

ASEAN MEET IN BRUNEI Ties with China, trade dominate talks

AFP, Bandar Seri Begawan

Southeast Asian leaders met in Brunei yesterday for talks aimed at easing tensions over the South China Sea and building momentum towards groundbreaking economic partnerships.

The annual two-day summit of the 10-member Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) began in the capital of the oil-rich sultanate with a dinner in which the leaders were looking to rebuild unity after unprecedented infighting last year.

The split was over how much pressure the group should try to apply to China over competing territorial claims to the resource-rich South China Sea.

But a push by the Philippines and Vietnam for Asean to send a united message to an increasingly assertive China crumbled amid resistance from Cambodia, a close China ally.

Asean leaders will make a united call in an end-of-summit statement for talks with China on the issue, but they will avoid any strong language, according to a draft of the document obtained by AFP.

One of the other key issues on the agenda of the summit is pressing ahead with deeper economic integration within the bloc, and with other countries in the region.



Leaders from the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) attend a working dinner at the prime minister's complex in Bandar Seri Begawan yesterday. Southeast Asian leaders met in Brunei hoping to heal wounds from infighting over relations with China while building momentum towards groundbreaking economic partnerships.

PHOTO: AFP



Hagel arrives in Egypt on ME tour

AFP, Cairo

US Defence Secretary Chuck Hagel landed in Egypt yesterday as part of a Middle East tour designed to bolster America's alliances amid growing concern over the fallout from Syria's roiling civil war.

In his first trip to the Middle East as Pentagon chief, Hagel is promoting longstanding US military ties with traditional allies -- including Israel and Saudi Arabia -- as a way of countering Iran and deterring Islamist militants.

Hagel, who was in Riyadh on Tuesday evening to finalise a major arms sale to Saudi Arabia, travelled to Cairo to meet his counterpart, General Abdel Fattah al-Sissi, and later hold discussions with President Mohamed Morsi.

For years Egypt was at the centre of America's strategic influence in the region but since the 2011 ouster of president Hosni Mubarak, the United States has had to contend with new political realities and an independent-minded government in Cairo.

India, China hold talks on border disputes

AFP, New Delhi

India and China are holding more talks over an alleged advance by Chinese troops into disputed territory after senior army officers failed to reach a resolution, Indian reports said yesterday.

Indian Defence Minister AK Antony was quoted as telling reporters that "negotiations are going on at various levels to resolve the issue peacefully."

"Our government will take every step to protect the national integrity and security," he said, while on a visit to the southern city of Bangalore, according to the Press Trust of India news agency.

India's foreign ministry said a day earlier that it had already asked China to withdraw troops who allegedly came across the border and set up camp in a remote area of the Himalayas on April 15.

"We have asked the Chinese side to maintain the status quo in this sector (of

the western border)," spokesman Syed Akbaruddin said. "By this I mean the status quo prior to this incident."

Akbaruddin stressed that there were differing perceptions of the undefined frontier in the Buddhist-majority Indian region of Ladakh which is a source of friction between the neighbours.

Beijing has denied that its soldiers had encroached on Indian territory or that they had contravened accords signed in 1993 and 1996 designed to maintain peace along the so-called Line of Actual Control (LAC).

Local military commanders from both sides have already met this week in a failed bid to resolve the issue, a reminder of the prickly relationship between the two countries.

Relations between the two neighbours are marked by mutual suspicion -- a legacy of a brief border war in 1962 that was waged in Ladakh and in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh.

China plans second, larger aircraft carrier

AFP, Beijing

China is planning a second and larger aircraft carrier, a top naval officer said according to state media yesterday, after its first carrier was commissioned last year as part of a military buildup.

