

briefly

CHINA FM to visit SE Asia countries

Chinese Foreign Minister Yang Jiechi will pay official visits to Indonesia, Brunei and Malaysia from Aug 9 to 13, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang said on Wednesday.

Yang will make the visits at the invitation of his counterparts from their respective countries, according to Qin.

During his visit, Yang will also co-chair, with Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa, the second meeting of the joint committee for bilateral cooperation established between the two governments.

THE PHILIPPINES More than 1m battle floods

More than 1 million people in and around the Philippine capital battled deadly floods on Wednesday amid relentless monsoon rains, with neck-deep waters trapping slum dwellers and the wealthy on roofs.

Sixty percent of Manila remained under water and vast tracts of surrounding farmland were also submerged as the deluge stretched into its third day, according to the government.

"The roads in some areas are like rivers. People have to use boats to move around. All the roads and alleys are flooded," civil defense chief Benito Ramos said after surveying the megacity of 15 million people from the air.

VIETNAM US begins Agent Orange cleanup

For the first time since the Vietnam War, the United States will begin cleaning up dioxin left from the defoliant Agent Orange at a former US air base.

A US embassy official says the \$43 million joint US-Vietnamese project begins on Thursday at Danang airport, the site of the former US base in central Vietnam.

US planes sprayed Agent Orange during the Vietnam War to eliminate enemy jungle cover.

Dioxin lingers in soil and watersheds for generations and has been linked to cancer, birth defects and other disabilities.

JAPAN Cabinet won't visit Yasukuni

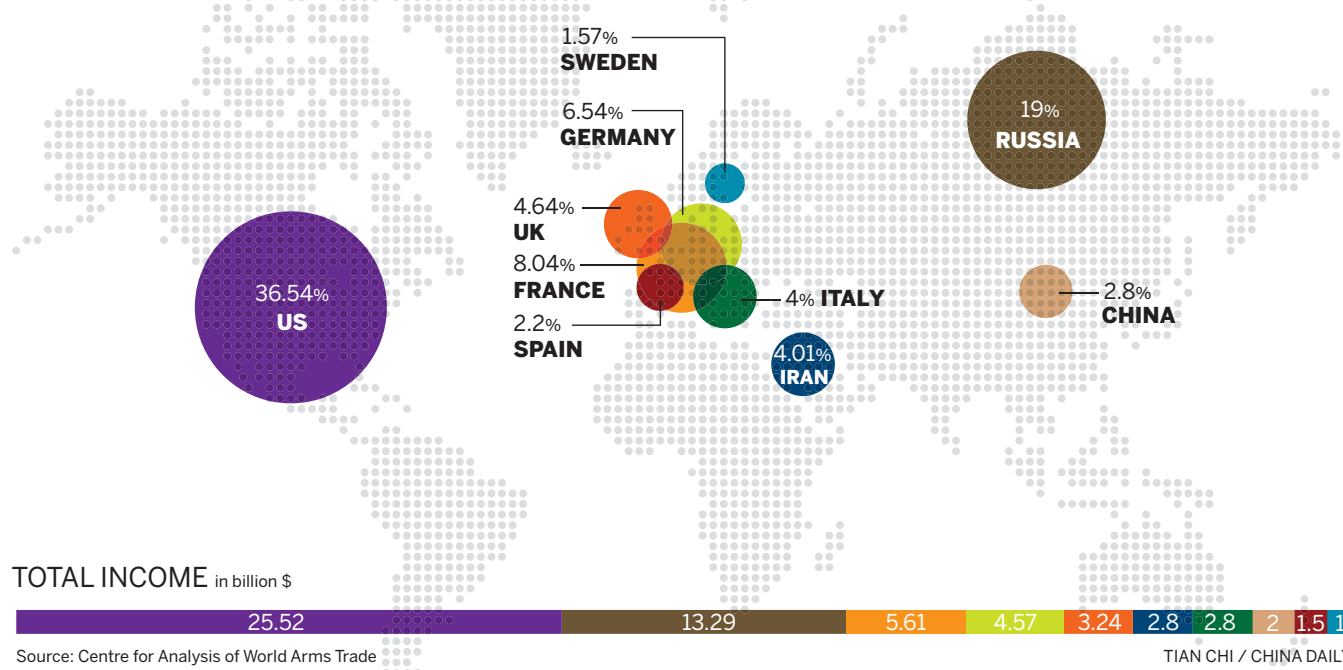
Japanese Foreign Minister Koichiro Genba said on Wednesday that Prime Minister Yoshihiko Noda and all of his cabinet members will not visit the Yasukuni war shrine on Aug 15.

