

## 'Houthis target key port with boat bomb'

## Yemeni rebel missile shot down near Makkah: Coalition

RIYADH, July 29. (Agencies): A ballistic missile fired by Yemeni rebels was shot down late Thursday close to Makkah in Saudi Arabia, a month before the annual Hajj pilgrimage to Islam's holiest site, the Arab military coalition fighting in Yemen said.

The missile was intercepted 69 kilometres (43 miles) south of the city in western Saudi Arabia, the coalition said in a statement, calling it "a desperate attempt by Shiite Houthi rebels to disrupt Hajj", which begins at the end of August.

Occasional ballistic missile attacks, as

well as more frequent short-range rocket fire over the southern border, have in the past been conducted after coalition air strikes against the rebels in Yemen and is not the first time rebels have fired in the direction of Makkah.

Nearly two million Yemeni children are "acutely malnourished" and a "vicious combination" of war, hunger and cholera have left the country in desperate need of aid, the United Nations warned this week.

The alarm was raised at the end of a two-day visit by the directors of the World Health Organization, the UN

Children's Fund and the World Food Programme to Yemen, which has seen more than 8,000 people killed and 44,500 wounded since March 2015.

"The missiles continue to be smuggled in due to a lack of controls at the port of Hodeida," it said in the statement.

It said permits given by the Arab coalition for the delivery of humanitarian aid and commercial cargo were being abused at the port.

The Saudi-led coalition backing Yemen's government said Shiite Houthi rebels on Saturday used a re-

mote-controlled boat packed with explosives to attack the Red Sea port of Mokha, but without causing casualties.

"On Saturday at dawn, Houthi militiamen targeted the port of Mokha with a remotely guided vessel full of explosives," a statement from the coalition said.

The statement, published by the official Saudi news agency SPA, said the boat exploded by the quayside, without causing any injuries or damage.

"In carrying out such criminal acts, the rebels are disrupting the flow of humanitarian aid to Yemen, in particular

medicines used to fight the rampant cholera epidemic," the statement said.

Yemen's Shiite Houthi rebels said on Saturday they targeted a military ship belonging to the United Arab Emirates, part of the Saudi-led coalition fighting them in the country.

The ship, carrying military equipment, was arriving from Eritrea's Assab port, according to Houthi officials. It is the third ship belonging to the coalition to be targeted off Yemen's west coast since the beginning of 2017.

The Saudi Press Agency, citing a statement by the coalition, said that

Houthis used an explosives-laden boat, which struck the pier close to a group of ships at the Red Sea port of Mocha. It added that there were no casualties or any substantial damage.

Also Saturday, Yemeni officials said that forces loyal to President Abed Rabbou Mansour Hadi took full control of a key military base, known as Khalid Ibn al-Walid, near Yemen's west coast.

Clashes that raged over the base between forces loyal to Hadi and Houthis, who controlled it for more than two years, have killed dozens on both sides.

## O' Palestinians ...

Continued from Page 1

September in Jordan turning the Jordanians, who shared their suffering and resistance, into tools for liberating Tel Aviv. They are not different from al-Qaeda, DAESH and Hezbollah. They raised the slogan on liberating Arabs from the 'reactionary regimes' under the pretext that the next step is restoring Palestine.

Yes, the people of Jerusalem ended the Al-Aqsa Mosque blockage alone, not in favor of the Iranian Jerusalem legion which they have been waiting for 38 years while the latter had been busy swirling terrorism in the Arab and Muslim world. It has not reached them and will never reach them.

Khamenei, who once said, "If all Muslims emptied buckets of water on Israel, they would have drowned it," made his Mullah regime fill buckets with peanut deals with Israel; whereas the Basij and the Revolutionary Guard were fighting the enemies of Tel Aviv in their capitals under the guise of fighting for Jerusalem to mislead and camouflage their real action.

The slogans of Abdul Naser fell in 1967 and the resistance has been incorporated into the 'strategic balance' game and the 'suitable response in time and place' theory. It was disclosed lately that there were closed door negotiations in which the Palestinians did not participate.

After all of these, it is high time for Palestinians to be aware that no one in this world will rescue them and treat them justly as long as they make their organizations and blocs into guns for hire. They should know that their unity behind an internationally recognized leadership will relieve them of a lot of suffering.

When the people of Jerusalem took their decision, they were aware that "whoever covers himself with the quilt of others will get cold." Therefore, they opened the doors of Al-Aqsa Mosque with their perseverance alone. They did not gamble on anyone. They gambled on themselves and they won. This is what all the people of Palestine should know, that on their own, they can get their rights from the Israeli occupiers, especially since there is a general conviction in the world that the conflict has become Palestine-Israel conflict.

