

You are next

Iran accuses 'petrodollar' states of creating Frankenstein

AFP, Tehran

Iran's President Hassan Rohani yesterday warned that Muslim states which funnel petrodollars to jihadist Sunni fighters wreaking havoc in Iraq will become their next target.

Rohani did not name any country, but officials and media in mainly Shia Iran have hinted that insurgents from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) are being financially and militarily supported by Saudi Arabia and Qatar.

"I advise Muslim countries that support the terrorists with their petrodollars to stop," Rohani said in remarks reported by the website of Iran's state broadcaster.

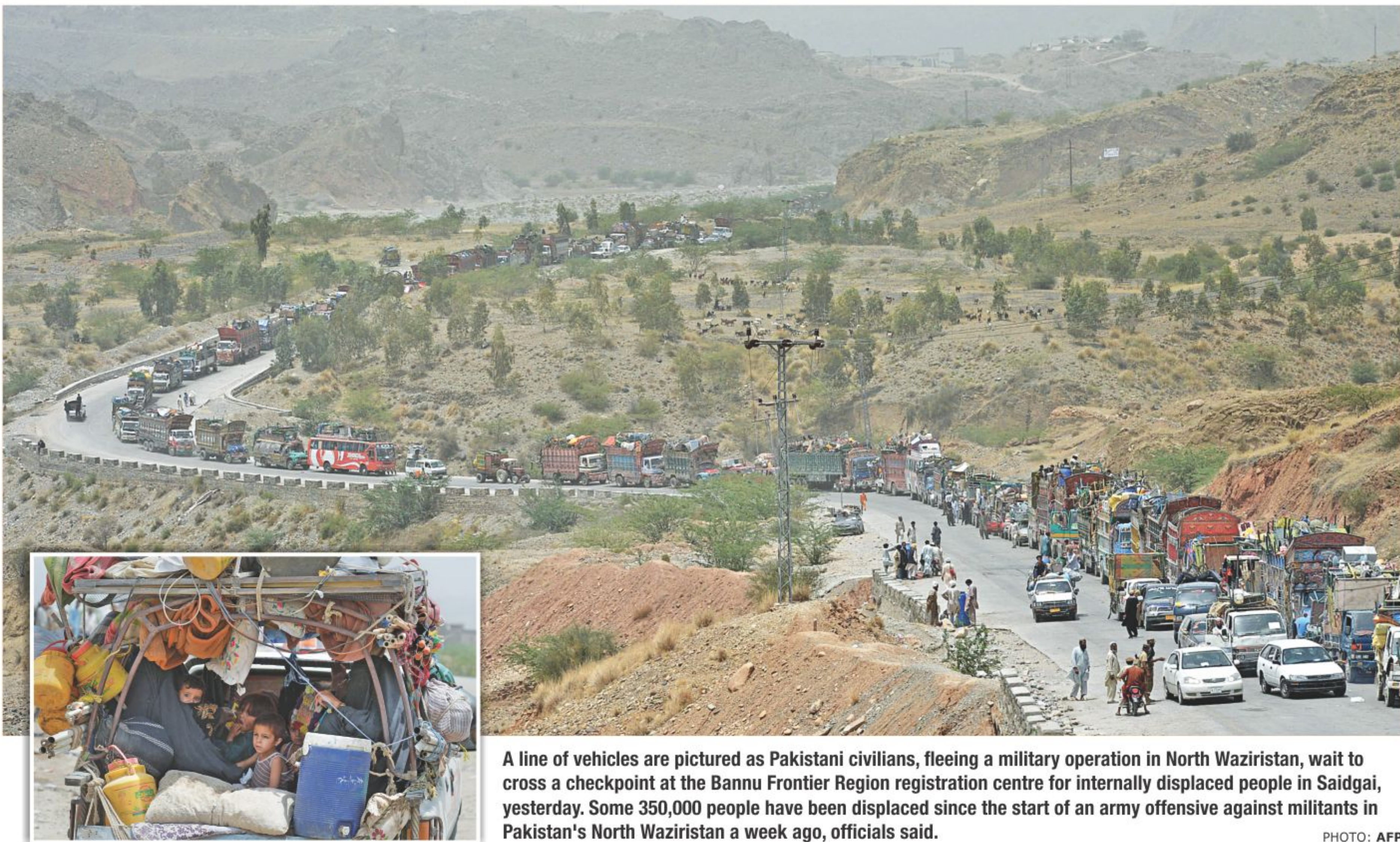
"Tomorrow you will be targeted... by these savage terrorists. Wash your hands of killing and the killing of Muslims," he added. ISIL militants have seized a swathe of Iraqi territory in a lightning offensive, with the Baghdad government's security forces hard-pressed to prevent the advance.

Riyadh has warned that Iran-ally Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki is steering Iraq towards civil war through policies that exclude the country's Sunni minority.

Iran, the predominant Shia powerhouse in the Middle East, says it will support Maliki against ISIL, which is also battling the regime of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, another Tehran ally.

Rohani meanwhile called for unity between "Shiites and Sunnis who are brothers".