Genba made the remarks at a regular news conference. He said the prime minister made the decision based on the feelings of neighboring countries and the Japanese people.

AFP—XINHUA—AP—CHINA DAILY

TOP TEN WEAPON EXPORTING COUNTRIES

PERCENTAGE OF GLOBAL ARMS EXPORTS



TOTAL INCOME in billion \$



Source: Centre for Analysis of World Arms Trade

TIAN CHI / CHINA DAILY

Global arms market hits post-Cold War high point

Experts say increase due to rising security risks around the world

By LI XIAOKUN and ZHOU WA

Despite the gloomy world economy, Chinese observers have cast their sights to a prosperous global arms market, which has hit the post-Cold War peak in 2012 according to a Russian report issued earlier this month.

The seemingly abnormal situation, driven by complex factors including turmoil in the Middle East and big appetites of international arms dealers, is likely to cast shadow over the already troublesome situation in East Asia, they said.

According to the report Russia's Center for Analysis of World Arms Trade issued in early August, global military equipment exports are to hit \$69.84 billion this year, the highest level since the end of the Cold War.

It is a 3.84 percent increase on the \$67.26 billion in 2011, which was already nearly 20 percent higher than the \$56.22 billion in 2010.

Increases in 2010 and 2011 were a result of weapon deals that had been delayed by the financial crisis that started in 2008, said the report.

Li Qinggong, deputy secretary of the China Council for National Security Policy Studies, said the recent surge is due to rising security risks around the world, especially turmoil in West Asia and North Africa, and escalating terrorism threats.

"Many countries, not only the ones in West Asia and North Africa, now feel more threatened. The traditional risks are still there, and new ones keeping emerging," Li said.

"Major weapon exporting nations are also trying to support the industry to stimulate the dim economy," he said.

Li said the trade had also benefited from countries worldwide updating their weapons.

Su Hao, an expert on political and security affairs with China Foreign Affairs University, noted escalating tensions in East Asia.

"Rising uncertainties in the region is also a contributing factor," he said.

Tensions on the rise

Tensions in the South China Sea have increased in recent months following a confrontation between China and the Philippines near China's Huangyan Island in April. The US and Japan have announced plans to help further equip the Philippine armed forces.

The Russian report said exports will hit \$77.5 billion in 2015, after a slight drop in 2013 and 2014. The peak in 2015 is due to "huge contracts" signed between the United States and Saudi Arabia and other countries in the Near East, it said.

"Turmoil in the Middle East is likely to maintain and even escalate in the near future, so it is not hard to understand Saudi Arabia's need to better equip itself," Su said.

"In another view Western countries also need a strong Saudi Arabia and other regional powers to balance their traditional enemies such as Iran."

According to the report, Russia is the world's second-largest weapon supplier in 2012, with an export volume of \$13.29 billion — 19 percent of the world market.

Russia had a good sales result, although it lost markets in Iran and Libya due to arms sanctions on the two nations and partly lost the Syrian market. It has also been crowded out of the market in Saudi Arabia by the US.

The Russian report showed France ranked third, with \$5.61 billion in exports, a figure expected to rise to \$19 billion by 2015.

France is followed by Germany, which has \$4.57 billion in exports, the United Kingdom with \$3.24 billion and Iran with \$2.8 billion. Italy, China, Spain and Sweden rank successively after Iran.

Hu Siyuan, an expert with PLA Defense University, said China's weapon exports are second-class compared with the world's leading exporters, "especially in the fields of material and sensing technique".

Li Qinggong said China sells combat fighters to Pakistan and training jets to other countries.