For them to reach their goal, they need to get out of disagreement and division; such that Gaza does not remain a mortgaged country for Qatari-Iranian interests, Hamas will not be a tool for the Muslim Brotherhood and the Islamic Jihad Movement will not be an Iranian branch.

All Palestinian factions should be dissolved under the Palestine Liberation Organization and Palestinian National Authority which alone can make them stronger. These factions should learn a lesson from the people of Jerusalem if they really want an independent State.

## Amir lauds

Continued from Page 1

In a press statement issued late Friday, the KFSD said that firefighters from five fire service stations have managed to extinguish the fire before spreading to nearby buildings.

It added that six firefighters wounded while fighting the fire and a probe was launched to unveil the causes of the blaze.

Earlier, KFSD's Acting Deputy-Director General Brigadier Mohammad Al-Mahmed told KUNA that the fire has damaged 2,500 square meters of the 4,000 square meter-building. (KUNA)

## Turks arrest

Continued from Page 1

Didim in Aydin province and then remained in custody by a court ahead of trial, the state-run Anadolu news agency said late Friday.

A Bulgarian citizen was detained with him but she was later allowed by the court to go free under judicial control. Her mother was also detained but freed without charge.

Anadolu said Joseph A.R. was arrested after posting pictures on social media allegedly showing himself in camouflage gear taking part in Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) operations in Syria.

Ankara considers the YPG a terrorist group and the Syrian branch of the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged an insurgency inside Turkey since 1984.

But Washington considers the YPG as the main fighting force on the ground in Syria against the Islamic State group.

The United States is now openly arming the YPG and the group is heavily involved in the US-backed operation to oust IS jihadists from their stronghold of Raqa.

The YPG has also attracted the services of foreigners -- many with no Kurdish family origin -- to fight against IS in Syria and Iraq. Several

## Syrian government troops enter last Islamic State 'stronghold'

IS claims deadly attack on US-backed forces

BEIRUT, July 29, (Agencies): Syrian government troops entered the last Islamic State group stronghold in the country's Homs province on Friday after jihadists began withdrawing, a monitor said.

Al-Sukhna, some 70 kms (45 miles) northeast of the famed ancient city of Palmyra, is the last town on the road to the eastern city of Deir Ezzor, where a government garrison has held out under IS siege since early 2015.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor, earlier reported clashes on the city's outskirts and said government troops were firing artillery and rockets at IS positions.

By early evening, the monitor said government forces had entered the southwestern part of the town.

"The Islamic State organisation has carried out successive withdrawals from the town," it added.

"Regime forces have line-of-fire effective control of the town after the withdrawals," said Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman.

He said the streets were reportedly empty, but it was unclear if pockets of IS fighters remained.

Since May, Syria's army has been conducting a broad military campaign with Russian support to recapture the vast desert that separates the capital Damascus from Deir Ezzor and other towns along the Euphrates Valley.

Already defeated in its Iraqi bastion of Mosul, IS is facing multiple assaults in Syria.

The US-backed Syrian Defence Forces now control more than half of its most important remaining stronghold Raqqa.

Islamic State militants have carried out a deadly attack on US-backed forces in Syria, killing and wounding many fighters and civilians, Syrian monitors and an IS-linked media outlet said Friday.

The assault took place on Thursday near the northern city of Raqqa -- the Islamic State group's de facto capital, where US-backed Syrian fighters are battling to rout the extremists from their stronghold.

The Syrian Democratic Forces have captured wide areas from IS in northern Syria since late last year, and on June 6, the US-backed forces launched an offensive to capture the city of Raqqa. The fighting recently has been concentrated inside the city but IS staged Thursday's surprise attack on a village about 17 kms (11 miles) away from Raqqa.

The Amaq news agency said the attack killed 53 SDF members and damaged two armored vehicles. It added that IS fighters returned to their base safely afterward.

Nisreen Abdullah, a spokeswoman

have lost their lives.

According to the Hurriyet daily, the Briton said in his statement to police investigators that he spent three months in Syria providing medical assistance to the YPG.

He said was trained on the use of weapons by the YPG but never took part in any clashes, Hurriyet reported.

The BBC said the man is ex-soldier Joe Robinson, 24, from the northern English city of Leeds and the Bulgarian his fiancée Mira Rojkan.

Robinson had previously described his experiences with the YPG in media interviews, including with the Guardian.

Anadolu said that Turkish police launched the raid to arrest him after receiving a tip-off by email.

"They arrested us on the beach while we were vacationing with my mother," Rojkan told the Guardian in a message.

## Senior Kurd

Continued from Page 1

this is not the right time, my question to them is when is the right time? ... When ISIS invaded parts of Iraq and attacked Kurdistan, once again we were told it's time of war so it's not the right time. Now that ISIS is on the verge of collapse we are again being told it is not the right time," he said.

