic State said in a message on social media, adding that the capture of the plant meant that the militants had driven their enemies out of the entire city. Forces loyal to the self-declared gov-

Neighbour News

Iran to Take Legal Action if U.S. Stops New Mahan Air Planes: ISNA

ANKARA - Iran will take legal action if Washington tries to stop newly acquired Iranian passenger planes flying international routes, the head of the country's aviation authority said on Tuesday.

Iran's Mahan Air, blacklisted by Washington, bought eight second-hand Airbus A340s and one Airbus A321 in May in defiance of U.S. sanctions. Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported last week that the planes would be used on international routes.

The U.S. Treasury

department said last month that Mahan Air had a "blockable

interest" in the planes, meaning they could be subject to an asset freeze, raising the possibility that Washington may attempt to have them seized at airports outside Iran.

"As long as ... a disruption has not taken place, we cannot make a definite assertion. But if it happens, Iran will take legal action," said Alireza Jahangirian, head of Iran's Civil Aviation Organization, according to the Iranian Students' News Agency (ISNA). "America does not have the right to stop our planes on international trips ... Under international laws, it is impossible to seize the new Iranian aircraft." (Reuters)

China Welcomes Foreign Companies to Join in its Development: Premier

BEIJING - Chinese Premier Li Keqiang said on Tuesday that China welcomes foreign companies to join in its modernization and will create a market environment for fair competition.

Li made the remarks while meeting with CEOs and presidents of 14 of the world's top corporations including Goldman Sachs, Nokia, Pfizer, Standard Chartered Bank and Volkswagen at the 3rd round table summit of the Global CEO Council.

To sustain economic growth, which slowed to a six-year low of 7 percent in the first quarter, the Chinese premier is paying close

attention to mass entrepreneurship and innovation.

Li said support of mass entrepreneurship and innovation will inject new growth to China's economy, and upgrade the economy to a medium-high level of development and maintain the growth at a medium-high speed. China is undergoing a new round of high-level opening-up, said Li, adding that the government will take more measures to ensure fair competition. China will further expand the opening-up of high-end manufacturing and service industry, he said.

China has cost-effective ... (More on P4)... (22)

Pakistan to Provide \$5m Food Grant to Rohingya Camps

ISLAMABAD - A cabinet committee formed to tackle issues over the plight of Rohingya Muslims has decided on a \$5 million grant in the form of food to be channelled through the World Food Program for distribution in Rohingya camps in Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand.

Pakistan will also appeal to the United Nations to impress upon the Myanmar government to grant Rohingya Muslims equal citizenship rights and ensure the protection of the oppressed minority community. Recommendations to intensify diplomatic efforts in this regard were made by the special committee - comprising Interior Minister Chaudhry Nisar

Ali Khan, Adviser to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs and National Security Sartaj Aziz and Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Tariq Fatmi - which were approved by PM Nawaz Sharif. According to the committee's recommendations, the prime minister will write a letter to the United Nations Secretary General, as well as the President of the UN Security Council, highlighting the humanitarian crisis and asking for further intensification of diplomatic and moral pressure on the Myanmar government to grant adequate citizenship rights to the Rohingya community in accordance with international humanitarian laws. (Agencies)

Tajik President Meets UN Chief

DUSHANBE - Tajik President Emomali Rahmon met UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon Tuesday who arrived here to attend the opening ceremony of the high-level international conference on the implementation of the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life", 2005-2015. During the meeting they discussed issues related to cooperation between Tajikistan and the UN, a presidential press service said.

UN chief highly appreciated Tajikistan's international initiatives on water problems and expressed gratitude to

President Rahmon for organizing the ongoing high-level international conference. He also invited the Tajik president to attend the next session of the UN General Assembly.

The UN has been present in Tajikistan since 1992, commencing with the UN Tajikistan Office for Peace-building (UNTOP), which ended its mission in October 2007. Since 1993, the UN has increased its presence in the country. From 2010 to 2014, 23 specialized agencies of the United Nations implemented approximately 100 projects to ... (More on P4)... (23)