

# DEFENCE TALKS US, Japan boost cooperation

AFP, Tokyo

New guidelines governing the Japan-US defence alliance will allow the two militaries to "cooperate seamlessly", American Defense Secretary Ashton Carter said yesterday in Tokyo following a meeting with his Japanese counterpart.

On the second day of a three-day visit to Japan, Carter met Gen Nakatani to thrash out rules on how their armed forces can work together in the coming years.

The move comes as Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe is pushing for a higher profile regional role for Japan at a time of growing disquiet in Asia over the rise of a newly assertive China, a push that is welcomed by Washington.

The fresh guidance will "detail how our governments will continue to work together around the world and in new domains, such as space and cyberspace, to ensure Japan's peace and security," Carter told a joint press conference with Nakatani.

A new code will be finalised in Washington at the end of April, when Abe visits the US, accompanied by Nakatani and Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida.

The rules, which were last revised in 1997, will take into account a reinterpretation of Japan's constitution by the Abe government last year, which allows for so-called "collective defence".

This change "has informed" the new framework, a senior US official travelling with Carter said.

Under the new interpretation, Japan's military will be permitted -- in certain circumstances -- to come to the aid of an ally under attack.



PHOTO: AFP

Members of Living History Society acting as Japanese soldiers reenact a scene of the "battle of the pockets" against Philippine-US soldiers during a memorial ceremony to remember fallen heroes of World War II in Balanga City, Bataan province, north of Manila yesterday, a day prior to the Araw ng Kagitingan (Day of Valor) memorial services. The ceremony was held as part of the week-long commemoration dubbed "veterans week" and 70th anniversary of Philippine liberation.

## NEWS IN brief

### 20 loggers killed: rights groups urge probe

AFP, New Delhi

Rights groups called yesterday for a full investigation into the death of 20 suspected illegal loggers, killed when police opened fire in a forest in southern India notorious for sandalwood smuggling. Local activists have questioned that account and accused police of regularly using excessive force on woodcutters, many of whom are poor migrant workers from the neighbouring

### Tsipras, Putin in talks

AFP, Moscow

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras met Kremlin strongman Vladimir Putin in Moscow yesterday with the EU nervous that cash-strapped Athens is trying to cosy up to Russia. The talks come as Tsipras is battling to unblock a rescue package from the EU and IMF, with some in Brussels warning against any move to barter financial support from Moscow for political backing over

### Classified systems not hacked: White House

AFP, Washington

US officials insisted Tuesday that a cyber attack late last year did not compromise White House classified systems, but refused to confirm reports Russia was behind the breach. "There was an event last year," said deputy national security advisor Ben Rhodes adding: "We have classified systems that are secure. We don't talk about where cyber intrusions originate

### US-CUBA SUMMIT Nations not to reopen embassies yet

AP, Washington

The US and Cuba are not expected to re-open embassies before a regional summit slated for April 10-11, an official said.

"I would not anticipate that we will be formalising the opening of embassies in advance of the summit," an aide to US President Barack Obama, Ben Rhodes said on Tuesday, referring to the Summit of the Americas to be held in Panama. Xinhua reported yesterday.

"When you have two countries that haven't really spoken to each other in over 50 years, you have a lot of issues to work through as you aim to open embassies," Rhodes said.

# Myanmar holds rare talks

Suu Kyi pushes for charter change

AFP, Naypyidaw

Myanmar's President Thein Sein held rare talks yesterday with influential allies and rivals including opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi as she intensifies efforts to lift a constitutional ban on her presidential bid.

The long-awaited talks in the capital Naypyidaw, which follow a similar meeting of key political figures in October, come as the country braces for elections seen as a key test of reforms in the former junta-run nation.

The closed-door talks -- attended by the president, Suu Kyi, parliamentary speaker Shwe Mann and a few dozen other political figures -- touched on a landmark draft ceasefire agreement forged last week with several ethnic armed groups, Myanmar's Information Minister Ye Htut told reporters.

Discussions will resume tomorrow and be whittled down to a smaller group of six participants, including Thein Sein and Suu Kyi, he added.

Changes to the constitution will be on tomorrow's agenda, "among many issues" including the signing of a binding nationwide ceasefire -- a prized aim of Thein Sein's administration.

The NLD is expected to Hoover up votes in the election in November, the first countrywide vote that the party will have contested in 25 years.

Despite her star power, Suu Kyi is banned from the top job under a provision in the junta-era constitution barring those with a foreign spouse or children from the presidency.