While saying it appreciated the "legitimate aspirations" of the people of Iraqi Kurdistan, the State Department said last month it supports a "unified, federal, stable and democratic Iraq" and had voiced its concerns to Kurdish



This picture released by the official website of the Iranian Defense Ministry on July 27, claims to show the Simorgh satellite-carrying rocket at Imam Khomeini National Space Center in an undisclosed location, Iran. (AP)

## 'We must face the threat together'

## SEA states vow cooperation on IS threat

MANADO, Indonesia, July 29, (RTRS): Southeast Asian nations will cooperate more closely with intelligence and law enforcement authorities from the Middle East amid "grave concerns" about an elevated threat from Islamic State (IS) in the region.

Representatives from four Southeast Asian nations, Australia and New Zealand met in the Indonesian city of Manado on Saturday to develop a response to the increased danger posed by IS, highlighted by the occupation of parts of the southern Philippines city of Marawi by militants owing allegiance to the group.

The battle has sparked alarm that as IS suffers reversals in Iraq and Syria, it is seeking to create a stronghold in the region, buttressed by Southeast Asian fighters returning from the Middle East and other militants inspired by the ultra-radi-

cal group and the Marawi conflict. Describing the regional threat from Islamist militants as growing and rapidly evolving, a joint statement by the participants called for enhanced information sharing, as well as cooperation on border control, deradicalisation, law reform and countering Islamists' prolific use of social media to plan attacks and lure recruits.

"We must face the threat together," said Wiranto, Indonesia's coordinating minister for security.

The meeting was co-hosted by Indonesia and Australia. The other participants were Malaysia, the Philippines, Brunei and New Zealand.

The main initiative was a law enforcement dialogue to be co-hosted by the Indonesian and Australian police forces in August bringing together key stakeholders affected by IS.

with the US-backed SDF, said IS has been carrying out attacks against the SDF but strongly denied the high number of casualties given by Amaq.

"DAESH is trying to boost the morale of its fighters," Abdullah said by telephone from northern Syria, using the Arabic acronym for IS.

"DAESH is facing collapse," she added, referring to the loss of the group of almost half of Raqqa in the

authorities. The Kurds have been seeking an independent state since at least the end of World War One, when colonial powers divided up the Middle East, but their territory ended up split between modern-day Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran.

Meanwhile, high-ranking Iraqi security officials say up to 7,000 Islamic State group affiliates remain in Iraq after the fall of Mosul, where the group's leader declared the self-styled caliphate three years ago.

Three intelligence and defense officials also told The Associated Press there are an estimated 4,000 militants and 3,000 supporters who were employed by the group and received salaries.

In Syria, there are up to another 7,000 IS militants and 5,000 supporters, they say.

The officials spoke to the AP on condition of anonymity because they are not authorized to speak to the media.

On July 10, Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi declared the liberation of Mosul, after nine months of highly destructive warfare. IS swept into Mosul in summer 2014 when it conquered much of northern and western Iraq. The extremists declared a caliphate and governed according to a harsh and violent interpretation of Islamic law. The militants rounded up their opponents and killed them en masse, often documenting the massacres with video and photos.

Two days after the declaration of Mosul liberation, Army Lt Gen Stephen Townsend, commander of the

leave the eastern suburbs known as eastern Ghouta.

Members of the powerful Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham militant alliance -- Arabic for Levant Liberation Committee -- shot toward the protesters but did not cause any casualties among them, according to the Observatory and Ghouta-based activist Anas al-Dimashqi.

The al-Qaeda faction is also known as HTS.

of its potential use in ballistic missile development.

A joint statement on Friday from the United States, France, Germany and Britain said the launch was inconsistent with a UN Security Council resolution calling on Iran not to conduct such tests.

The US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control imposed sanctions on six Iranian firms owned or controlled by the Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group. The move enables the US government to block any company property under its jurisdiction and prevents US citizens from doing business with the firms.

"These sanctions ... underscore the United States' deep concerns with Iran's continued development and testing of ballistic missiles and other provocative behavior," Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said in a statement.

Iran, US trade blame

Tehran and Washington Saturday accused each other's naval forces of provocative maneuvers in the Gulf that culminated in a US helicopter firing warning flares at Iranian vessels, the latest close encounter between the countries in recent months.

The US Navy said it had reacted to unresponsive vessels belonging to the Revolutionary Guards closing in on American ships at high speed, a charge denied by Iran, which described the American move as unprovoked.

"At 4 pm (1130 GMT) on Friday, the supercarrier USS Nimitz and its accompanying warship, while being monitored by the Guards' frigates,

of its potential use in ballistic missile development.