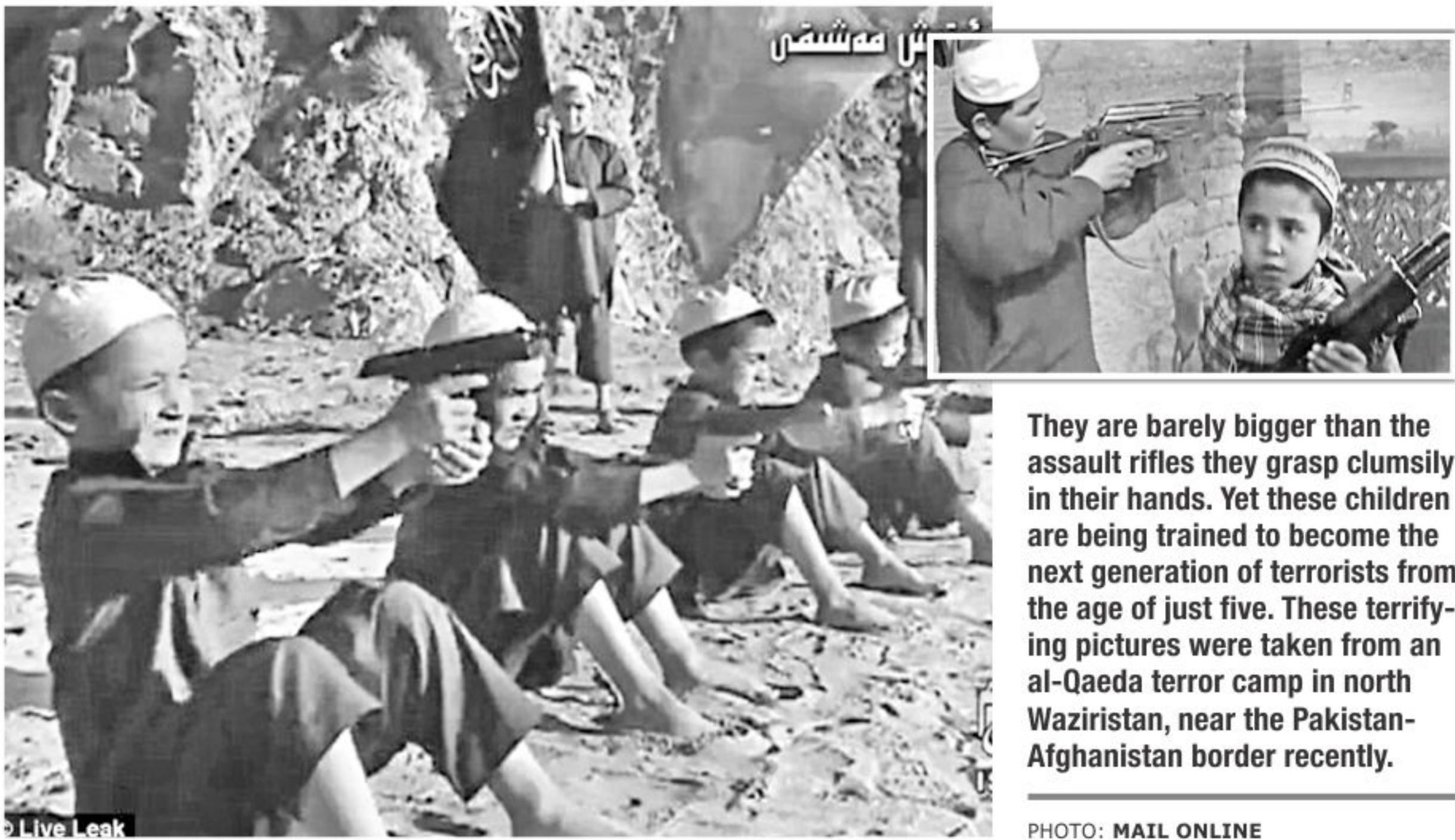
The confirmation of a second vessel comes amid escalating maritime territorial disputes between China and its neighbours, and the United States' increased focus on Asia which has riled China.

"China will have more than one aircraft carrier," Song Xue, deputy chief of staff of China's navy, said at a ceremony Tuesday to celebrate the 64th anniversary of the founding of China's navy, the Xinhua news agency reported.

"We hope the next aircraft carrier can be bigger, because then it would be able to carry more aircraft and be more powerful," he told foreign military attaches in Beijing.

