Al-Qaeda admits role in Syria war

AFP, Damascus

Al-Qaeda in Iraq yesterday admitted to long-held suspicions it is behind jihadists fighting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, as Washington said it was mulling new ways to drive him from power.

The mainstream rebel Free Syrian Army kept its distance from the jihadists, insisting its alliance with the key oppo sition fighting force was purely tactical and that its goal was a democratic

"The Al-Nusra Front is simply a branch of the Islamic State of Iraq," the head of the al-Qaeda in Iraq front group, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, said in a

recording posted online. Describing Al-Nusra leader Abu Mohammed al-Jawlani as "one of our soldiers," he said the two groups would merge under the banner of the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant.

Baghdadi's comments came a day after an Al-Nusra-style suicide bombing in the heart of Damascus killed at least 15

people and wounded 146. They also came after al-Qaeda's global chief,

Ayman al-Zawahiri, urged rebels to fight to establish an Islamic state in Syria, in an audio message posted on the Internet on Sunday.

REUTERS, Nairobi

many Africans.

sation he denies.

"National Nuclear Day."

CNN ONLINE

and Germany.

BBC ONLINE

NEW S_{brief}

Kenya swears in president

Uhuru Kenyatta took the oath of

office as Kenyan president yester-

day, presenting Western states

with the challenge of how to deal

with a leader indicted by the

International Criminal Court (ICC)

Uganda's president praised Kenyans at the

ceremony for rejecting what he called the court's

bid to sway the vote by "blackmail", a reflection of

the distrust or resentment of the court felt by

humanity for orchestrating an orgy of

intercommunal violence that followed the previ-

ous presidential election five years ago, an accu-

Iran opens uranium-processing site

Two days after nuclear talks with world leaders

yielded little progress, Iran announced it has

opened a new uranium-processing site to mark

facility as well as a uranium mine in the central

province of Yazd, state-run TV reported yesterday.

the most contentious issues in nuclear talks

between Iran and the so-called P5+1 countries --

the United States, France, Britain, China, Russia

The UN yesterday said it has reopened its food

distribution centres in the Gaza Strip after they

closed following violent protests over aid cutbacks.

closed the centres on 4 April after a compound

deficit was forcing it to cut cash payments to

some of Gaza's poorest families. Unrwa con-

firmed it was reopening all of its centres on 9

April. But it warned that they could shut again if

A four-year-old child has become Vietnam's first

victim of the H5N1 bird flu virus in more than a

year, a health worker said yesterday, amid grow-

ing regional concerns about the virulent disease.

bles to contain a new H7N9 strain that had not pre-

viously been transmitted from birds to humans but

The death comes as neighbouring China scram-

The UN Relief and Works Agency (Unrwa)

The protests came as the agency said a budget

UN resumes Gaza food aid

was stormed by protesters.

there was further unrest.

Bird flu kills 1 in Vietnam

The country opened a uranium-processing

Iran's enrichment of uranium has been one of

Kenyatta is charged with crimes against

North Korea vows all-out, sacred war

Warns foreigners to leave South; Japan puts missiles in Tokyo

AGENCIES

North Korea intensified threats of an imminent conflict against the United States and the South yesterday, warning foreigners to evacuate South Korea to avoid being dragged into "thermonuclear war".

However, Pyongyang has shown no sign of preparing its 1.2 million-strong army for war, indicating the threat could be aimed partly at bolstering Kim Jong-un, 30, the third in his family to lead the country.

The North, which threatens the United States and its "puppet", South Korea, on a daily basis, is marking anniversaries this week that could be accompanied by strong statements or military displays.

The warning to foreigners in the South, reported by the KCNA news agency, said once war broke out "it will be an all-out war, a merciless, sacred, retaliatory."

"It does not want to see foreigners in South Korea fall victim to the war," the agency quoted the Korea Asia-Pacific Peace Committee as saying.

None of the embassies in Seoul appeared to have issued any directives to their nationals and airlines reported no changes in their schedules.

The warning, read out on North Korea's state television in a bulletin that interrupted normal programming, was the latest threat in weeks of high tension following UN sanctions slapped on Pyongyang for its latest nuclear arms test.

Speculation remained high that the North may launch some provocative action this week - perhaps a missile launch or a nuclear arms test as early as Wednesday.

