

# Iran must never be allowed to have nuke

## Says Trump during Israel visit

AFP, Jerusalem

US President Donald Trump travelled to Jerusalem yesterday to seek ways to achieve Israeli-Palestinian peace, but also used the visit to again lash out at Iran.

Trump's visit is part of his first trip abroad as president and follows an initial stop in Saudi Arabia, where he urged Islamic leaders to confront extremism while also criticising Iran.

Trump landed in Tel Aviv yesterday afternoon, welcomed by officials including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as he walked along a red carpet ahead of a brief ceremony.

He later travelled by helicopter to Jerusalem and, in remarks at Israeli President Reuven Rivlin's residence, launched his latest salvo against Iran.

"The United States and Israel can declare with one voice that Iran must never be allowed to possess a nuclear weapon -- never ever -- and must cease its deadly funding, training and equipping of terrorists and militias," Trump said.

"And it must cease immediately."

While in Saudi Arabia, Trump accused Iran of fuelling "the fires of sectarian conflict and terror" while calling for its international isolation.

Security was extremely tight for the Israeli leg of the visit, with police deploying some 10,000 officers.

The alleys and passageways of Jerusalem's ancient Old City, which Trump visited later in the day, were essentially under lockdown.

Ahead of talks with Netanyahu, Trump was touring two iconic sites in Jerusalem, a city holy to Muslims, Christians and Jews.



US President Donald Trump (C) sits next to Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (R) and Israel's President Reuven Rivlin during a welcoming ceremony upon his arrival at Ben Gurion International Airport in Lod near Tel Aviv, Israel, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

# Saudi summit was 'show'

## with no value'

Says Iran's Rouhani

AGENCIES

Iran's newly re-elected President Hassan Rouhani yesterday dismissed his US counterpart Donald Trump's summit with Arab leaders in Saudi Arabia this weekend as "just a show".

"The gathering in Saudi Arabia was just a show with no practical or political value of any kind," Rouhani said at a press conference.

In a jibe at the billion-dollar deals signed between Trump and the Saudi government, Rouhani said: "You can't solve terrorism just by giving your people's money to a superpower."

He said Friday's election in Iran that saw Rouhani convincingly defeat headline challenger Ebrahim Raisi had been a message to the world that Tehran was ready for engagement, reported AFP.

"We wanted to tell the world that on the basis of mutual respect and shared interests, we are ready to

# No time for Brexit delays

## Says UK's May as poll lead slips; EU's Barnier gets green light for divorce talks from June 19

AGENCIES

British Prime Minister Theresa May yesterday urged voters to back her to deliver the country's exit from the European Union, playing one of her strongest cards in the election campaign as opinion polls show that her party's large lead has shrunk.

A series of polls ahead of Britain's June 8 election have shown the Conservatives' lead over Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party has fallen to between 9 and 13 percentage points, well down on leads of 20 points or more before May called the snap election.

After launching her manifesto last week, including unexpected plans to reduce financial support for elderly voters, May returned to her core message, saying that Corbyn was not committed to or capable of securing a successful Brexit, reported Reuters.

"The deal we seek will be negotiated by me or Jeremy Corbyn. There will be no time to waste and no time for a new government

to find its way," May said, according to extracts of a speech that highlighted that divorce talks with the EU could begin 11 days after the election.

Meanwhile, EU ministers yesterday unanimously gave Michel Barnier the green light to start Brexit talks, with the Frenchman hoping to sit at the table from June 19 after Britain's general election.

Barnier said the backing of the remaining 27 countries was a further show of "determination and confidence" in what promise to be two years of bruising negotiations with London, reported AFP.

The former European commissioner and French foreign minister also warned his British counterpart David Davis against further threats to walk away from the talks if Brussels pushes a reported 100-billion-euro (\$112-billion) divorce bill.

Although both May and Corbyn campaigned last year to remain in the EU, polls show that May is more trusted to secure a good deal in talks with Brussels.



# Ready for mass-production

## Says N Korea after latest intermediate-range ballistic missile test meets all specifications; hints at its ambitions to hit US

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea said yesterday it had successfully tested an intermediate-range ballistic missile which met all technical requirements and could now be mass-produced, indicating advances in its ambitions to be able to hit the United States.

The North fired the missile into waters off its east coast on Sunday, its second missile test in a week, which South Korea said dashed the hopes of the South's new liberal government under President Moon Jae-in for peace between the neighbours.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un supervised the test of the Pukguksong-2, which confirmed reliable late-stage guidance of the warhead and the functioning of a solid-fuel engine, the KCNA state news agency said.

