



Rescuers try to revive a person after a boat carrying refugees sank off on its way to Lesbos Island at Ayvacik district, Canakkale, yesterday. Five Afghans, including two children and a six-month old baby, drowned in the Aegean overnight trying to reach Greece as Turkey starts to implement an EU agreement to curb illegal migration.

North Korea fires two more missiles

Liquidates South's assets

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea yesterday in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, as South Korean and US forces conducted massive war games.

The North also announced it had scrapped all agreements with the South on commercial exchange projects and would "liquidate" South Korean assets left behind in its territory.

South Korea protested the move as "totally unacceptable" but did not say what it could do to recover the assets that it valued in excess of 1.4 trillion won (\$1.17 billion).

North Korea has a large stockpile of short-range missiles and is developing long-range and intercontinental missiles as well. Yesterday's missiles flew about 500 km into the sea off the east coast city of Wonsan and probably were part of the Soviet-developed Scud series, South Korea's defense ministry said.

Japan, which is within range of the longer-range variant of Scud missiles or the upgraded Rodong missiles, lodged a protest through the North Korean embassy in Beijing, Japan's Kyodo news agency reported.

North Korea often fires short-range missiles when tensions rise on the Korean peninsula. Pyongyang gets particularly upset about the annual US-South Korea drills, which it says are preparations for an invasion.

The US and South Korea remain technically at war with the North because the 1950-53 Korean War ended in an armed truce instead of a peace agreement.

Around 17,000 US military personnel are participating alongside some 300,000 South Korean troops in what South Korea's Defense Ministry has called the "largest-ever" joint military exercises. North Korea on Sunday warned it would make a "pre-emptive and offensive nuclear strike" in response to the exercises.

Mass expulsion plan 'illegal' IS treasure trove leaked

UN blasts EU-Turkey deal; rift widens over Balkans route closure

AFP, Geneva

The mass expulsion of migrants from Greece to Turkey under a draft EU-Ankara deal to ease the migrant crisis would be "illegal," the UN warned yesterday, as some of the bloc's own ministers also criticised the plan.

While EU countries squabbled over how to cope with the bloc's worst migration crisis since World War II, UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said the proposed deal with Turkey raised "a number of very serious concerns".

"Among my concerns is the potential for collective and arbitrary expulsions, which are illegal," he told the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva.

EU leaders had hoped the mooted deal with Turkey -- due to be finalised at an EU summit on March 17-18 -- could stem the flood of migrants streaming through the bloc in search of a better life, many fleeing the five-year war in Syria.

Underscoring yet again the human tragedy of the crisis, a fresh shipwreck off the Turkish coast claimed five lives including a baby as a boat full of migrants heading for Greece capsized.

The EU-Turkey plan drawn up on Monday

would see Ankara take back all migrants landing in Greece, in a bid to reduce their incentive to get to Europe. In return for every Syrian expelled from Greece, the EU would resettle one Syrian refugee from camps in Turkey -- which is hosting about 2.7 million people who have fled the conflict across the



border.

And in exchange for its cooperation, Turkey wants six billion euros in aid, visa-free access to Europe's passport-free Schengen zone and a speeding up of its efforts to join the EU.

Ankara's EU affairs minister Volkan Bozkir also underlined yesterday that the deal would not be retroactive, and would "not include the existing refugees on the Greek islands".

The crisis has exposed sharp divisions in

the 28-member bloc and the leaders of Greece and Germany blasted Balkan countries for slamming shut their borders.

The EU "has no future if it goes on like that," warned Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras, while German Chancellor Angela Merkel said the border closures were "neither sustainable nor lasting."

Their reactions flew in the face of the response of EU President Donald Tusk, who welcomed the Balkan route closure as being part of a collective response from the bloc.

The strong words came after Slovenia and Croatia barred entry to transiting migrants from Wednesday and Serbia indicated it would follow suit.

EU member Slovenia also said it will follow suit.

The border closures have created a huge bottleneck on the Greece-Macedonia border. Greek authorities yesterday said there were 41,973 asylum seekers in the country.

