

NEWSIN brief

South Korea expands air defence zone

CNN ONLINE

In a move that is certain to anger China, South Korea has expanded its air defense zone to include an area claimed by both countries. Last month, China declared an Air Defense Identification Zone (ADIZ) in the East China Sea and declared that planes flying through it needed to file flight plans. The Chinese zone covers a disputed submerged rock in the Yellow Sea, known by Korea as Ieodo and by China as Suyan.

IAEA visits Iran's Arak nuke site

REUTERS, Dubai

UN inspectors visited Arak Iranian plant yesterday linked to a planned heavy-water reactor that could yield nuclear bomb fuel, taking up an initial offer by Tehran to open its disputed nuclear programme up to greater scrutiny. It was the first time in more than two years that the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) had been allowed to go to the Arak heavy water production plant, which is designed to supply a research reactor under construction nearby.

Blasts targeting Baghdad kill 35

AFP, Baghdad

A wave of bombings mostly targeting Shia areas in and around Baghdad killed at least 35 people yesterday, sources said, as surging violence spurs concerns Iraq is falling back into all-out conflict. Violence in Iraq this year has killed more than 6,300 people, AFP figures show.

At least 53 head of states to attend funeral

AFP, Johannesburg

Fifty-three heads of state and government have so far confirmed attendance at upcoming memorial events for peace icon Nelson Mandela, South African Foreign Minister Maite Nkoana-Mashabane said yesterday. The dignitaries will include US President Barack Obama, along with three former American presidents, Brazilian leader Dilma Rousseff, French President Francois Hollande and British Prime Minister David Cameron. The White House has indicated that former first couple George W and Laura Bush will accompany the Obamas on the presidential plane Air Force One. Ex-president Bill Clinton also said that he would be making the trip with his family. Many leaders will attend a memorial service tomorrow at the Soccer City stadium, where Mandela made his last major public appearance during the 2010 football World Cup. A smaller group would travel to the Nobel peace laureate's rural childhood village Qunu for his funeral service and burial next Sunday. Scores of dignitaries are also expected to attend, including UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, Kofi Annan, Martti Ahtisaari, Lakhdar Brahimi, Mary Robinson. Palestinian leader Mahmud Abbas and Britain's Prince Charles, representing Queen Elizabeth II, will also attend. **Dalai Lama to miss** The Dalai Lama, who has twice since 2009 been denied a visa for South Africa, is not planning to attend his fellow Nobel laureate Nelson Mandela's funeral, his spokesman said yesterday. No reason was given for the decision. Dalai Lama was barred from visiting South Africa twice in the past.



Former Thai Prime Minister and opposition leader Abhisit Vejjajiva addresses a news conference at the Democrat Party headquarters in Bangkok, yesterday, after resigning from parliament.

PHOTO: AFP

Opposition MPs quit en masse in Thailand

PM's poll proposal rejected; protesters vow final push

AFP, Bangkok

Thai opposition lawmakers resigned en masse from parliament yesterday, deepening the kingdom's political crisis as anti-government protesters vowed a final showdown despite an election offer from the embattled prime minister. Bangkok is bracing for another major opposition demonstration today aimed at toppling Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra and curbing the political influence of her brother Thaksin. The kingdom has been rocked by several episodes of political bloodshed since Thaksin, a billionaire tycoon-turned-premier, was ousted by royalist generals in a coup seven years ago. Yingluck's government has been shaken by more than a month of rolling rallies by demonstrators, sometimes numbering in their tens of thousands, who want to suspend the country's democracy in favour of an unelected "People's Council". The opposition Democrat Party yesterday said that its 153 MPs were resigning from the 500-seat lower house -- a move that does not prevent Yingluck's Puea Thai party from passing new laws but which leaves parliament facing questions about its legitimacy. "We performed our duty in parliament as best we could," said Democrat leader and former premier Abhisit Vejjajiva. "We cannot do any more. We regret that the majority in parliament betrays the voice of the people." The move came soon after Yingluck

renewed her offer of elections if the protesters -- a mix of royalists, middle class Thais and other Thaksin opponents -- agree to respect the democratic process. "The government is ready to dissolve the house if the majority wants it," she said in a televised address, noting that under the kingdom's laws an election would have to be held within 60 days. She also floated the idea of a referendum to solve the crisis but it was unclear what the nation would be asked to vote on. The protest leaders have said that they would not be satisfied with new elections, but the opposition Democrats hinted that it might take part in any new polls, even though they have not won an elected majority in about two decades. Tensions remain high in the kingdom following several days of street clashes last week between police using tear gas, water cannon and rubber bullets against rock-throwing demonstrators. The unrest has left five people dead and more than 200 injured in Bangkok. With turnout dwindling, protest leader Suthep Thaugsuban has called for a final push today to bring down the government, describing it as "judgement day". The government's "Red Shirt" supporters plan their own rally tomorrow. The recent protests were triggered by an amnesty bill, since dropped by Yingluck's ruling party, which opponents feared would have cleared the way for her brother Thaksin's return.

