

Nuke summit kicks off in US

North Korea, 'dirty bombs' in focus

AFP, Washington

The United States yesterday moved to keep pressure on nuclear-armed North Korea and reassure China over the proposed deployment of a sophisticated anti-missile system to South Korea.

After meeting with South Korean and Japanese allies at the start of a nuclear summit in Washington, President Barack Obama said there is a need to "vigorously enforce the strong UN security measures" against Pyongyang.

North Korea in January detonated a nuclear device and launched a long-range rocket a month later, the latest in a series of tests that have alarmed neighbors and violated UN resolutions.

The White House wants to keep up pressure on the North Korean regime, increasing the economic and diplomatic cost of ignoring international appeals to do-both its nukes.

Obama kicked off the nuclear security summit by holding discussions with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korean President Park Geun-Hye.

Obama will later meet Chinese President Xi Jinping, his only full bilateral meeting with the dozens of world leaders coming to Washington.

The specter of the Islamic State group obtaining a "dirty bomb" will also loom over the summit, which is the fourth of its kind. Nuclear material can be found in small quantities at universities, hospitals and other facilities the world over, often not well secured.

More than 50 heads of state have been invited to attend the summit, but the absence of leaders from Russia, North Korea, Iran and Belarus virtually ensures gaps in the united front.



French highschool and university students attend a demonstration against the French labour law proposal in Nantes, France, as part of a nationwide labor reform protests and strikes, yesterday. The slogan reads "We have a leftist party who deserves to be punched".

US, China to sign Paris climate treaty

AFP, Washington

The United States and China will be among the nations signing the Paris climate agreement in New York next month, the White House announced Wednesday.

Seeking to highlight areas of cooperation amid disputes over the South China Sea and how hard to push back on North Korea's nuclear program, the White House said both countries would take part in a signing ceremony on April 22.

The two nations will also "take their respective domestic steps in order to join the Agreement as early as possible this year," according to a US statement.

An agreement between Obama and Xi to tackle domestic carbon emissions was seen as a key ingredient of the global accord achieved at a summit last year.

The global accord sets a target of limiting global warming to "well below" 2.0 degrees Celsius compared to pre-industrial levels.

NEWS IN brief

IS urges attacks on German targets

AFP, Berlin

Islamic State posted pictures on the Internet calling on German Muslims to carry out Brussels-style attacks in Germany, singling out Chancellor Angela Merkel's offices and the Cologne-Bonn airport as targets, the SITE intelligence group reported. The IS images and graphics included slogans in German inciting Muslims to

Deadly blasts hit restive Thai south

REUTERS, Pattani

Several bombs have gone off in Thailand's insurgency-plagued south killing one person and wounding dozens in a new wave of violence, the military said yesterday. At least 10 blasts went off in Pattani, one of three Muslim-majority provinces in largely Buddhist Thailand, near the

Bomb attack kills 6 cops in Turkey

AFP, Diyarbakir

Six police officers were killed and at least 23 people wounded yesterday in a bomb attack targeting a Turkish police vehicle in the Kurdish-majority southeastern city of Diyarbakir. The attack took place a day before Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu was to

'Suicide bomber not one of Chibok girls'

REUTERS, Abuja

A suspected suicide bomber intercepted in northern Cameroon last week before she could blow herself up is not one of 219 schoolgirls kidnapped by Boko Haram in the Nigerian town of Chibok in 2014, an African public advocacy group said on Wednesday. The abduction of about 270 school girls by the Islamist militant group sparked international

'Hospital ward' serial killer nabbed in Italy

REUTERS, Rome

A woman suspected of murdering 13 patients in a Tuscan hospital in 2014 and 2015 has been arrested, Italian police said in a statement yesterday. Called "the hospital ward killer", the woman allegedly committed multiple homicides while working as a nurse in

UN doesn't know definition of terrorism: Indian PM

AGENCIES

In the backdrop of terror attacks in Brussels last week, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi highlighted the dangers posed by terrorism to the world and said the UN should address such major challenges failing which the global body could be rendered irrelevant.

During a summit with EU leaders in Brussels on Wednesday, he said it was unfortunate that the UN was still unable to define terrorism and act on a resolution which prescribes action against the countries which support or give shelter to terrorism.

Underlining that terrorism needs to be delinked from religion, Modi said the menace posed challenge to humanity and those believing in humanity should collectively fight it, reports PTI.



He said that terrorism cannot be defeated only by guns, but an environment needs to be created in the society to ensure that the youth are not radicalised.

He said that while world was feeling the impact of terrorism only now, India has been facing this menace for over last 40 years.

Referring to the UN, Modi said it has all means and mechanism to deal with war. But unfortunately the UN does not know what the definition of terrorism is and how to

address it.

"The UN could not perform its duty in this regard...if the UN does not address this problem, it will not be too far before the world body loses its relevance," he said.

The March 22 suicide bombings on the Belgian capital's airport and metro system loomed large over Modi's visit to Brussels for the 13th EU-India summit, with the premier saying his country shared Belgium's pain, reports AFP.

In a joint statement after talks with European Council president and European Commission president, the leaders condemned last week's carnage as "an unacceptable affront to our open democratic societies".

"The EU and India will remain united and firm in the fight against hatred, violent extremism and terrorism," they said.

'Be careful' in S China Sea

China warns US, slams defence deal between Washington and the Philippines

AFP, Beijing

Beijing's defence ministry yesterday warned the US navy to "be careful" in the South China Sea and slammed a newly signed defence agreement between Washington and the Philippines.

Earlier this month, Manila agreed to give US forces access to five military bases, including some close to the disputed South China Sea, where tensions have risen over Beijing's assertion of its territorial claims.