Zeid said that more than 400 people had died trying to reach Europe in the first two months of the year alone.

"I urge the EU to adopt a much more rights-compliant and humane set of

Thousands of fighters' names and personal details revealed

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The leak of a huge cache of stolen Isis documents revealing the names and details of thousands of foreign recruits has been hailed as a "devastating" coup for intelligence agencies around the world.

The files, obtained by German and British media outlets, are said to be recruitment questionnaires that identify thousands of supporters of the Islamic State group from 50 countries. German officials say they are working on the belief the files are genuine.

Zaman Al Wasl, a pro-opposition Syrian news website, and Sky News published a selection of the forms online showing a 23-part survey detailing extremists' names, birth dates, nationalities, hometowns, nationalities and even blood types.

The forms show prospective members were asked to choose if they wanted to be used as suicide bombers, soldiers or in another role, and to detail any previous jihadist experience.

Afzal Ashraf, a visiting fellow at Nottingham University's centre of conflict, security and terrorism, told The Independent the leak will be "devastating" for the terrorist group.

"It will be a great blow for their recruitment

process because these documents show not just the people joining but the networks involved in radicalising them and facilitating their travel," he said.

Sky News said the files contained details of 22,000 individuals. It said the documents were obtained from a man called Abu Hamed, an IS fighter who became disillusioned with the group's leadership.



Omar al-Shishani

IS 'MINISTER OF WAR' aLIVE

Top Islamic State commander leader Omar al-Shishani, known as Omar the Chechen, was "seriously injured" in a recent strike in northeastern Syria but not killed despite US suggestions to the contrary, a monitoring group said.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said Wednesday that according to its sources the March 4 strike had indeed targeted the jihadist's convoy, killing his bodyguards, while Shishani himself "was seriously injured".

The US official branded Shishani "the ISIL equivalent of the secretary of defence", using another acronym for the group.

Shishani was one of the IS leaders most wanted by Washington, which put a \$5 million bounty on his head.



Saudi could 'turn page' if Iran changes policies: FM

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia and other Gulf monarchies could turn a page and build strong relations with Iran if it respects them and stops "meddling" in their affairs, Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said Wednesday.

"If Iran changes its way and its policies, nothing would prevent turning a page and building the best relationship based on good neighbourliness, with no meddling in the affairs of others," he told reporters in Riyadh.

"There is no need for mediation" in such a case, said Jubeir, whose country severed all links with the Islamic republic in January after crowds attacked the kingdom's diplomatic missions in Iran.

Jubeir said relations with Tehran had deteriorated "due to the sectarian policies" followed by Iran and "its support for terrorism and implanting of terrorist cells in the countries of the region".

Jubeir was speaking after a meeting of Gulf foreign ministers and their counterparts from Jordan and Morocco. In a joint statement, ministers meeting in Riyadh urged Iran to respect UN resolution 2231 which endorsed the nuclear deal and included curbs on ballistic missiles, as Tehran defiantly fired two more missiles on Wednesday.

Missile tests don't violate nuke deal

Insists Iran amid US warning

AGENCIES

Iran's foreign ministry insisted yesterday that the missile tests carried out by the country's Revolutionary Guard this week do not violate Tehran's nuclear deal with world powers or a UN Security Council resolution.

According to ministry spokesman, Hossein Jaber Ansari, the missiles were "conventional defensive instruments and they were merely for legitimate defense," the official IRNA news agency reported.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard test-launched two ballistic missiles on Wednesday emblazoned with the phrase "Israel must be wiped out" in Hebrew -- a show of power by the Shia nation, long an opponent of Israel.

It was the latest in a series of recent tests, aimed at demonstrating Iran's intentions to push ahead with its ballistic program after scaling backing its nuclear program under the deal reached last year with the US and other world powers, reports AP.

Israel's Foreign Ministry condemned the launch, saying it did violate the UN resolution and that it shows that Iran "continues to dismiss the international community's demands and to develop its aggressive capabilities."