2-state theory key to Israel's security: US

AFP, Washington

The United States said Saturday it had conducted its deepest-ever analysis of Israel's security needs and believed a two-state solution with Palestinians could include sufficient guarantees to safeguard the Jewish state. President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry revealed some details of the US effort to convince Israel that its security could be ensured in any final peace deal. Kerry said US Middle East security envoy General John Allen was working closely with Israeli forces to test scenarios and work out how to satisfy Israeli needs for years to come. Obama said Allen had concluded "that it is possible to create a two-state solution that preserves Israel's core security needs." "That's his conclusion, but ultimately he's not the decision-maker here"

Pakistan turns to China for development

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's launch of work on its largest nuclear power plant last week is the latest example of big-money Chinese infrastructure projects in the troubled nation. Cash-strapped Pakistan, plagued by a bloody home-grown Taliban insurgency, is battling to get its shaky economy back on track and solve a chronic energy crisis that cripples industry. Politicians in Beijing and Islamabad are fond of extolling the profundity of their friendship in flowery rhetoric and on the ground this has translated into around 10,000 Chinese engineers and workers flocking to Pakistan. Chinese companies are working on more than 100 major projects in energy, roads and technology, according to Pakistani officials, with an estimated \$18 billion expected to be invested in the coming years. Pakistan faces an electricity shortfall of around 4,000 megawatts in the sweltering summer, leading to lengthy blackouts that make ordinary people's lives a misery and have strangled economic growth. But cooperation goes beyond energy. Visiting in May during his first overseas trip after taking office, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang linked growth in his country's restive west with that in Pakistan, saying the two sides wanted to create an "economic corridor" to boost development. The concept involves improving road and rail networks to link China through Pakistan to the Arabian Sea and planning minister Iqbal said its benefits would extend to other neighbouring countries.



Hagel backs Nato force in Afghanistan

AFP, Camp Bastion

US Defense Secretary Chuck Hagel told American troops yesterday that he backed a NATO force playing a role in Afghanistan after 2014, as Washington and President Hamid Karzai wrangle over a stalled security pact. Hagel travelled to the southern province of Helmand to meet troops a day after further tensions over the security pact that would allow NATO forces to stay in the country after next year. "I believe there is a role for our coalition partners and the United States, but that depends on the Afghan people," Hagel told US soldiers in a question-and-answer session. "If the people of Afghanistan want to continue that relationship, then we will." US commanders were looking at "a new phase for our mission to train, assist, advise and counter-terrorism," he said. Meetings with Karzai have been customary over the years for Pentagon chiefs, but Hagel said Saturday after his arrival that he had no plans to meet the Afghan president during his weekend visit. As President Barack Obama's top national security adviser, Susan Rice, and top diplomat, John Kerry, had already had frank discussions with Karzai urging him to sign the security agreement, Hagel said there was no point in him repeating the US position.

No 'ideal' deal possible with Iran, says Obama

Gives final nuke deal with Tehran a 50-50 chance

AFP, Washington

President Barack Obama warned Saturday that Israel's vision of an "ideal" nuclear agreement with Iran was unrealistic and put the chance of any acceptable final deal emerging at no more than 50/50. But Obama argued that the best possible available agreement with Tehran was likely to be better than the alternatives, and it was therefore imperative to try to secure one. Obama, speaking at the Brookings Institution's Saban Forum in Washington, said a deal was possible that included enough verification safeguards to assure foreign powers Tehran could not build a nuclear bomb. He indicated that could include a very "modest" option for Iran to enrich uranium as part of a peaceful nuclear program under intense scrutiny by outside observers that

would ensure Tehran was kept from "break-out" capacity needed to race to build an atomic weapon. "If we could create an option in which Iran eliminated every single nut and bolt of their nuclear program and foreswore the possibility of ever having a nuclear program, and for that matter got rid of all its military capabilities, I would take it," Obama said. "But I want to make sure everybody understands it -- that particular option is not available, so as a consequence, what we have to do is make a decision, as to given the options available, what is the best way for us to assure Iran does not get a nuclear weapon?" Obama also made clear that the interim deal reached in Geneva last month between Iran and world powers did not grant Iran a "right to enrich," despite such interpretations of the deal by some top Iranian officials.



PHOTO: REUTERS

A woman folds her hands in prayers during a mass commemorating late Nelson Mandela in Soweto, near Johannesburg, yesterday.