It quoted Kim as saying the Pukguksong-2 met all the required technical specifications so should now be mass-produced and deployed to the Korean

People's Army strategic battle unit.

Pyeongyang has defied all calls to rein in its nuclear and missile programmes, even from China, its lone major ally, saying the weapons are needed for defence against US aggression.

The UN Security Council is due to meet today behind closed doors to discuss the latest test, which defies Security Council resolutions and sanc-

### TENSIONS ON KOREAN PENINSULA

UNSC to meet behind closed doors today  
S Korea questions missile re-entry technology

tions, at the request of the United States, Japan and South Korea, diplomats said on Sunday.

The test could also alter the dynamics of Moon's plan to review a controversial deployment of the THAAD US anti-missile system in the South that is angrily opposed by China, which sees its powerful radar as a threat to its security.

"Saying with pride that the missile's

rate of hits is very accurate and Pukguksong-2 is a successful strategic weapon, he approved the deployment of this weapon system for action," KCNA said, quoting Kim.

The launch verified the reliability and accuracy of the solid-fuel engine's operation and stage separation and the late-stage guidance of the nuclear warhead which was recorded by a device mounted on the warhead, KCNA said.

The use of solid fuel presents advantages for weapons because the fuel is more stable and can be transported easily in the missile's tank allowing for a launch at very short notice.

The Pukguksong-2 flew about 500 km (310 miles), reaching an altitude of 560 km, South Korea's military said.

The South's military said the test provided more "meaningful data" for the North's missile programme but whether the North mastered the re-entry technology for the warhead needs additional analysis.



have interaction," he said.

Meanwhile, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman accused the United States of selling arms to "dangerous terrorists" in the Middle East and of spreading "Iranophobia" aimed at encouraging Arab states to purchase arms, reported Reuters.

"Once again, by his repetitive and baseless claims about Iran, the American president ... tried to encourage the countries of the region to purchase more arms by spreading Iranophobia," Bahram Qassemi said.

Sending a tough message to Tehran shortly after pragmatist Hassan Rouhani was re-elected president, Trump had urged Arab and Islamic leaders to unite to defeat Islamist militants.

# Flynn to defy Senate Russia probe: report

REUTERS, Washington

Former White House National Security Adviser Michael Flynn will decline to comply with a subpoena from the Senate Intelligence Committee investigating possible Russian interference in the 2016 US election, according to media reports yesterday.

Flynn will invoke his Fifth Amendment protection against self-incrimination, the Associated Press, Wall Street Journal and Fox News reported, citing sources close to Flynn.



The retired lieutenant general, a key witness in the Russia probe, planned to inform the panel of his decision later yesterday, the reports said.

The Senate Intelligence Committee is conducting one of the main congressional probes of alleged Russian meddling in the US presidential election and whether there was any collusion between President Donald Trump's campaign and Russia.

The committee first requested documents from Flynn in an April 28 letter, but he declined to cooperate with the request.

The US intelligence community concluded in January that Moscow tried to sway the November vote in Trump's favor. Russia has denied involvement and Trump insists he won fair and square.

Flynn was forced to resign in February, after less than a month on the job, for failing to disclose the content of his talks with Russia's ambassador to US.



Turkish Gendarmerie escort defendants Akin Ozturk (3L) and others involved in last July's attempted coup in Turkey as they leave the prison where they are being held, ahead of their trial in Ankara yesterday. The trial opened for more than 220 suspects, accused of being among the ringleaders of the attempted coup last year aimed at ousting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. PHOTO: REUTERS

# THAI COUP ANNIVERSARY

## Bomb blast wounds 21 at army hospital

AFP, Bangkok

A bomb struck a Bangkok military hospital yesterday and wounded 21 people -- one seriously -- three years to the day after the Thai army seized power in the politically unstable kingdom.

The small device -- which police said was potentially deadly -- went off near the VIP section of King Mongkut hospital as patients and their families waited for prescriptions, shattering glass and sending smoke into the corridors.

Hospital director Saroj Keokajee said the "low intensity bomb" injured 21 people, among them retired military officers. "Eight people were admitted to hospital to observe their condition... among them is one woman who needed surgery because of shrapnel buried in her jaw," he said.

Thailand has remained starkly divided since the May 22, 2014 coup, but dissent has broadly been smothered by a military with sweeping security powers.

While it was not immediately clear who was behind the blast, Thailand has a long history of bomb attacks on symbolic dates -- carried out by militant political factions or separatists linked to an insurgency in the Muslim-majority south.