In response, Japan deployed PAC-3 mis-



Japanese troops work in front of a set Patriot Advanced Capability-3 (PAC-3) missile at in Tokyo yesterday.

sile interceptors in Tokyo yesterday. Japan's self-defence forces are under orders to shoot down any incoming North Korean missiles; Tokyo has also deployed two Aegis destroyers equipped with sea-based interceptor missiles in the Sea of Japan.

The two missiles, thought to be the untested Musudan, have a maximum range of 2 485 miles, putting South Korea, Japan and US bases on Guam within reach.

A spokeswoman for South Korea's presidential Blue House dismissed the warning, saying no one felt under threat.

Strong quake near Iran

A powerful earthquake struck close to Iran's only nuclear

power station yesterday, killing 30 people and injuring

The 6.3 magnitude quake totally destroyed one village,

800 as it devastated small villages, state media reported.

a Red Crescent official told the Iranian Students' News

Agency (ISNA), but the nearby Bushehr nuclear plant was

undamaged, according to a local politician and the

and 800 injured," said Fereydoun Hassanvand, the gover-

nor of Bushehr province, according to ISNA.

mud brick, which can easily crumble in a quake.

"Up until now the earthquake has left behind 30 dead

Many houses in rural parts of the province are made of

Across the Gulf, offices in Qatar and Bahrain were

evacuated after the quake, whose epicentre was 89 km

southeast of the port of Bushehr, according to the US

Geological Survey. The early afternoon shock was also felt

station, 18 km south of Bushehr, said the plant was unaf-

The Russian company that built the nuclear power

Iran is the only country operating a nuclear power

plant that does not belong to the Convention on Nuclear

Safety, negotiated after the 1986 nuclear disaster in

Chernobyl which contaminated wide areas and forced

Western officials and the United Nations have urged

about 160,000 Ukrainians from their homes.

nuke plant kills 30

REUTERS, Dubai

Russian company that built it.

in financial hub Dubai.

fected.

The legacy of Thatcher Funeral set for next week

CNN ONLINE

Margaret Thatcher, one of the seminal political figures of the 20th century, will be remembered for her unswerving belief in the virtues of free market capitalism and the vices of socialism, and for her role in the downfall of communism.

Margaret Thatcher was an icon for what politics should be about -- courage, spirit and the determination to change things for the better.

In pursuit of the defeat of what she saw as socialist totalitarianism, she made a close alliance with US President Ronald Reagan and built a relationship with Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, while still standing firm in opposition to the Soviet empire. Without question, she was one of America's closest and most important friends and was instrumental in winning the Cold War for the West. She refused to be bowed by terrorism

and stood against it in all its forms. After the Irish Republican Army attempted to assassinate her and her Cabinet at the 1984 Conservative Convention in Brighton, narrowly missing Thatcher but killing five people, she insisted on continuing the conference the next day. Her resolve to stand against any threat

to British interests was clear in the Falklands War. After the invasion of British territory by Argentine military forces,



Thatcher said it would not stand. Fully · knowing the real prospect of defeat, Thatcher ordered a British military task : will take place at London's force to re-take the islands. They did.

Along with foreign policy successes, Thatcher, known as "The Iron Lady," scored domestically too.

a polarizing presence and had relatively low approval ratings during her tenure. Still, there can be no debate of her enduring impact. Thatcher had changed

Britain's economic debate forever. She · had moved the political discussion from one of statism versus capitalism to a basic acceptance of free market economics as a standard of British political consensus. Although many on the British left : Mother.

oppose what Thatcher did and what she stood for, there is a quiet, begrudging one rung down from a perhaps, but unmistakable admiration of · state funeral and requires her strong and unswerving leadership.

BBC ONLINE

The funeral of Baroness Thatcher will take place on Wednesday, 17 April, **Downing Street** announced yesterday.

The 87-year-old former prime minister died on Monday, after suffering a series of strokes.

The funeral ceremony, with full military honours, St Paul's Cathedral, following a procession from

The Queen, accompa-Despite her successes politically, she was nied by the Duke of Edinburgh, will attend the service, Buckingham Palace said.

Westminster.

Lady Thatcher will not · have a state funeral but will be accorded the same status as Princess Diana and the Queen

A ceremonial funeral is : the consent of the Queen.

5 Indian UN troops killed in Sudan

BBC ONLINE

Five Indian peacekeepers escorting a UN convoy in South Sudan were killed yesterday in an ambush by rebels, the Indian foreign ministry said. Spokesman Syed

Akbaruddin tweeted that the peacekeepers were serving with the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (Unmiss). An unnamed UN offi-

cial told the AP news

agency that seven civilians were also killed in the attack. The violence happened

in the state of Jonglei, a haven for armed groups.

