



**S Korean speaker
visits Jaber
Bridge work site**



**Trump, Xi meet
again in shadow
of missile strikes**



**Olympic champ
Sumgong fails
drug test**



150 FiIs

RUSSIA 'FURIOUS' AS US FIRES MISSILES ON SYRIA

KUWAIT, GCC STATES SUPPORT US STRIKE



Min 20°
Max 32°



In this image released by the US Navy, the guided-missile destroyer USS Porter conducts strike operations while in the Mediterranean Sea yesterday. — AFP

PALM BEACH, Fla./MOSCOW/BEIRUT: The United States fired cruise missiles yesterday at a Syrian airbase from which President Donald Trump said a deadly chemical weapons attack had been launched, the first direct US assault on the government of Bashar Al-Assad in six years of civil war.

In the biggest foreign policy decision of his presidency so far, Trump ordered the step his predecessor Barack Obama never took: Directly targeting the Syrian military for its suspected role in a poison gas attack that killed at least 70 people.

That catapulted Washington into confrontation with Russia, which has military advisers on the ground aiding its ally, President Assad. The Kremlin denounced the strikes as illegal.

Meanwhile, Kuwait, along with GCC member states Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain as well as Qatar, expressed support for the pre-dawn US missile strike on a Syrian military air base, said to be the launching site for Tuesday's chemical attack in northern Syria where scores of people perished. An official source at the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry said: "The State of Kuwait, while affirming its emphatic rejection and robust condemnation of using various weapons of mass destruction including chemical arms, expresses its support for the military operations carried out by the United States of America targeting bases from where the chemical attack on the innocent in Khan Sheikhoun, Idlib, was launched claiming hundreds of victims and injuries particularly among women and children."

He affirmed all Syrian parties must be coerced to respond to international efforts for reaching the aspired political solution for restoring security and stability to Syria and halt spilling blood of the brotherly Syrian people.

Other GCC states, namely Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE took an identical stance. An official source at the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs expressed the Kingdom's strong support for the military operations carried out against military targets in Syria.

The US cruise missile strikes on a Syrian air base were one step away from clashing with the Russian military, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev charged yesterday, underscoring the risks in US President Donald Trump's first major foray into the Syrian civil war.

Medvedev, on social media, said the strikes were illegal and had been "one step away from military clashes with Russia." Trump has frequently called for improved relations with Russia which were strained under Obama, but the US president said action had to be taken against Assad.

US allies around the world expressed support yesterday for Washington's missile strikes on Syria, calling them a proportionate response to Syria's suspected use of chemical weapons. The strikes were denounced as illegal by Syria itself and its allies Russia and Iran. But a wide range of US allies from Asia, Europe and the Middle East expressed support, if sometimes cautiously, in similar terms.

"Years of previous attempts at changing Assad's behavior have all failed and failed very dramatically," Trump said as he announced the attack from his Florida resort, Mar-a-Lago, where he was meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping.

"Even beautiful babies were cruelly murdered in this very barbaric attack," he said of Tuesday's chemical weapons strike, which Western countries blame on Assad's forces. "No child of God should ever suffer such horror."

The swift action is likely to be interpreted as a signal to Russia, as well as to countries such as North Korea, China and Iran where Trump has faced foreign policy tests early in his presidency, that he is willing to use force. — Agencies

TRUCK SLAMS INTO CROWD IN SWEDEN; MANY KILLED

STOCKHOLM: A truck slammed into a crowd of people outside a busy department store in central Stockholm yesterday, causing "deaths" in what the prime minister described as a "terror attack."

"There are deaths, and many injured," Nina Odermalm Schei, a spokeswoman for Swedish intelligence agency Sapo, told AFP, without giving a precise figure. "Sweden has been attacked. Everything points to a terror attack," said Prime Minister Stefan Lofven. Pictures showed a large blue truck with a mangled undercarriage smashed into the Ahlens department store.

A spokeswoman for transport company Spendrups told AFP that the truck "had been stolen during a delivery to a restaurant." Witnesses described scenes of terror and panic.

One witness identified only as Dimitris told the Aftonbladet daily that the truck came "out of nowhere." "I couldn't see if anyone was driving but it was out of control. I saw at least two people get run down. I ran as fast as I could away from there," he said.

Another shopper, 66-year-old Leander Nordling, was at Ahlens when he suddenly heard a loud bang. "It sounded like a bomb exploding and smoke starting pouring in through the main entrance," he told daily Aftonbladet. He and fellow shoppers took refuge in a supply closet inside the depart-



STOCKHOLM: Emergency services work at the scene where a truck crashed into the Ahlens department store at Drottninggatan in central Stockholm yesterday. — AFP

ment store. "After that the building was evacuated ... There were a lot of guards who took care of us outside and they urged us to leave the scene immediately," Nordling said.

The incident occurred just before 1300 GMT at the corner of the store and Drottninggatan, the city's biggest pedestrian street, above ground from Stockholm's central subway station. Thick smoke was rising from the scene, while video images showed an area blocked off by police and crowds gathering around the police cordon. Police vans circulating in the city using loud-

speakers urged people to go straight home and avoid large crowds. The centre of the usually buzzing city was in lockdown, with the central train station evacuated and other shops quickly emptied of shoppers.

The Stockholm metro was completely shut down, with the attack taking place at the city's T-Centralen station, through which all the city's lines pass. Helicopters could be heard hovering in the sky over central Stockholm, and a large number of police cars and ambulances were dispatched to the scene, witnesses said. — AFP