

Germany, Russia see new Cold War

THE HINDU ONLINE

Russia accused Nato of reviving the ghost of the Cold War by encroaching close to its borders and seeking to change the strategic balance of power, as Germany denounced Moscow's nuclear weapons build-up as a Soviet-style reflex.

Ties between Russia and the West have hit new lows over Ukraine and the latest accusations come after Moscow said it would enhance its nuclear arsenal in response to Washington's plans to station heavy military equipment in eastern Europe.

It's not Russia that's approaching someone's borders. It's Nato's military infrastructure that is approaching the borders of Russia," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters. "All this ... forces Russia to take measures to safeguard its own security."

Peskov said the West had increasingly resorted to "unconstructive and confrontational" Cold War-style rhetoric.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg accused President Vladimir Putin of "sabre rattling" on Tuesday after the Russian leader said Moscow would add more than 40 intercontinental ballistic missiles to its nuclear arsenal this year.

On Wednesday, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier accused Putin of acting on Cold War reflexes.

Russia and the West accuse one another of endangering global security and the latest spat adds to tensions over Ukraine where Russia-backed separatist rebels seized land in the east after Moscow annexed Crimea from Kiev in early 2014.

Foreign Ministers from Russia, France, Germany and Ukraine will meet in Paris on June 23 to discuss the conflict in east Ukraine.



Queen Mathilde and King Philippe of Belgium attend with other guests the official commemoration of the bicentenary of the Battle of Waterloo in Waterloo, yesterday. The battle was a pivotal moment in European history, when around 93,000 French troops led by Napoleon faced off against 125,000 British, German and Belgian-Dutch forces. After his defeat, Napoleon was exiled to the island of Saint Helena in the south Atlantic Ocean, where he died in 1821. The victors redrew the map of Europe and the continent enjoyed almost a century of relative peace. PHOTO: AFP

POPE ON CLIMATE CHANGE Its real, act now to save planet

AFP, Vatican City

Pope Francis yesterday urged the world to act quickly to prevent "extraordinary" climate change from destroying the planet and said wealthy countries must bear responsibility for creating the problem and for solving it.

In a radically worded letter addressed to every person on the planet, the leader of the world's 1.2 billion Catholics blames human greed for the critical situation "Our Sister, mother Earth" now finds itself in.

"This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her," he writes in his long-anticipated Encyclical on the environment.

Arguing that environmental damage is intimately linked to global inequality, he goes on to say that doomsday predictions can no longer be dismissed and that: "The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth."

Green activists hailed the charismatic Argentinian pontiff's widely-trailed intervention as a potential game-changer in the debate over what causes global warming and how to reverse it.

"Everyone, whether religious or secular, can and must respond to this clarion call for bold urgent action," said Kumi



Francis, the International Executive Director of Greenpeace.

Environmentalists hope the pope's message will significantly increase the pressure for binding restrictions on carbon emissions to be agreed at global talks in Paris at the end of this year.

"If present trends continue, this century may well witness extraordinary climate change and an unprecedented destruction of ecosystems, with serious consequences for all of us," he writes.

Bemoaning the "remarkable" weakness of political responses to this, Francis accuses the sceptics of cynically ignoring or manipulating the scientific evidence.

The consequences of climate change, he argues, will include a rise in sea levels that will directly threaten the quarter of the world's population that lives near or on coastlines, and will be felt most acutely by developing countries.

Highlighting warnings that acute water shortages could arise within decades, he writes that, "the control of water by large multinational business may become a major source of conflict in this century".

One of the strongest themes in the encyclical is that rich countries must accept responsibility for having caused climate change and should "help pay this debt" by cutting their carbon emissions and helping the developing world adopt sustainable forms of energy generation.

60m displaced worldwide: UN

REUTERS, London

Almost 60 million people worldwide were forcibly uprooted by conflict and persecution at the end of last year, the highest ever recorded number, the UN refugee agency said yesterday.

More than half the displaced from crises including Syria, Afghanistan and Somalia were children, UNHCR said in its annual Global Trends Report.

In 2014, an average of 42,500 people became refugees, asylum seekers, or internally displaced every day, representing a four-fold increase in just four years, the aid agency said.

"We are witnessing a paradigm change, an unchecked slide into an era in which the scale of global forced displacement as well as the response required is now clearly dwarfing anything seen before," said UN High Commissioner for Refugees Antonio Guterres in a statement.

UNHCR said Syria where conflict has raged since 2011, was the world's biggest source of internally displaced



people and refugees.

There were 7.6 million displaced people in Syria by the end of last year and almost 4 million Syrian refugees, mainly living in the neighbouring countries of Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

"Even amid such sharp growth in numbers, the global distribution of refugees remains heavily skewed away from wealthier nations and towards the less wealthy," UNHCR said.

UNHCR said there were 38.2 million displaced by conflict within national borders, almost five million more than a year before, with wars in

Ukraine, South Sudan, Nigeria, Central African Republic and the Democratic Republic of the Congo swelling the figures.

Of the 19.5 million refugees living outside their home countries, 5.1 million are Palestinians. Syrians, Somalis and Afghans make up more than half the remaining 14.4 million refugees, UNHCR said.

It also noted that more than 1.6 million people sought political asylum in a foreign country last year, a jump of more than 50 percent compared to the previous year - largely due to the 270,000 Ukrainians who submitted asylum claims in Russia.

While many conflicts have erupted or reignited in the past five years, few have been conclusively resolved. Just 126,800 refugees were able to return home in 2014, the lowest number in 31 years, UNHCR said.