"For centuries, Shias and Sunnis have lived alongside each other in Iran, Iraq, the Levant, Lebanon, the Persian Gulf and North Africa... in peaceful coexistence," he said.



A line of vehicles are pictured as Pakistani civilians, fleeing a military operation in North Waziristan, wait to cross a checkpoint at the Bannu Frontier Region registration centre for internally displaced people in Saidgai, yesterday. Some 350,000 people have been displaced since the start of an army offensive against militants in Pakistan's North Waziristan a week ago, officials said.

PHOTO: AFP



Rousseff launches re-election bid amid protests

AFP, Brasilia

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff formally launched her re-election bid Saturday, leading in opinion polls despite lingering discontent over World Cup costs.

Rousseff's leftist Workers Party (PT) approved her candidacy in a voice vote of 800 members meeting at a convention in Brasilia, with the popular former president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on hand.

Rousseff's popularity has fallen but she leads her rivals ahead of the October presidential election, with 39 percent of voters backing her candidacy, a survey by pollsters CNI Ibope showed Thursday.

The former guerrilla member, who was jailed and tortured during the 1964-1985 military dictatorship, is well ahead of Social Democratic Senator Aécio Neves, with 21 percent, and socialist ex-governor Eduardo Campos, a former ally, with 10 percent.

The PT convention turned into a defense of the World Cup, with promises of changes in a new Rousseff administration following protests over hosting the tournament that began June 12 and ends July 13, which costs Brazil billions. The protest movement has lost some steam, however, drawing smaller crowds during the World Cup but with sporadic clashes between riot police and protesters.

Iran opposes US intervention

Sunni militants seize more towns as US pushes for unity

REUTERS, Tehran

Iran's supreme leader condemned US intervention in Iraq yesterday, accusing Washington of seeking control as Sunni insurgents drove toward Baghdad from the Syrian border and consolidated positions in the north and west.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State John Kerry on a surprise Egypt visit yesterday urged Iraqi leaders to rise above "sectarian considerations", and said Washington was "not responsible" for the crisis there.

The statement by Ayatollah Ali Khamenei was the clearest statement of opposition to a US plan to dispatch of up to 300 military advisers in response to pleas from the Iraqi government and runs counter to speculation that old enemies Washington and Tehran might cooperate to defend their mutual ally in Baghdad.

"We are strongly opposed to US and other intervention in Iraq," IRNA news agency quoted Khamenei as saying. "We don't approve of it as we believe the Iraqi government, nation and religious authorities are capable of ending the sedition."

The Iranian and the US governments had seemed open to collaboration against al-Qaeda offshoot the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), which is fighting both the US-backed, Shia-led government of Iraq and the Iranian-backed

president of Syria, whom Washington wants to see overthrown.

"American authorities are trying to portray this as a sectarian war, but what is happening in Iraq is not a war between Shia and Sunnis," said Khamenei, who has the last word in the Islamic Republic's Shia clerical administration.

Accusing Washington of using Sunni Islamists and followers of ousted Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, he added: "The US is seeking an Iraq under its hegemony and ruled by its stooges."

Tehran and Washington have been shocked by the lightning quick offensive, spearheaded by ISIL, that has seen large swathes of northern and western Iraq fall to the hardline extremist group and other Sunni fighters since June 10, including the north's biggest city Mosul.

ISIL thrust east from a newly captured Iraqi-Syrian border post yesterday, taking three towns in Iraq's western Anbar province after seizing the frontier crossing near the town of Qaim on Saturday, witnesses and security sources said.

The gains have helped ISIL secure supply lines to Syria, where it has exploited the chaos of the uprising against President Bashar al-Assad to seize territory.

The fall of Qaim represented another step towards the realisation of ISIL's military goals, erasing a frontier drawn by British and French colonial map-makers a century ago.



Ukraine leader offers talks with pro-Russian rebels

Putin conditionally backs Poroshenko's peace plan

AFP, Siversk

Ukraine's new Western-backed leader yesterday agreed to dialogue with separatists not implicated in "murder and torture" as he laid out a peace plan that Russian President Vladimir Putin promised to back.

Petro Poroshenko's initiative follows his announcement on Friday of a week-long unilateral ceasefire in the government's 10-week campaign against pro-Russian rebels that has claimed more than 375 lives and displaced tens of thousands.

The 48-year-old confectionery tycoon said that a peaceful settlement was "our plan A".

"But those who are planning to use peaceful negotiations only to buy time and regroup their forces must know that we have



Putin



Poroshenko

a detailed plan B," he added in the 12-minute address.

Putin yesterday vowed to stand behind Poroshenko's peace efforts as long as they led to "substantial dialogue" between the two sides.

The Kremlin chief has been sending mixed signals to Kiev that included a surprise order on Saturday for Russian forces stretching from the Volga to western Siberia to go on "full combat alert". Some analysts see this as an effort by Putin -- unable to keep Poroshenko from signing a economic pact with the EU on Friday that will pull Ukraine further out of the Kremlin's reach -- to unsettle the new pro-Western leaders and keep reins on the Russified southeast while avoiding new Western sanctions.