China's first aircraft carrier, the Liaoning, went into service in September in a symbolic milestone for the country's increasingly muscular military.

China has generated concern with double-digit rises in its annual defence budget -- set at 10.7 percent for 2013 -- with experts saying their actual military spending is substantially higher than the publicised totals.



They are barely bigger than the assault rifles they grasp clumsily in their hands. Yet these children are being trained to become the next generation of terrorists from the age of just five. These terrifying pictures were taken from an al-Qaeda terror camp in north Waziristan, near the Pakistan-Afghanistan border recently.

PHOTO: MAIL ONLINE

Grandpa sells newborn on Facebook

AFP, New Delhi

Police in northern India yesterday said they had arrested a 47-year-old man for selling his newborn grandson to a local businessman in a deal that was struck on Facebook.

Feroz Khan, a resident of Ludhiana city in the northern state of Punjab 300 kilometres from New Delhi, had allegedly kidnapped his grandson shortly after he was born earlier this month.

Khan sought help from two temporary employees at a local hospital where his daughter gave birth, who contacted the buyer on Facebook and arranged the deal for 45,000 rupees (\$830).

Police have rescued the baby and returned him to his mother, who had lodged the complaint against her father.

The three accused have been charged with kidnapping. If proven guilty, they could be jailed for 7 years.

Leftist nominated as Italy PM

Tasked with forming a govt to
end political limbo

REUTERS, Rome

Italian President Giorgio Napolitano yesterday asked centre-left deputy leader Enrico Letta to form a new government, signalling the end of a damaging two-month vacuum since elections in the euro zone's third largest economy in February.

Letta, a youthful former Christian Democrat from the right wing of his Democratic Party, said he would start talks to form a broad-based coalition on Thursday. It will likely go to parliament for a vote of confidence by early next week.

The prime minister designate is expected to select a group of ministers, mixed between politicians and technocrats, under the guidance of Napolitano, whose own unprecedented re-election last weekend opened the way for an end to the crisis.

The new government will be backed primarily by Letta's centre-left and the centre-right of Silvio Berlusconi, which had hitherto repeatedly failed to cut a deal following inconclusive elections two months ago.

Formation of a government after a lengthy and turbulent political impasse will send a signal that Italy might at last be ready to make a start on much-needed reforms.

Accepting his mandate, Letta, 46, said he was surprised by the nomination and felt a profound responsibility on his shoulders.

He added that European Union economic policies had been too focused on austerity instead of growth and that Italy's electoral and parliamentary system must be reformed.



Enrico Letta

Unrest in western China kills 21

AFP, Beijing

Twenty-one people, including police officers and social workers, were killed in violent clashes in China's ethnically divided western region of Xinjiang, officials said yesterday.

Gun fights broke out in Barchuk county in the west of the province after police went to search the home of locals suspected of possessing illegal knives, a report on Tianshan Net, a government-run news website, said.

Foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said 15 police and social workers were killed in the violence, which occurred Tuesday -- among them 10 from China's mostly Muslim Uighur ethnic minority, who live mainly in Xinjiang.

Xinjiang is home to around nine million ethnic Uighurs, many of whom complain of religious and cultural repression by Chinese authorities. The region is regularly hit by unrest.

'Pakistan may have got nuke design from China'

PTI, Washington

China might have provided its close ally Pakistan a fairly comprehensive package of proven nuclear weapons design in late 1970s and the CIA knew about it, according to a recently declassified document.

"The CIA had evidence suggesting close Pakistan-China nuclear cooperation, to the point of facilitating a nuclear weapons capability, although the intelligence community saw this as possibly a special case based on an alliance that had existed since 1963," according to recently declassified CIA data, obtained by the National Security Archive (NSA) under the Freedom of Information Act.

According to the document, this allegation has come up before, for example in a state department document and in major news stories but this is the first time the CIA has released some of its own information.