### CUSTODY SANS TRIAL Malaysia revives practice with new law

AP, Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia has revived detention without trial after its lower house passed an anti-terrorism law that rights groups say is a giant step backward for human rights.

The government says the measures were needed after it arrested 92 Malaysians so far this year suspected of supporting the Islamic State militant group. This includes 17 people detained Sunday, whom police say were planning to rob banks and attack police stations and army camps to obtain weapons.

The Prevention of Terrorism Act bill was passed by lawmakers in the lower house Tuesday, with 79 votes in favor to 60 against. It allows authorities to detain suspects indefinitely without trial and the decision cannot be challenged in court.

## IRAN NUCLEAR DEAL Deal must cover missile capacity Demands Netanyahu

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu kept up his offensive against the framework nuclear deal with Iran on Tuesday, saying it fails to address Tehran's long-range missile arsenal.

"Why doesn't the framework address Iran's intercontinental ballistic missile programme whose sole purpose is to carry nuclear payloads?" he asked on his official Twitter account.

He said the economic benefits from the easing of sanctions would go to fund Iran-sponsored radicals across the Middle East.

"What is to stop Iran from using the over one hundred billion dollars that will be unfrozen as part of this agreement to fund aggression and terror in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon, Yemen and elsewhere," he tweeted.

It was the latest salvo in transatlantic sniping on the issue between Netanyahu's office and the White House.

On Sunday, Netanyahu demanded that Iranian recognition of the Jewish state's right to exist be written into last week's agreement.



## YEMEN CRISIS

### Red Cross says situation 'catastrophic' in Aden

AFP, Aden

The Red Cross warned Tuesday of a "catastrophic" situation in Yemen's main southern city Aden, as forces loyal to the president battled Iran-backed Shiite rebels in the streets. The Huthi rebels and their allies made a new push on a port in the central Mualla district of the city, but were forced back by militia supporting President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, witnesses said. International Committee of the Red Cross spokeswoman Marie Claire Feghali said the humanitarian situation across Yemen was "very difficult... (with) naval, air and ground routes cut off." The situation in Aden was "catastrophic to say the least".

### 11 dead in dashes in Aden: military

AFP, Aden

Eleven people were killed in Yemen's main southern city Aden overnight in clashes between rebels and forces loyal to fugitive President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, a military source said yesterday. Saudi-led warplanes also struck the port city's rebel-held international airport as the air war in support of Hadi's beleaguered forces entered its third week, another military source said. Eight rebels and three loyalist militiamen died in the fighting in the northern Dar Saad neighbourhood, the first source said.

### Qaeda making gains: US Defense Secretary

AFP, Tokyo

US Defense Secretary Ashton Carter acknowledged yesterday that Al Qaeda was seizing terrain amid the chaos in Yemen, but vowed that Washington would continue to combat the extremist group despite ongoing fighting there. "We see them making gains on the ground there as they try to take territory," said Carter, who was in Japan as part of a visit to Asia for talks with regional allies.

### US hurries arms to Saudi-led coalition

AFP, Aden

Washington deepened its involvement in the Saudi-led air war in Yemen yesterday as aid agencies scrambled to deliver help to civilians caught up in the campaign now heading into its third week. US Deputy Secretary of State Antony Blinken said Washington was stepping up weapons deliveries and intelligence sharing in support of the Saudi-led coalition. A US defence official told AFP that Washington was sending primarily precision-guided munitions.

### Iran, Turkey agree on need to stop Yemen war

AFP, Tehran

Turkey and Iran agree on the need for a political solution to end Yemen's war, which has raised tensions between them, Iran's president said Tuesday after talks with his visiting Turkish counterpart. "We talked about Iraq, Syria, Palestine... We had a long discussion about Yemen. We both think war and bloodshed must stop in this area immediately and a complete ceasefire must be established and the strikes must stop" in Yemen, Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said during a joint press conference broadcast by state television. Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan made no remarks about Yemen, but he talked at length about bilateral relations with Iran.