Indian volunteers dance during the One Billion Rising campaign programme in front of the Victoria Memorial in Kolkata, yesterday. The One Billion Rising campaign is a global call for an end to violence against women and girls and that survivors should receive justice.

PHOTO: AFP

Korean troops corner renegade soldier

BBC ONLINE

South Korean troops yesterday managed to corner a soldier who shot dead five colleagues and fled his post near North Korea's border, sparking a massive manhunt.

One soldier was injured as the renegade conscript exchanged fire with troops hunting him in the border town of Goseong, Gangwon province, reports said.

One media report said the conscript's parents had been taken to the site to help convince their son to turn himself in.

Sgt Im shot fellow members of his 22nd infantry division in the remote guard post and then escaped with his semi-automatic K2 rifle and some ammunition, army officials said.

Sgt Im "threw a grenade and then opened fire" after completing his day shift, Yonhap reported. Seven other troops were injured in the incident, but are expected to survive.

It is not clear why the sergeant had opened fire on Saturday evening.

There have been similar incidents in South Korea's military, which operates under a conscription system. Bullying and mental problems have been blamed for previous attacks.

Tens of thousands of soldiers from both North and South Korea are stationed along their joint border, one of the most heavily fortified in the world.

The two Koreas were divided at the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, which ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty. As a result, they remain technically at war.

'The hardest, highest glass ceiling'

Hillary on her chances of being the first female US president

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

American women face a tough battle as they seek to shatter the "highest, hardest glass ceiling" - the election of a female US president - because of the enduring double standards in politics, Hillary Clinton told the Observer yesterday.

The former secretary of state, senator and first lady, who in 2008 became the only woman in America to have won a presidential primary, says that she has a "great personal commitment" to seeing a woman in the White House. "I'm hoping that we get it cracked, because it's past time, but it's going to be difficult."

Hillary stepped down as America's top diplomat last year and has embarked on a book tour for Hard Choices, her new memoir of four years at the state department. She has yet to disclose whether she will launch a second presidential bid in 2016 in which she is seen as a strong candidate both to take the Democratic nomination that eluded her



six years ago and to seal her return to the White House, this time as president.

Hard Choices begins with Hillary's bruising defeat at the hands of Barack Obama in the 2008 contest to become the Democratic Party's presidential candidate. In her concession speech, on 7 June in Washington, she told her disappointed supporters: "Although we weren't able to shatter that highest, hardest glass ceiling this time, thanks to you it's got about 18 million cracks in it."

Despite the enduringly tough terrain for senior female politicians in America, there are signs of change. A poll conducted by Emily's List, the campaign that seeks to have more pro-choice Democratic women elected to public office, found that 75% of voters saw a female president as a good thing that would send a positive signal to the nation's children.

Hillary has indicated that she is likely to announce her decision on whether to run early next year.

Ancient Inca roads win World Heritage status

AFP, Doha

UN cultural agency UNESCO on Saturday granted its coveted World Heritage status to a vast and ancient Inca road system spanning six countries in South America.

The listing of the Qhapaq Nan roads will boost efforts to preserve and promote the network -- an engineering marvel comparable to the vast road system of the Roman Empire. The system, which began forming as trails thousands of years ago, linked some 40,000 people of the Incan Empire, carrying traders, travellers, messengers and armies.

Delegates at UNESCO's World Heritage Committee voted to grant the status at a gathering in Doha, where they are considering some 40 cultural and natural wonders for inclusion on the UN list.

Covering some 30,000 kilometres and constructed by the Incas over centuries, the system has long connected the peoples of Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

The six nations came together to submit the bid for its nomination and have vowed to work in concert to preserve and restore the road system.

US pushes democracy in Egypt; releases aid

AFP, Cairo

US Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday pressed Egypt's former military leaders to allow greater political freedoms, warning the nation faced a "critical moment", as he arrived on a surprise visit.

Kerry became the highest-ranking US official to meet President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi since he came to power earlier this month, as part of a rocky transition to democracy since the ousting of long-time leader Hosni Mubarak in 2011.

"Obviously this is a critical moment of transition in Egypt, enormous challenges," Kerry said as he met first with new Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukri, before then huddling with Sisi at the presidential palace in Cairo.

But he vowed that "the US is very interested in working closely" with the new government "in order to make this transition as rapidly and smoothly as possible".

Since Egypt's first freely elected leader,

Islamist president Mohamed Morsi, was toppled by Sisi in July 2013, a government crackdown on his supporters has left more than 1,400 people dead in street clashes and at least 15,000 jailed.

US officials warned Washington has deep concerns about the government's "polarising tactics" and acknowledged they were "balancing" different strategic interests in what is a "complicated" relationship.

Kerry's latest diplomatic mission, that will also see him visit Amman, Brussels and Paris, is expected to focus on uniting Iraq's fractious leaders and urging its neighbours to use their sway to ensure the speedy formation of a new government while cutting off funds to the militants.

US officials also revealed that \$572 million (420 million euros) in aid, which had been frozen since October, was released to the Cairo government about 10 days ago after finally winning a green light from Congress. It will mainly go to pay existing defence contracts.