"It is now absolutely clear that we are not able to deliver," Guterres said. "It is time for the international community to assume its responsibilities."

US to put woman on new \$10 bill

AP, Washington

Alexander Hamilton, who has been featured on the \$10 bill since 1929, is making way for a woman.

US Treasury Secretary Jacob Lew was to officially announce yesterday that a redesign of the \$10 will feature the first woman on the nation's paper money in more than a century.

The bill will go into circulation in 2020, the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote.

Lew is asking the public for suggestions on who should be chosen for the bill, as well as what symbols of democracy it should feature.

ISIS says shot down Iraqi fighter plane

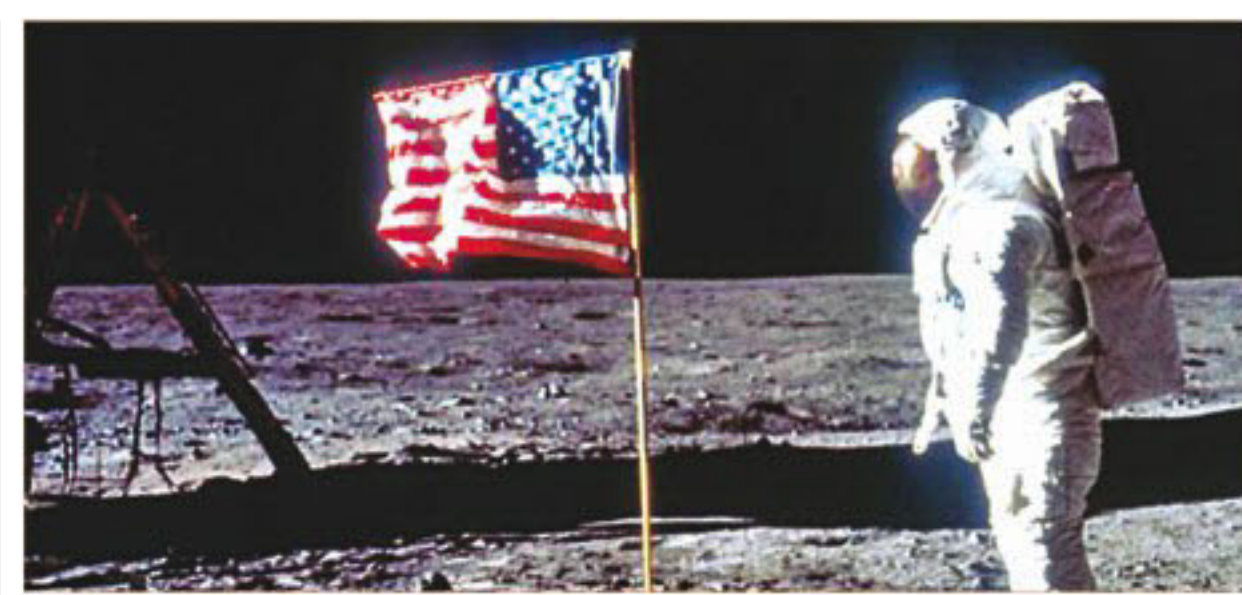
REUTERS, Baghdad

Islamic State said on Thursday it had shot down an Iraqi fighter plane north of the city of Ramadi in Anbar Province.

It was not immediately possible to independently confirm the claim made on one of Islamic State's Twitter accounts. A member of an anti-Islamic State Sunni force called Sahwa (Awakening) said an Iraqi fighter jet, a Russian-made Su-25, was seen in flames as it crashed after being shot down north of Ramadi.

Iraq's government relies on a U.S.-led coalition and Iranian-backed Shi'ite militias in its fight against Islamic State, which holds a third of the country as well as parts of neighbouring Syria.

The Islamic State Twitter site said the fighter jet had been shot down as it conducted a raid on areas north of Ramadi, the provincial capital of Sunni heartland Anbar.



Russia questions US moon landing

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The increasingly tense relationship between the United States and Russia might be about to face a new challenge: a Russian investigation into American moon landings.

In an op-ed published by Russian newspaper Izvestia, Vladimir Markin, a spokesman for the government's official Investigative Committee, argued that such an investigation could reveal new insights into the historical space journeys.

According to a translation by the Moscow Times, Markin would support an inquiry into the disappearance of original footage from the first moon landing in 1969 and the whereabouts of lunar rock, which was brought back to Earth during several missions.

"We are not contending that they did not fly [to the moon], and simply made a film about it. But all of these scientific — or perhaps cultural — artifacts are part of the legacy of humanity, and their disappearance without a trace is our common loss. An investigation will reveal what happened," Markin wrote, according to the Moscow Times translation.

The op-ed is unlikely to raise worries among Nasa officials. Nasa did also emphasize the uniqueness of lunar soil and rock in the past.

'Arson attack' damages Israel 'miracle' church

AFP, Tabgha

A suspected arson attack damaged a revered Christian shrine in northern Israel overnight, and police detained 16 young Jewish settlers for questioning yesterday.

The Church of the Multiplication at Tabgha on the shores of the Sea of Galilee is where many Christians believe Jesus fed the 5,000 in the miracle of the five loaves and two fish.

A church adviser blamed Jewish extremists for the incident and police later said they had detained 16 youths from settlements in the occupied West Bank for questioning.

A member of the Roman Catholic Benedictine order, which manages the site, said one of the buildings within the compound was completely destroyed in the blaze but the church itself was not damaged. Hebrew graffiti was found on another building within the complex, reading "Idols will be cast out" or destroyed.

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