Lanterns from northern Japanese city Natori are illuminated during an event to pray for the reconstruction of areas devastated by the March 11, 2011 earthquake and tsunami, and mourn victims of the disaster at the Canadian embassy in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday, a day before the five-year anniversary of the disaster.

1,300 African rhinos poached in 2015

AFP, Geneva

More than 1,300 rhinos were poached in Africa last year, a record since 2008 when South Africa banned trade in rhino horns, leading conservation body IUCN said on Wednesday.

"The number of African rhinos killed by poachers has increased for the sixth year in a row with at least 1,338 rhinos killed by poachers across Africa in 2015," the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) said in a statement.

"This is the highest level since the current crisis began to emerge in 2008," the Switzerland-based body said. The slaughter has been driven by demand for their horn in countries such as China and Vietnam, where they are prized for their purported medicinal properties.

The horn is composed mainly of keratin, the same component as in human nails, but it is sold in powdered form as a supposed cure for cancer and other diseases.

Trade in rhino horns was banned in 1977 by the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), an international treaty created in 1973 to protect wildlife against over-exploitation, and ensure that trade in specimens of wild animals and plants does not threaten their survival.

S'pore 'still world's most expensive city'

BBC ONLINE

Singapore has again been judged as the world's most expensive city but costs across the world have been highly volatile, according to researchers.

The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) ranked Singapore as the priciest ahead of Zurich, Hong Kong, Geneva and Paris. London was sixth and New York seventh on the list that compares the cost of a basket of goods across 133 cities.

The cheapest were Lusaka, the capital of Zambia, followed by Bangalore and Mumbai in India, the EIU said. The EIU charts the expense of cities by comparing them to the cost of living in New York.

Although Singapore was the most expensive, the cost of living there was 10% cheaper when compared to New York than was the case in the EIU survey a year ago.

Researchers said they saw considerable movement in the rankings as cities coped with economic factors ranging from the strength of the US dollar and currency devaluations to falling oil and commodity prices and geopolitical uncertainty.

The EIU said India and Pakistan accounted for five of the 10 least expensive cities in the world.

Five shot dead in US family party

AFP, Washington

A shooting at a backyard barbecue in the northeastern US state of Pennsylvania has left five people dead, and at least two suspects are still on the run, police said yesterday.

Four of the victims -- three women and one man -- died at the scene while another woman succumbed to her wounds in hospital, police said in a statement.

Two men are in critical condition and a woman is in stable condition following the incident that unfolded at a home late Wednesday in the town of Wilkensburg, they said.

"The ballistic evidence on the scene leads police to believe that two different weapons were discharged from two different people," the statement said.

No one has been taken into custody and police were urging witnesses to come forward to aid their investigation, which they said was still in its preliminary stage.

Police said shots were fired from an alley and that when partygoers tried to seek cover in the home, someone on the side or backyard adjacent to the residence fired at the back porch, where all four deaths occurred.

The rampage represents the latest mass shooting to rock the United States, where such attacks have become commonplace. Gun violence is responsible for some 30,000 deaths per year in the country, with 330 mass shooting incidents recorded last year.

'Harem was 'school' for women'

AFP, Ankara

The wife of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday hailed the harem of the Ottoman sultans as "a school for preparing women for life".

Emine Erdogan's comments come a day after the president triggered protests by saying he believed that "a woman is above all a mother" in a speech marking International Women's Day.

Critics have accused Erdogan's government of trying to impose strict Islamic values on Turkey and curtailing women's civil liberties.

"The harem was a school for members of the Ottoman dynasty and an educational establishment for preparing women for life," Emine



Erdogan said at an official event on the Ottoman sultans in Ankara, according to Turkish TV stations.

President Erdogan has come under fire in the past for urging Turkish women to have at least three children and railing against efforts to promote birth control as "treason".

He and his wife regularly speak of their attachment to Islamic principles and the values of the old Ottoman empire, from the ruins of which the modern Turkish state was founded in 1923.

In the Ottoman period Harem was an institution with very strict, detailed rules, which even the sultan