S Africa awaits post-Madiba world

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

Dirk Smit's reaction to the death of Nelson Mandela, it would be fair to assume, puts him in the minority of South Africans. "Sort of indifferent, to be honest," he said flatly of his feelings. "Calling him a terrorist was a fair comment. What we shouldn't forget is that he also killed a lot of people. The bombings and all that crap." To criticise Mandela in these days is a subversive act, as politically contrarian as declining to wear a poppy on Remembrance Sunday is in Britain. The country's first black president, already immortalised with statues, on bridges and on banknotes, is the subject of rolling eulogies on television and radio channels and he will be prayed for at church services up and down the country yesterday. But scratch the surface and among white South Africans -- about 9% of the population -- there is a mosaic of views. Many have flocked to Mandela's home in the upmarket Johannesburg suburb of Houghton to lay flowers and shed tears. The great majority of Afrikaners interviewed by the Observer, expressed sorrow at his loss and admiration for his ability to bridge the nation's racial divide. But several also spoke of a deep-

rooted fear that Mandela's death could dismantle the social pact of 1994 and lead to persecution, or worse, of the white minority. And a small fraction echoed the views of the marginal rightwingers who yearn to rekindle racial apartheid. "I didn't agree with any of his opinions or statements on things," said Smit, walking through Benoni's non-descript town centre with his girlfriend. "In general, I would say the country is not better than it was in 1994. It's much worse. Crime is just ridiculous, healthcare is terrible now -- you can't use public systems any more -- and the roads are bad. The poor are still poor and life for the middle class has gone backwards." And the rainbow nation? "There's still a division between the races in this country. You go to any function and see the people are split. I have some black friends, but 99% of my friends are white because we share the same culture." There has long been an urban myth, fanned by the internet in recent years, that Mandela's death would be the trigger for a so-called "night of the long knives" in which whites would be wiped out. Mandela's release from jail, and the democratic election of 1994, ended more than three centuries of white colonial and apartheid rule. But

instead of seeking vengeance, Mandela reached out. He studied his captors, learned the Afrikaans language and invited one of his white prison wardens to his inauguration. He visited the widow of Hendrik Verwoerd, the architect of apartheid, and embraced the Afrikaners' beloved rugby at the World Cup. Fears that Mandela would seize white-owned farms and businesses also proved groundless, allowing whites to retain many of their economic privileges today. All of this made him hugely popular among those whites dealing with complex feelings of guilt, vulnerability or resentment. Alan de Klerk, 47, a white, wearing a green Springbok rugby jersey. "Heartsore" was how he characterised his reaction to Mandela's demise. "You guys overseas don't understand the culture in this country. He brought unity, something we never had here." "There was a lot of hatred, but the attitude when he came out of jail was reconciliation. He could have started a civil war like the rest of Africa. Black and white would have stood up to each other. I don't think any other leader could have pulled off what he pulled off. There will never be a war of black and white again."

Czech PM hopes to shun funeral!

AFP, Prague

Outgoing Czech Prime Minister Jiri Rusnok said he was hoping to shun the funeral of anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela next week, in comments he didn't realise were being recorded that went viral on Saturday. Talking to Defence Minister Vlastimil Picek, his neighbour in parliament on Friday, Rusnok said "I hope the president will go instead. The idea of going gives me the shivers." The prime minister, who had sent condolences to South Africa earlier expressing "profound grief" over Mandela's death, called the trip "one hell of a distance" before conceding: "I guess he (President) won't fly so I'm fucked."



The magic of MANDELA

AGENCIES

A mini-dressed Geri Halliwell clutching his arm and the rest of the Spice Girls cuddling him for the picture, Nelson Mandela stood grinning. "These are my heroines," the South African president said when he met what was then the world's hottest pop band in 1997. "I don't want to be emotional, but it's one of the greatest moments in my life." Mandela's star-pulling power was legendary. Feted by the world's biggest names in entertainment, sport and politics, his own star often shone brighter than those in his company. A telling cartoon early in his term as South Africa's first black president depicts Mandela next to Britain's Queen Elizabeth during a state visit to London. "The next bloody tourist who asks who's the little old lady with Mandela..." remarks a policeman in the 1996 sketch by South African cartoonist Zapiro. Celebrity fascination with Mandela dates back to his 27 years of imprisonment, when outdated photographs were the only public images that the world had of him. Songs like "Free Nelson Mandela" and "Bring Him Back Home" climbed the 1980s charts and a 70th birthday trib-



Mandela & Naomi Campbell



Mandela with Hillary

ute was broadcast to hundreds of millions of people around the world in 1988. After his release in 1990, the appeal of the man fondly known by his clan name Madiba only grew larger. Free of the stuffiness usually inbred into politicians, Mandela was equally at home bantering with celebrities or tackling the world's issues on the global stage. With an ability both to inspire and delight, his calls for tolerance were blended with a penchant for breaking into a gleeful shuffle dance in public and wearing colourful shirts. Few stars were immune to the "Madiba magic" and a photo opportunity with one of the world's most recognisable personalities was seen as an essential part of a stop in South Africa. His rock star-like 85th birthday drew guests ranging from U2 frontman Bono to actor Robert de Niro, who were invited alongside his cook and gardener. Canadian singer Celine Dion even named one of her twin boys Nelson after meeting him -- an occasion she prepared for by taking a history course. Supermodel Naomi Campbell reportedly called him her "honorary grandfather". Former US leader Bill Clinton described him as "a ferociously loyal friend". But not all of them liked him either. When US President George W Bush visited South Africa in 2003 he didn't meet Madiba, after he was criticised for the invasion of Iraq in stinging terms. Mandela described Bush as "a president who can't think properly".