A joint statement on Friday from the United States, France, Germany and Britain said the launch was inconsistent with a UN Security Council resolution calling on Iran not to conduct such tests.

The US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control imposed sanctions on six Iranian firms owned or controlled by the Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group. The move enables the US government to block any company property under its jurisdiction and prevents US citizens from doing business with the firms.

"These sanctions ... underscore the United States' deep concerns with Iran's continued development and testing of ballistic missiles and other provocative behavior," Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said in a statement.

Iran, US trade blame

Tehran and Washington Saturday accused each other's naval forces of provocative maneuvers in the Gulf that culminated in a US helicopter firing warning flares at Iranian vessels, the latest close encounter between the countries in recent months.

The US Navy said it had reacted to unresponsive vessels belonging to the Revolutionary Guards closing in on American ships at high speed, a charge denied by Iran, which described the American move as unprovoked.

"At 4 pm (1130 GMT) on Friday, the supercarrier USS Nimitz and its accompanying warship, while being monitored by the Guards' frigates,

of its potential use in ballistic missile development.

A joint statement on Friday from the United States, France, Germany and Britain said the launch was inconsistent with a UN Security Council resolution calling on Iran not to conduct such tests.

The US Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control imposed sanctions on six Iranian firms owned or controlled by the Shahid Hemmat Industrial Group. The move enables the US government to block any company property under its jurisdiction and prevents US citizens from doing business with the firms.

flew a helicopter near the Resalat oil and gas platform and approached the force's ships," the Guards said.

## Qatar seeks

Continued from Page 1

in favor and no vetoes. Efforts by Kuwait to mediate in the dispute have so far yielded little progress.

The boycotting countries want Qatar to cut back ties with Iran, close a Turkish military base in Qatar and shut the Al-Jazeera TV channel.

"We want to solve this issue by dialogue and we are not willing to escalate and they need to retreat from all their legal actions," said Al-Thani, who also met with US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson in Washington on Wednesday.

The Qatar crisis is now at a "standstill", said US State Department spokesperson Heather Nauert late Thursday.

US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson met on Wednesday with Qatar's Foreign Minister, where they "talked a lot about the situation as it unfolds there," Nauert told reporters.

She added, "We believe now that the dispute is at a standstill."

"We've gone between periods where we have said that it is at impasse, at one point, and then there was some movement ... Well, now it appears to be at standstill," she noted.

Foreign ministers from Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Egypt will meet in Manama on Sunday, the Bahraini Foreign Ministry said on Saturday.

The four ministers agreed in Cairo on July 5 to meet again in Manama by the end of the month, the ministry added in a statement.

They had met in Cairo to discuss Qatar's response to a list of demands submitted by the four states, through His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In a joint statement after the meeting, they said Doha's response to the demands was "generally negative," and thanked His Highness the Amir for his efforts to solve the row with Qatar.

Qatar refuses to bow to Saudi-led demands to "outsource" its foreign policy to resolve the Gulf crisis, its government spokesman told AFP in an interview.

Sheikh Saif bin Ahmed Al-Thani, who holds ministerial rank, accused Doha's adversaries in the crisis -- Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Bahrain and Egypt -- of meddling in Qatar's internal affairs.

## Newswatch

Continued from Page 1

**Middle East** women's rights researcher at Human Rights Watch.

"These provisions ... are a relic of the past and the Middle East and North Africa need to ... leave it in the past," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Campaigners have said such laws condemn girls to a lifetime of sexual violence and domestic abuse at the hands of their rapist. (RTRS)

**DUBAI, United Arab Emirates:**

Thousands of North Korean laborers work in four US-allied nations in the Arabian Gulf, earning hard currency for Pyongyang despite international sanctions as pressure grows over its nuclear weapons program.

Officials and experts say North Korea's government uses that money to buy missile parts. Meanwhile, they say laborers in Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates face conditions akin to forced labor while eating little food and suffering physical abuse. (AP)

**WASHINGTON:** The House on Friday strongly backed a sweeping intelligence authorization bill that supports critical national security programs, including those addressing counterterrorism and cyberattacks, and takes a tacit swipe at President Donald Trump.

The vote was 380-35 for the bill that sets spending levels for national intelligence programs slightly below the amount sought by President Donald Trump. The amount is not disclosed. (AP)

**ANNAPOLIS, Md:** A three-term Maryland Democrat who is one of the wealthiest members of Congress is the first to announce he'll seek his party's nomination to challenge President Donald Trump in 2020.

Rep John Delaney said Friday that he would seek the presidency, rather than the Maryland governorship or re-election to his House seat in 2018.

In doing so, he swiftly criticized Trump's efforts to dismantle the healthcare overhaul passed under President Barack Obama as "the most recent example of their brand of destructive partisanship." (AP)