"The estimate highlights some of the main developments, including 'verbal consent (in 1974) to help Pakistan develop a nuclear blast capability', 'hedged and conditional commitment' in 1976 to provide nuclear weapons technology, and unspecified excised information that raised the possibility that China has provided a fairly comprehensive package of proven nuclear weapon design information," it said.

"Even without Chinese help, the Pakistanis could develop a nuclear weapon, but access to Chinese weapons design and test data might be crucial in establishing Islamabad's confidence in an untested weapons capability," said a 1983 national intelligence estimate of the CIA, which is heavily excised.

The exchanges may not have been one-way and the reference to Chinese "involvement" in Pakistan's uranium enrichment programme probably refers to gas centrifuge technology, which Pakistan shared with China, it noted.

NEWS IN brief

Bird flu spreads outside China

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan yesterday reported the first case of the H7N9 bird flu outside of mainland China.

The 53-year-old man, who had been working in the eastern Chinese city of Suzhou, showed symptoms three days after returning to Taiwan via Shanghai, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) said, adding that he had been hospitalised since April 16 and was in a critical condition.

China has confirmed 108 cases and 22 deaths since the first infections were announced on March 31, with a higher proportion of cases in older people.

France adopts gay marriage law

AFP, Paris

French lawmakers on Tuesday defied months of angry protests to approve a bill that is to make France the 14th country worldwide to legalise same-sex marriages.

Opponents of the law vowed to fight on, quickly filing a constitutional challenge and promising more demonstrations to pressure President Francois Hollande into backing down from signing the bill.

If Hollande signs the law, France will join eight other European countries -- the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Norway, Sweden, Portugal, Iceland

New Iraq violence kills 15

AFP, Kirkuk

Violence in Iraq killed 15 people yesterday, including 12 security force personnel and gunmen who died in attacks apparently launched in revenge for deadly clashes at a protest, officials said.

Fighting between security forces and protesters near the northern town of Hawijah left 27 people dead on Tuesday, and sparked a wave of revenge attacks in which a further 27 people were killed that day.

The revenge attacks continued yesterday, leaving nine security forces members and three

S Korea, US extend nuclear pact

AFP, Seoul

South Korea and the United States have agreed on a two-year extension to a civilian nuclear pact that Seoul wants amended to allow it to produce its own nuclear fuel, officials said yesterday.

The current pact, signed in 1974, had been due to expire next year. The extension was agreed to allow more negotiations on the heated topic of

'China, Romania hackers' hub'

AFP, Washington

China and Romania were by far the largest sources of confirmed hacking attempts last year, with China's mostly from state-controlled sources aimed at data theft, a new report said Tuesday.

Verizon's 2013 Data Breach Investigations report said 30 percent of 621 confirmed attacks were sourced back to China, 28 percent to Romania, and another 18 percent to the United States.

By far most of the attacks in China were focused on data theft, the report said, while those from Romania and most of those in the United States were about theft for financial gains.

Malaysian poll violence spikes

AFP, Kuala Lumpur

Hundreds of cases of Malaysian election violence including a bomb explosion have been reported since campaigning for tightly contested May 5 polls got under way four days ago, police said yesterday.

In the latest incident a bomb exploded in northern Penang state late Tuesday near a political gathering of the ruling Barisan Nasional coalition, resulting in a 35-year-old security worker being injured by flying debris. Police later found a



Request for Proposal Communications Specialist

Katalyst is a market development project that aims to contribute to increasing the income of poor men and women in rural areas. It does this by facilitating changes in services, inputs and product markets, which in turn increases the competitiveness of farmers and small enterprises. Katalyst is co-funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), the UK Department for International Development (DFID), and the Danish International Development Agency (Danida). It is implemented by Swisscontact and GIZ International Services under the umbrella of the Ministry of Commerce, Bangladesh.

Katalyst requests proposals from interested individuals or organisations for designing and conducting a stakeholder analysis and feedback. The detail Terms of Reference (ToR) is available at the web-link: http://www.katalyst.com.bd/abtus_procurement.php

Individuals/organisations interested to bid for the assignment, are requested to submit their technical and financial proposals separately by 2 May 2013, 5 pm at Katalyst office.