Investigators said the bomb may be linked to two other similarly small devices that went off in recent weeks, one outside Bangkok's National Theatre a week ago and another left in a Bangkok bin in early April.

# Philippine ban on religious 'distractions'

AFP, Manila

Philippine authorities have banned hanging rosaries and religious icons off car dashboards because of safety concerns, prompting an outcry from the Catholic Church which insists they offer divine intervention on the nation's chaotic roads.

The ban, which will take effect on Friday, is part of a wide-ranging new law aimed at eliminating distractions for drivers.

These include talking or sending messages on mobile phones, putting on make-up, and eating or drinking coffee while driving, according to Aileen Lizada, spokeswoman for the national transport regulatory agency.

# China plays down Duterte claim of war threat

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday sidestepped claims by Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte that it had threatened to go to war over the disputed South China Sea.

Duterte, who met with Chinese President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Keqiang in Beijing last week, said Friday the leaders had raised conflict as an option to resolving their competing claims to the waters.

"I really said it to their face. That is ours and we intend to drill oil there," said Duterte, who claimed he made the comments public in response to domestic criticism he was being too weak with China over the row.

"And they told me: 'Well, we're friends. We do not want to quarrel with you. We want to maintain the present warm relationship. But if you force the issue we'll go to war.'"

China's government yesterday did not directly comment on Duterte's version of the leaders' conversation, but said it would "work with the Philippines to peacefully

resolve disputes through friendly consultation".

China sought to "deepen cooperation in other fields so bilateral relations can move forward in a sound steady way and also contribute to regional peace stability," foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying told reporters.

The rival claims to the South China Sea, which is believed to sit atop vast oil and gas deposits, have for decades made it one of Asia's potential military flashpoints.

China claims most of the sea, a key waterway for global shipping, and has reclaimed disputed reefs and installed military facilities on them.

Malaysia, Brunei, Vietnam and Taiwan also have overlapping claims.

An international tribunal ruled in July last year that China's claims to most of the sea were without legal basis, in a case filed by the Philippines under Duterte's predecessor, Benigno Aquino.

But China vowed to ignore the ruling and warned the Philippines against trying to use the verdict as leverage.

# FREE SPEECH PROTEST

## University students walk out on US VP

REUTERS, New York

Dozens of students walked out of Notre Dame University's commencement exercise on Sunday to protest a speech by US Vice President Mike Pence, who warned graduates of the prestigious Catholic school against suppressing free speech.

The protesters, among the thousands of graduates and guests assembled in the university's football stadium, stood up when the conservative Republican began his speech and streamed out of the ceremony, to the jeers of some of those who remained.

A few of the students had messages of protest attached to their traditional "mortarboard" graduation caps. One of them displayed an inverted US flag, a sign of protest popularized during the Vietnam War era, and the words "Are we great again yet?," a reference to President Donald Trump's campaign slogan.

In his speech at the Indiana school, Pence squarely addressed the festering controversy of what constitutes free speech on campus, an issue that has intensified at many universities since Trump's election victory last year.

"I would submit that the increasing intolerance and suppression of the time-honored tradition of free expression on our campuses jeopardizes the liberties of every American. This should not, and must not be met with silence," Pence said, in an apparent reference to efforts to bar him from speaking.

# NEWS IN brief

## Lanka switches foreign, finance ministers

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena announced his first cabinet reshuffle yesterday, switching his finance and foreign ministers. Sirisena swapped the portfolios held by Finance Minister Ravi Karunanayake and Foreign Minister Mangala Samaraweera in the shake up.

## Israel, India sign \$630m defence deal

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel announced Sunday it had reached a deal worth \$630 million to provide India's navy with missile defence systems, following a record weapons sale between the two countries last month. The new contract will see Israel Aerospace Industries supply LRSAM air and missile defence systems.

## Everest toll mounts to 4 as rescuers find body

AFP, Kathmandu

Rescuers on Everest found the body of a missing Indian climber yesterday. Three other climbers died on Everest over the weekend, one of the deadliest episodes since an avalanche swept through base camp two years ago, killing 18.

## Indonesia arrests 141 over gay party

AFP, Jakarta

Indonesian police have detained 141 men including several foreigners for allegedly taking part in a gay sex party at a sauna, an official said yesterday. Officers late Sunday raided a building in the capital Jakarta that houses a sauna and a gym, and halted what they said was a sex party promoted as "The Wild One".