

World news



Catch of the day Kiyoshi Kimura, right, president of sushi restaurant chain Sushi Zanmai, paid a record \$3.1million (£2.4million) for a 278kg bluefin tuna – an endangered species – yesterday, as Tokyo’s new fish market, which replaced the world-famous Tsukiji last year, held its first pre-dawn New Year auction.

Taiwan backs British move for military base in South China Sea

By Nicola Smith in Taipei

TAIWAN’S president has suggested she would welcome a British military base in the South China Sea as she called for international help to defend the island from renewed Chinese threats.

Tsai Ing-wen’s comments yesterday came after Xi Jinping, China’s president, warned that Beijing reserved the right to use force to bring Taiwan under its control, but would first strive to achieve peaceful “reunification”.

Ms Tsai said: “We hope the international community takes it seriously and can support and help us.” If it did not support a democratic country under threat, “we might have to ask which country might be next?” she added.

Taiwan, a self-ruled democracy of 23 million and a key US ally in the region, is claimed by China. It borders the disputed waters of the South China Sea, which carries a third of global shipping and is the focus of disputes between Brunei, China, Taiwan, Malaysia, Indonesia, the Philippines and Vietnam.

Beijing, which claims the sea in its entirety, has alarmed the international community with a build-up of military fortifications in its waters.

The UK is making post-Brexit plans to beef up its presence, with Gavin Williamson, the Defence Secretary, revealing to *The Sunday Telegraph* last week that Britain would open a new military base in South East Asia. Asked if she would support a British presence, Ms Tsai signalled Taiwan would welcome “any actions that will be helpful towards maintaining peace in the South China Sea, as well as maintaining freedom of passage”.

Mr Williamson has taken a hard line against Beijing in the South China Sea, deploying British warships to send the “strongest of signals” to China on the importance of freedom of navigation.

Taiwan is not formally recognised by most nations, including the UK, but it is often considered by the West to be a democratic ally in a volatile region.

Moon offers China a new frontier for warfare

Beijing’s growing global network of space tech marks its emergence as a true rival to the US

By Andrew J Wight in Bogotá and Nick Allen in Washington

WHEN a Chinese spacecraft successfully signalled from the far side of the moon this week, the country’s triumphalist state media was quick to describe the achievement as “a huge stride” for the nation.

The deliberate echo of Neil Armstrong – and the Cold War space race he won – also carried an implicit warning: China under Xi Jinping, its unabashedly nationalist president, is rapidly becoming a global space power and should be treated with more respect.

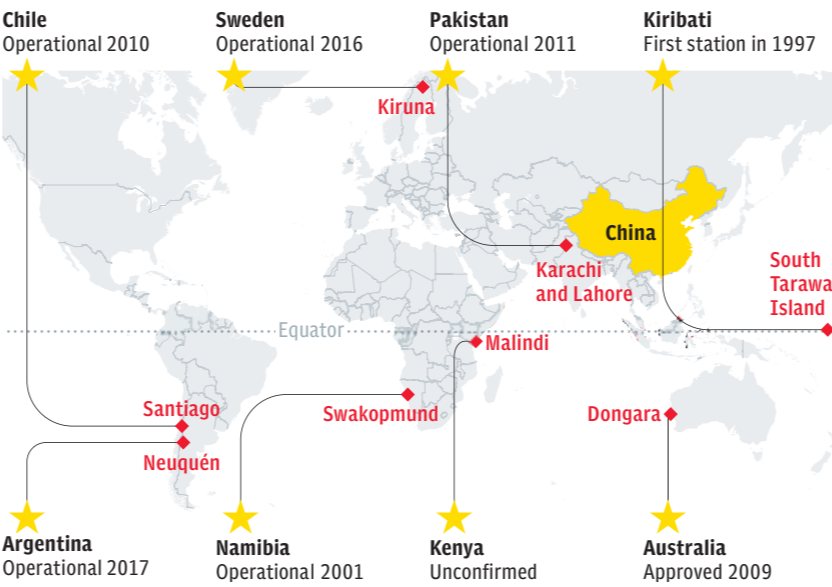
Underpinning last week’s achievement is a rapidly growing global

network of base stations and satellites, identified by *The Sunday Telegraph* across the world, that the Pentagon warned this year were part of Chinese military plans to make space “central to modern warfare”.

“It’s part of a more total Chinese effort,” said Bob Walker, the space adviser to Donald Trump’s presidential campaign. “This is an indication China has the capability to use the moon for military matters.”

Since China began its trillion-dollar “one belt, one road” infrastructure network in 2013 it has not confined itself to building roads, railways and ports across the globe – often saddling recipient countries such as Pakistan and Sri Lanka with billions of dollars of unsustainable debt. It has simultaneously invested in a space network that spans the globe with China National Space Administration (CNSA) ground stations in Australia, Kiribati, Chile, Sweden, Namibia and Pakistan. Kenya and

China's space base network around the world



Venezuela are thought to be among other hosts, but details could not be verified.

