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Yemen separatists drive out govt troops from two camps

UN envoy warns of threat of partition, resurgence of Qaeda, IS

Rebels withdraw from key area of northwest Syria



MAARET AL-NOMAN, Syria: Members of the Syrian Civil Defense (White Helmets) carry an injured man after removing him from under the rubble of a building that collapsed during air strikes by pro-regime forces in the village of Binin yesterday. — AFP

MAARET AL-NOMAN, Syria: Militants and allied rebels withdrew from a key area of northwestern Syria yesterday, a war monitor said, as President Bashar Al-Assad's forces pressed an offensive against Idlib region. Turkey warned Damascus "not to play with fire" after the advance saw government fighters almost encircle a patch of countryside including an important Turkish monitoring post. After eight years of civil war, the Idlib region on the border with Turkey is the last major stronghold of

opposition to Assad's Russia-backed government. Since January, it has been administered by the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance, which is led by jihadists from Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate. The region of some three million people was supposed to be protected by a buffer zone deal signed last September by Moscow and rebel backer Ankara, but government and Russian forces have subjected it to heavy bombardment since late April, killing almost 880 civilians. **Continued on Page 24**

ADEN: Yemeni separatists drove government troops out of two military camps in deadly clashes yesterday, reinforcing their presence in the south after they seized the de facto capital Aden. The fighting, in Abyan province, came after the pro-independence Southern Transitional Council (STC) partially withdrew from key sites it occupied in Aden earlier this month, and a Saudi-led military coalition - which backs the government - said it had "succeeded in calming the situation".

But yesterday, fighters from the so-called Security Belt Forces initially surrounded a special forces camp in Zinjibar, the capital of Abyan about 60 km from Aden - and a nearby military camp at Al-Kawd, Abyan governor Abu Bakr Hussein told AFP. He said the separatists then seized the Al-Kawd camp in fierce clashes, forcing out the 350 troops there, and that they remained positioned around the Zinjibar base following the exit of government forces in a deal mediated by local authorities.

At least four military personnel - two separatists and two government troops - were killed and 23 wounded in the fighting, said Hussein, adding that 1,100 troops had been stationed in Zinjibar. The spike in tensions between the separatists and pro-government forces constrains their cooperation against a common foe - the Iran-aligned Houthi rebels - in a war that has pushed the country to the brink of famine. Mohammed Al-Markhi, a commander in the Security Belt Forces - an outfit trained by the United Arab Emirates that is aligned with the STC - told AFP "we are controlling both camps now".

Residents in Zinjibar, meanwhile, said separatist troops were deployed in the capital's streets. Yemeni Information Minister Moammer Al-Eryani said in an earlier tweet that the Zinjibar base had been besieged. "The Security Belt Forces... are demanding the (government) troops surrender or they will storm the camp," he said. **Continued on Page 24**

US tests cruise missile after exiting treaty

MOSCOW/WASHINGTON: Russia and China warned yesterday that a new US missile test had heightened military tensions and risked sparking an arms race, weeks after Washington ripped up a Cold War-era weapons pact with Moscow. The US and Russia ditched the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) treaty this month after accusing each other of violating the accord. Washington said the agreement also tied its hands in dealing with other powers such as China.

The US Department of Defense announced on Monday it had tested a type of ground-launched missile that was banned under the 1987 INF agreement, which limited the use of nuclear and conventional medium-range weapons. "The US has obviously taken a course towards escalation of military tensions. **Continued on Page 24**



SAN NICOLAS ISLAND, California: This handout photo shows a flight test of a conventionally configured ground-launched cruise missile on Aug 18, 2019. — AFP

India's Moon probe enters lunar orbit

BANGALORE: India's Chandrayaan 2 spacecraft entered lunar orbit yesterday, executing one of the trickiest maneuvers on its historic mission to the Moon. After four weeks in space, the craft completed its Lunar Orbit Insertion as planned, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) said in a statement. The insertion "was completed successfully yesterday at 0902 hrs IST (0332 GMT) as planned, using the onboard propulsion system. The duration of maneuver was 1738 seconds," the national space agency said.

India is seeking to become just the fourth nation after Russia, the United States and China to land a spacecraft on the Moon. If

the rest of the mission goes to plan, the Indian probe will land on the lunar South Pole on September 7. To enter the final orbit over the lunar poles, Chandrayaan 2 will undergo four more similar maneuvers, with the next scheduled today.

ISRO chief K Sivan said the maneuver was a key milestone for the mission, adding he was hoping for a perfect landing next month. "On September 7, the lander will land on the moon. Whatever is humanly possible, has been done by us," Sivan told reporters. Yesterday's insertion was one of the trickiest operations in the mission because if the satellite had approached the Moon at a higher velocity it would have bounced off and got lost in deep space. And had it approached at a slow velocity, the Moon's gravity would have pulled it in, causing a crash.

"The approach velocity had to be just right and the altitude over the moon precise. Even a small error would have killed the mission," Sivan said. "Our heartbeats increased...

for 30 minutes, our hearts almost stopped." Chandrayaan 2, or Moon Chariot 2, lifted off from India's spaceport at Sriharikota in southern Andhra Pradesh state on July 22.

The spacecraft used in the mission comprises an orbiter, a lander and a rover almost entirely designed and made in India. The orbiter has a mission life of a year and will take images of the lunar surface. ISRO says the mission will help scientists to better understand the origin and evolution of the Moon by conducting detailed topographical studies, mineral analyses and a host of other experiments. About \$140 million was spent on preparations for the probe's mission - a much smaller price tag compared to similar operations by other countries.

It was launched on India's most powerful rocket, the Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) MkIII. The lift-off was successful in its second attempt, a week after it was aborted just under an hour from its **Continued on Page 24**



BANGALORE: Chairman of the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) Kailasavidi Sivan holds up a model of the Chandrayaan 2 spacecraft during a press conference at ISRO headquarters yesterday. — AFP

Facebook launches tool to let users control data flow

PARIS: Facebook, under pressure to ramp up privacy rules across its platform, said yesterday it was rolling out a tool allowing users to control data that it receives from other apps and websites about their online activity. The new tool is to give clients access to their so-called "off-Facebook activity" - fed back to Facebook with the aim of targeting advertisements - and give them the option of deleting it. "Off-Facebook Activity lets you see a summary of the apps and websites that send us information about your activity, and clear this information from your account if you want to," it said in a statement. "This is another



way to give people more transparency and control on Facebook," it said. **Continued on Page 24**

Tearful Tlaib says grandma advised her against trip

WASHINGTON: A tearful US Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib said on Monday that her Palestinian grandmother told her last week not to visit Israel under conditions demanded by the Israeli government. Tlaib said she had considered accepting Israeli demands to not engage in politics so that she could travel to the West Bank and visit her grandmother, who is around 90 years old.

"She said I'm her dream manifested, I'm her free bird, so why would I come back and be caged and bow down, when my election rose her head up high, gave her dignity for the first time?" Tlaib told reporters. "And so through tears, at 3:00 in the morning, we all decided as a family that I could not go until I was a free United States congresswoman." **Continued on Page 24**



ST PAUL, Minnesota: US Reps Rashida Tlaib (left) and Ilhan Omar hold a news conference on Monday. — AFP