China claims virtually all the South China Sea despite conflicting claims by Brunei, Malaysia, Vietnam, Taiwan and the Philippines, and has built up artificial islands in the area in recent months, including some with airstrips.

Washington has since October carried out two high-profile "freedom of navigation" operations in which it sailed warships within 12 nautical miles of islets claimed by China.

Asked about a recent report on US patrols in the sea, defence ministry spokesman Yang Yujun told a briefing yesterday: "As for the US ships

which came, I can only suggest they be careful".

The agreement between Washington and Manila applies to the Antonio Bautista Air Base on the western island of Palawan, directly on the South China Sea.

Asked about the deal, Yang said: "To strengthen military alliances is a reflection of a Cold War mentality".

"It is in the opposite direction of the trends of the era for peace, development and cooperation," he said, adding bilateral military cooperation "should not "undermine a third party's interests".

Washington regularly accuses Beijing -- which says it has built runways on and deployed unspecified weapons to islands in the South China Sea -- of militarising the area.

Beijing denies the accusations and says US patrols have ramped up tensions.

"Now, the United States has come back and is reinforcing its military presence in this region and promoting militarisation in the South China Sea," Yang said.



The mother of Palestinian Ihab Maswadeh inspects belongings after their family house was partially demolished by the Israeli forces in the West Bank city of Hebron, yesterday. According to the Israeli military, Ihab Maswadeh was shot dead by Israeli troops after he attempted to stab an Israeli soldier last December.

PHOTO: REUTERS

US judge nixes suit against World Bank

REUTERS, New York

A US federal judge has dismissed a lawsuit filed by Indian fishermen and farmers who sued the World Bank over a loan for a power plant they claimed ravaged the environment.

The World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) is shielded by immunity and cannot be sued in the United States, the US District Court judge ruled.

The IFC loaned \$450 million to help build the coal-fueled Mundra power plant in India's coastal region of Gujarat, which became fully operational in 2013.

The Indian company that carried out the project, Coastal Gujarat Power Limited, a subsidiary of Tata Power, said it would create jobs, benefit 16 million domestic consumers and provide competitively priced electricity to industry and agriculture.

But fishermen, farmers and others living near the plant said it took a huge toll on the environment. Saltwater leaking from the plant made groundwater undrinkable and unfit for irrigation, hot water from the cooling system harmed the fish catch and air quality suffered, they said in the US lawsuit filed last year in the District of Columbia.

Their way of life could be "fundamentally threatened or destroyed," the complaint said, accusing the IFC of irresponsible and negligent conduct in financing and supervising its loan.

But US District Court Judge John Bates in a ruling last week said under the International Organizations Immunities Act, the IFC is immune to prosecution in the United States.

The World Bank and IFC have come under criticism by groups that contend their focus on big projects can disrupt the environment and displace people.

HOUSE RENOVATION ROW

S Africa court orders Zuma to repay money

AFP, Johannesburg

President Jacob Zuma flouted the constitution in using public funds to upgrade his private residence and must repay the money, South Africa's top court ruled yesterday, sparking calls for his impeachment.

The Constitutional Court delivered a damning verdict on Zuma's conduct after a swimming pool, chicken run, cattle enclosure and amphitheatre were built at his rural homestead as so-called "security" measures.

The president had refused an ombudswoman's orders to repay money spent on the upgrades, which became a symbol of alleged corruption and greed within the ruling African National Congress (ANC) party.

Zuma "failed to uphold, defend and respect the constitution as the supreme law of the land," Chief Justice Mogoeng Mogoeng said in a strongly-worded judgement.

The unprecedented rebuke came as Zuma fights back against separate allegations that a wealthy Indian family influenced ministerial appointments in a scandal that has rocked his government. Zuma has also been battered by the country's sharply declining economy.

But he retains a strong grip on parliament through his dominant



Drought-hit Somalia at 'tipping point': UN

AFP, Nairobi

The United Nations' aid chief for Somalia yesterday begged for cash to stave off starvation amid intense drought affecting a million people and to pull the war-torn country "back from the tipping point."

"Urgent action is required right now. If not, we risk a rapid and deep deterioration of the situation, as drought conditions may worsen in the coming months," UN Humanitarian Coordinator for Somalia Peter de Clercq said, appealing for \$105 million (92 million euros) for "life-saving" aid for more than one million people.

"Communities are already losing their means of survival. The time to fund is now, to come back from the tipping point, avoid a greater crisis and avert loss of lives," he told reporters in Nairobi.

The UN said that "malnutrition-related deaths" have already been reported.

Severe drought and conflict in Somalia caused a famine in 2010-2012 that eventually killed a quarter of a million people.

Stewardess also took selfie with Egypt hijacker

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A second 'selfie' taken with the man suspected of hijacking an EgyptAir flight has emerged on social media.

The image appears to show an air stewardess posing next to 59-year-old Seif Eldin Mustafa while he is wearing what is now known to be a fake suicide belt. She has been named as Naira Atef according to some reports.

On Tuesday, Mustafa held 72 passengers and crew members hostage on the flight from Alexandria to Cairo.

The photo comes after a selfie of Ben Innes, from Leeds, and Mustafa went viral on the internet and appeared in



many British newspapers.

The photo was taken after the plane was diverted to Cyprus, during the five-hour standoff on the tarmac of Larnaca airport. Innes, 26, said he can't explain why he did it.

Mustafa was arrested by police following the standoff. He reportedly told them: "What's someone to do when he hasn't seen his wife and children for 24 years?"

Appearing in a Cypriot court on Wednesday, he was ordered to be detained for eight days as he faces charges including hijacking, illegal possession of explosives, kidnapping