Unmiss has been in South Sudan since the country's creation in 2011 with a remit to preserve peace and security.

Akbaruddin said four Indian soldiers were also wounded in the attack, and arrangements were being made to bring those killed back to India.

Correspondents say that Jonglei has been hit by widespread ethnic violence since South Sudan became independent from Sudan in July 2011 - with much of it taking place in Pibor county, where the UN peacekeeping force is based.

Poaching: India uses drones AP, Guwahati

Wildlife authorities are using aerial drones to oversee a sprawling natural game park in Assam to protect the onehorned rhinoceros from armed poachers.

Security officers conducted flights of the unmanned aircraft over the Kaziranga National Park on Monday and will fly drones at regular intervals to prevent rampant poaching in the park in the remote area of Assam.

The drones are equipped with cameras and will be monitored by security guards, who find it difficult to guard the whole 480-square kilometer reserve. The drones will also be useful during

the annual monsoon season when large areas in the Kaziranga reserve are flooded by the mighty Brahmaputra River and three other rivers that flow through the



game park, park officials said. Hussain said the Central Bureau of

Investigation (CBI) will soon begin investigations into the steep rise in rhino poaching this year.

Poachers armed with automatic rifles killed 22 rhinos last year, but have killed 16 rhinos already this year.

Rhino horn is in great demand in China and Southeast Asia where it is believed to have medicinal properties.

Leftists manhandle WB minister in Delhi

Angry Mamata cancels meeting with Manmohan

PTI, New Delhi

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and her finance minister Amit Mitra were the target of the ire of CPM and its students' wing activists yesterday with protesters manhandling the minister outside the Planning Commission here.

A crucial meeting between West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee and Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, scheduled for this evening, was cancelled at the last minute against this backdrop.

A group of about 150 protesters from CPM and SFI ambushed the chief minister and other ministers including Mitra when they arrived at the Planing Commission complex around 3.45 pm for annual state plan discussion. Banerjee, who was advised by police

not to get down from her car and drive inside, however, chose to walk through the slogan-shouting and placardwielding crowd into the building. While the chief minister was immedi-

ately shielded by policemen, it was left to Mitra's lot to face the anger of the activists who were protesting the death of a SFI member Sudipto Ghosh in police custody in Kolkata last week.

The 65-year-old finance minister was pushed and jostled around as he tried to enter the Yojna Bhawan building.

TAX EVASION ROW French ministers to declare assets

Iran to join the safety forum.

BBC ONLINE

The French government yesterday pledged to reveal the value of ministers' assets by 15 April in a new transparency drive, amid a scandal over tax evasion.

The Socialist government also says it will present a draft law obliging MPs to declare their assets and introducing tougher penal ties for financial fraud.

Currently ministers only have to declare any conflict of interest.

France's ex-Budget Minister Jerome Cahuzac has been charged with fraud over a secret Swiss bank account.

He admitted last week that he had hidden about 600,000 euros (£509,000; \$770,000) in a Swiss bank account, causing shock in France.

The former conservative Prime Minister, his property on Monday evening.

UPA govt on 'borrowed time'

Modi attacks Congress, woos Mamata

PTI, Kolkata

Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi yesterday said the Central government was engulfed by policy paralysis and it was on "borrowed time".

"It (UPA government) is not watching the calendar, but the clock. It is on borrowed time," Modi said at a programme jointly orga-

nized here by three city-based chambers of commerce. Raking up Centre's "discrimination" against non-Congress states, Gujarat chief minister Narendra Modi sought to reach out to his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee expressing confidence in her govern-

ment's efforts to set right the "ruin" of the Left Front government. In a speech to businessmen in West Bengal, Modi, widely seen as the Prime Ministerial candidate of BJP in the next general elections, appeared to woo Trinamool Congress, which was once a BJP ally and is seen as a potential friend in

the coming days. Echoing his West Bengal counterpart Mamata Banerjee's charge that the Centre has been discriminating against non-Congress states, Modi said the UPA government's approach was detrimental to the country's federal structure.

When Atal Bihari Vajpayee was heading the NDA government, there was never the cry from Bengal that it was being discriminated against, but now this is happening, Modi said.

Modi's remarks came in the backdrop of West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee's charge that the Centre had imposed an "economic blockade" against her state.



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has now killed eight people since February. It was not immediately clear exactly when the child died and health officials in Hanoi were Francois Fillon, declared unavailable for comment.

AFP, Hanoi