Japan relaxed its self-imposed decades-old ban on military equipment exports in December 2011, and the Philippines became its first consumer.

Japan is not a big player in the world arms market, but it is now trying to have a finger in the pie to help boost the domestic economy, Li said.

"But Japan may not manage to achieve that goal, as Washington will not allow it to sell weapons based on technology mainly learned from the US," he added.

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Egypt army airstrikes kill 20 militants, says senior official

By AGENCIES in Cairo and El-Arish, Egypt

Egypt's military killed 20 militants in a raid using helicopter gunships in Sinai on Wednesday, a military official said, days after 16 soldiers were killed in an attack attributed to Islamic extremists.

A senior military official in Sinai, who spoke to reporters on condition of anonymity, said "20 terrorists were killed" in Apache helicopter airstrikes and when soldiers stormed Tumah.

"The operation is continuing," he said. Other security officials in the north of the peninsula reported airstrikes near the town of Sheikh Zuwayid, close to the village.

Security officials say it is the first time that the army has fired missiles in Sinai since Egypt's 1973 war with Israel, which was an attempt to recapture the Sinai Peninsula.

Overnight, unknown assailants attacked four security checkpoints near the town of El-Arish, the officials said, wounding a conscript.

Officials say six people were wounded in the attacks — among them a military officer, two soldiers, two policemen and a civilian whose condition is critical.

Israel on Wednesday hailed

as positive the Egyptian military operation.

"The only one responsible for Sinai is Egypt, and Egypt will do everything in its power to deal with terror. Its success will prevent a bigger attack," Amos Gilad, a top official in Israel's defense ministry, told public radio.

The airstrikes came a day after the military held a funeral for the 16 soldiers killed on Sunday's attack by militants amid widespread calls for vengeance.

The soldiers were killed when Islamist militants raided a border guard base under the cover of mortar fire, and commandeered a military vehicle into neighboring Israel before they were stopped by an Israeli helicopter strike.

Security forces had raided homes on Tuesday in search of suspects in the attack, as they prepared to close tunnels to the Palestinian Gaza Strip used to smuggle weapons and militants as well as food and other supplies.

Israel had handed over to Egypt six "completely charred" bodies that were in the armored personnel carrier that was driven into Israel before being destroyed, said a medical official in El-Arish.

AFP—AP



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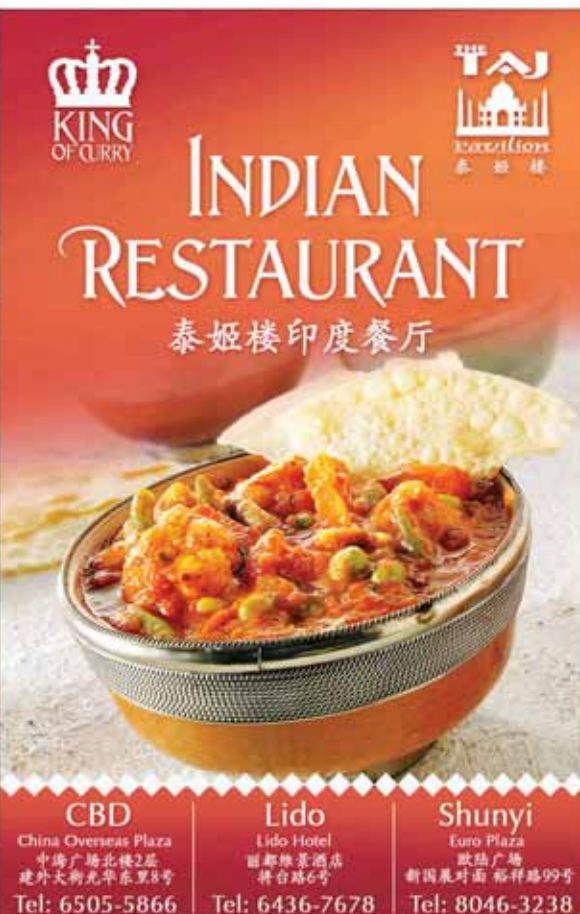
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