Among the stations providing telemetry for the Chang’e-4 lunar landing was a Chinese-Argentinian facility near the town of Bajada del Agrio where at least eight Chinese personnel are based.

Officially, China’s rhetoric on its space exploration programmes is benign, but military planners fret that the rapid development of its BeiDou global positioning system as a rival to the American GPS and EU Galileo systems heralds a new era of competition.

At the same time, China is investing in expanding its network of telecommunications satellites with Venezuela, Nigeria and Brazil all announcing joint projects last year.

The BeiDou system, which is due to be completed in 2020 with a network of 35 satellites, has both civilian and military applications, and this year Pakistan became the first Chinese ally to

be given access to BeiDou’s military side, according to *The New York Times*.

The move deepens fears that China is creating the infrastructure that will underpin a global web of strategic relationships to rival the post-war Western military hegemony.

“Space power is about soft power in that it feeds into nationalistic narrative internally and narrative of China’s growing power internationally,” said Adam Ni, China scholar at Australia’s Macquarie University.

Dean Cheng, an expert on China’s space efforts at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, said China was investing in big-ticket space projects that reflected its arrival as a rival to the US.

“When, not if, China puts a man on the moon that’s going to have a huge psychological impact,” he said.

“This has always been an example of American exceptionalism. Once the Chinese are able to do it, it’s no longer exceptional.”

UK activists take initiative to rescue North Koreans

By Jack Hardy

FROM a small office in a leafy corner of south London, two British researchers are directing one of the most dangerous rescue missions on earth.

Their work, unfolding far from their base in New Malden, supports a journey menaced by risk that begins with a dash across the North Korean border.

The Korea Future Initiative has become the first British organisation working to save fugitives from the world’s most oppressive regime.

For around £1,700, it is claimed, a North Korean can be evacuated from the parious hinterlands north of the border to a place promising freedom from tyranny, South Korea.

The money is used to transport refugees along a subterranean route from China to south-east Asia or Mongolia – where they can fly to Seoul – using a chain of safe house contacts. Covert

methods are necessary because the initial dash across the North Korean frontier with China, often achieved by wading through the Yalu or Tumen rivers, forms just the start of a defector’s ordeal.

Since 1986, the two communist states have had a protocol on security in the border area, obliging China to repatriate any North Koreans it finds.

The British team are therefore leading an unusual form of charity work, because, by its very nature, their efforts can result in the imprisonment, or death, of those they are trying to help.

Speaking about the secretive operation for the first time, Michael Glendinning, its founder, told *The Sunday Telegraph*: “It’s one of those things where any kind of compromise of security protocols could result in death. The basic premise is that the request comes in for support or help and we scramble to get the money together,

‘This money will bring this person to safety and give them the opportunity to create a new life’

transfer it to an individual in Seoul and they divide it out and pay what needs to be paid.”

Mr Glendinning and his colleague, who wishes to remain anonymous, have both worked extensively in South Korea, where they built contacts. Mr Glendinning also teaches English to dozens of North Koreans who have settled in Britain.

The Korea Future Initiative hopes to interview the people they rescue – many of whom will settle in South Korea rather than Britain – to build an up-to-date understanding of the human rights situation in North Korea.

Mr Glendinning said: “We decided this was the area we wanted to focus on because we knew that there was a really clear and defined impact. That this money will bring this person to safety and give them the opportunity to create a new life.”

Donate at koreafuture.org/donate.

Race to the Finnish as ships opt for the ‘polar silk road’ shortcut

By Robin Pagnamenta in Helsinki

FINLAND is cashing in on a global boom in demand for icebreakers, driven by growing maritime traffic through Arctic regions previously considered unnavigable due to thick ice and extreme conditions.

The new frontier of the “polar silk road” linking China and the Far East with Europe is pushing up demand for vessels and equipment able to cope with the extreme conditions, Finnish maritime experts told *The Sunday Telegraph*.

Retreating Arctic ice caused by a warming climate is permitting more vessels to use the shorter northern sea route to Beijing.

A total of 1,908 vessels made the voyage via the northern sea route during 2017, up 12 per cent from 2016, according to figures from Nord University in Norway. About 69 per cent of the trips

in 2017 were made during the summer months when there is less ice.

But growing numbers of vessels are making the journey during the freezing winters too. While 494 vessels made the trip during the icebound months between January and June in 2016, the figure rose to 596 in 2017.

Eero Hokkanen, director of communications for Arctia, a state-owned company which operates Finland’s ice breaking fleet, said: “Finland is a super-power of ice breaking.”

Speaking from the bridge of the new Polarix, the world’s first icebreaker to be powered by liquefied natural gas, he added: “This is the only country in the world where all of our seaports can be frozen in. So we need to keep them open.”

About two thirds of icebreakers globally have been designed or built in part or fully in Finland, including many of Russia’s fleet of 55.

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