### Iran deploys warships off Yemen's coast

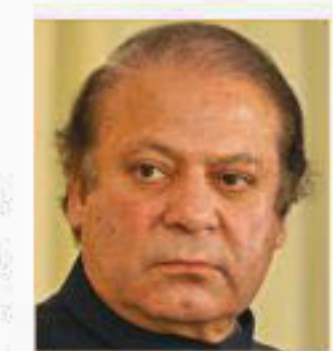
REUTERS, Dubai

Iran sent two warships to the Gulf of Aden yesterday, state media reported, establishing a military presence off the coast of Yemen where Saudi Arabia is leading a bombing campaign to oust the Iran-allied Houthi movement. The Alborz destroyer and Bushehr support vessel sailed from Bandar Abbas on a mission to protect Iranian shipping from piracy, Rear Admiral Habibollah Sayyari said in comments cited by Press TV.

### Pak PM says 'no hurry' in joining coalition

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan is "not in a hurry" to decide whether to join the Saudi-led coalition against rebels in Yemen, the prime minister said Tuesday, before a round of shuttle diplomacy involving Iran and Turkey. Nawaz Sharif told a special parliamentary debate on Yemen he thought the diplomatic efforts planned for the coming days would yield results.



### Afghan militants to send 'thousands' of fighters to join coalition

AFP, Islamabad

An Afghanistan-based jihadist group known for its past ties to Pakistani intelligence yesterday vowed to send "thousands" of fighters to Yemen in support of Saudi Arabia. Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin was one of the main Sunni insurgent groups that fought against Soviet troops and later re-emerged to fight US-led coalition forces after 2001. "If there is any possibility to go to Iraq and Yemen, thousands of Afghan mujahideen would be ready to go, to counter Iran's interference and to defend their Muslim brothers," its leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, former prime minister of Afghanistan, said in an online statement.



Indian Sikh devotees known as Punj Pyara hold swords during a procession from the Sri Akal Takhat at the Sikh Shrine to the Golden Temple in Amritsar yesterday on the eve of the 394th birth anniversary of the ninth Sikh Guru Teg Bahadur. Bahadur, the youngest of five sons of Guru Hargobind, was executed on the orders of Mughal Emperor Aurangzeb in Delhi in 1675.

PHOTO: AFP

## Clarkson to host HIGHFY



BBC ONLINE

Jeremy Clarkson is set to make his first appearance on the BBC since losing his job as co-presenter on Top Gear.

The controversial broadcaster will appear as the guest host of Have I Got News For You on 24 April.

"Jeremy's contract has not been renewed on Top Gear but he isn't banned from appearing on the BBC," a BBC spokesman said.

Clarkson has hosted the satirical news quiz on numerous occasions.

During one appearance in 2008, he threw a pen at regular panellist Ian Hislop that left the latter with a cut on his face.

Clarkson was suspended by the BBC on 10 March following a "fracas" with Top Gear producer Oisin Tymon in a hotel in North Yorkshire.

## US approves arms worth \$1bn for Pakistan

AGENCIES

The Pentagon has notified US Congress about the state department's approval of a military arms package worth nearly \$1 billion for Pakistan, ostensibly in support of its counterterrorism and counter-insurgency operations.

The proposed sale "will contribute to the foreign policy and national security of the US by helping to improve the security of a country vital to US foreign policy and national security goals in South Asia," the DSCA said in its notification, adding that the helicopters and weapon systems will provide Pakistan with military capabilities in support of its counterterrorism and counter-insurgency operations in South Asia.

## LAL MASJID CASE Musharraf arrest warrant suspended

PTI, Islamabad

A Pakistani court yesterday suspended the non-bailable arrest warrant against former military dictator Pervez Musharraf for the killing of cleric Abdul Rashid Ghazi during the army siege of the Lal Masjid in 2007.

The arrest warrant was challenged in the high court which set aside the orders of the lower court on assurance by Musharraf's lawyer that he would attend the next hearing.

The district and sessions court in Islamabad last week issued his arrest warrant in the case of Ghazi who was killed when the army stormed the mosque here to flush out militants.

The Islamabad high court adjourned the hearing till April 27 and ordered 71-year-old Musharraf to appear in person. The former



military ruler was booked in the murder case in 2013.

Separately, a medical report of Musharraf was presented in an anti-terrorism court in Quetta hearing a case against him for alleged involvement in the killing of Baloch tribal leader Akbar Khan Bugti in a military operation in 2006.

Musharraf, who was president at the time, had ordered the operation that killed Bugti.

The Sindh government had formed a medical team on the directives of the court after Musharraf failed to appear due to health reasons. A nine-member medical team conducted a medical checkup of Musharraf on April 1.

The court accepted a day's exemption regarding the appearance of the former military ruler. The hearing was adjourned until April 22.