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Russia, China veto West-backed UN resolution on Syria

bers on Thursday that addressed some of the Russian objections. The double-veto was inflicted following days of intensive negotiations aimed at overcoming Russian opposition to the draft resolution. "It is a sad day for this council, a sad day for Syrians and a sad day for all friends of democracy," French Ambassador Gerard Araud said after the resolution was vetoed. US Ambassador Susan Rice said her country was "disgusted" by the veto, calling the move "shameful". Mr Araud said Russia and China had "made themselves complicit in a policy of repression carried out by the Assad regime". But the Russian and Chinese envoys defended their decision to block the resolution which they called unbalanced, while voicing their opposition to



India's military build up may be too little too late?

INDIA: India's 1.3 million-strong armed forces, hobbled by outdated equipment and slow decision-making, are undergoing an overhaul as defence priorities shift to China from traditional rival Pakistan. And like a refit of the imposing but dilapidated defence ministry on Delhi's grand South Block, it's a plodding process. Defence chiefs are hurrying to modernise aging weaponry as China reinforces a 3,500-km (2,200-mile) shared, but disputed border through the Himalayas. It took 11 years to select France's Rafale as the favoured candidate for a \$15 billion splurge on 126 new combat jets to replace a Soviet-era fleet of MiGs dubbed "flying coffins" for their high crash rate. At the same time, feeling encircled as China projects its fast-growing naval power from Hormuz to Malacca, India is rushing to firm up friendships the length and breadth of the Indian Ocean. India is the world's largest arms importer with plans to spend \$100 billion on weapons over the next decade. "The Indian military is strengthening its forces in preparation to fight a limited conflict along the disputed border, and is working to balance Chinese power projection in the Indian Ocean," U.S. Director of National Intelligence James R. Clapper told the U.S. Senate this week. That "balance" includes a strategic alliance with Washington that in turn has

stoked Chinese fears of containment. It is due to test-fire its nuclear capable Agni V rocket in the next few weeks with a strike range reaching deep into China. In 2009, the air force reopened a high-altitude, landing strip in Ladakh, which was last used during a 1962 border war with China. Along with other Himalayan bases, it is now upgrading the strip for fighter operations. About 500 Indian MiG-21s have plunged to the ground since the 1960s, yet the jet is still in use, raising the question of whether painfully slow defence procurement procedures can come up with new hardware faster than old equipment is sent to the scrap heap. According to Indian media, Russia delivered the nuclear submarine INS Chakra on a 10-year lease at the end of last month, eight years after India first asked for it. A shortfall of about 200 planes means the air force is operating at its lowest level in decades – just 33 squadrons against a goal of 45. By the time all the Rafales are delivered, more MiGs will have been decommissioned. "It's taken too long," said Jasjit Singh, a retired commander and director of the think tank centre for Air Power Studies. "Can we live with a certain shortfall in the force, and for how long?" India is developing a fifth-generation fighter with Russia and aims to fly it in 2015, as well as a fleet of 272 Sukhois, half of which have already been built.



UNITED NATIONS: Russia and China vetoed on Saturday a UN Security Council resolution which backed an Arab League plan for a political transition in Syria as the violence continued unabated in the country. The other 13 members of the council, including Pakistan and India, voted in favour of the resolution sponsored by Arab and Western nations and aimed at ending the ongoing violence

in Syria. The vote was 13 in favour and two against (veto). Pakistan expressed regrets that the 15-nation council was not able to adopt the resolution, despite the consensus reached on the draft among its members. Russia and China also used their veto powers as permanent council members in October to block a previous Western attempt to condemn the violence in Syria.

Twenty five Bangladeshi illegal workers were arrested in the last seven weeks in several enforcement operations at businesses across the UK.

The UK Border Agency is now working to remove them from the UK as soon as possible, said a press release of British High Commission in Dhaka Tuesday. They had committed immigration offences including entering the UK illegally and overstaying their visas. The men were working illegally in restaurants and take-aways. These businesses now face fines of up to £10,000 for each illegal worker, unless they can prove that they carried out the correct pre-employment checks. "We will not tolerate illegal working, which undercuts wages and can exploit vulnerable workers. The UK Border Agency will target employers

who ignore the rules and remove people who have no right to be in the UK", said a UK Border Agency spokesperson. We're happy to work with businesses to let them know what checks need to be done on staff, but those who do break the law should know that we are out there looking for them and they will face heavy fines," the spokesman added. The illegal workers were arrested in enforcement operations by UK Border Agency and police officers in Worcester, Pontypool and Merthyr Tydfil in South Wales, Exeter, Paignton and Newton Abbott in Devon, Lincolnshire, Warwickshire and Southall in West London, the release said.

UK Immigration announces changes to a number of Visa types

As from the 6 April 2012 the UK Border Agency (UKBA) has announced that applications made to remain in the UK under Tier 1 (General), Tier 1 (Entrepreneur) and Tier 2 of the UK Points Based System will have to complete a language test before applying for the above stated Visa types. Under previous UK Immigration Rules, applicants were given licence to apply before taking the English Language examination as it was not easily accessible for all applicants. However, the availability of the English Language test has been widely increased and therefore, immigrants should now have an appropriate amount of time to undertake the test before submitting a UK Visa application. The UKBA has stated that applicants applying for leave to remain will still benefit from concessions for Visa applications that are received up to and including the 6 April 2012. Following this date, all applications must come with supporting evidence of an English Language test that has been passed and sanctioned. In addition to the changes, UK Immigration has also supplied a fresh list of approved English Language test providers that will support Visa applications made under Tiers 1, 2 and 4 of the Points Based System.

As from the 24 January 2012, the following changes were also implemented:

- City and Guilds test scores now show 'pass' and there is a separate English Language test for spouse/partner applications. Also the documents required for the application have been amended
- Education Testing Service has changed the way that the scores for their TOEFL internet based test compare against the Common European Framework of Reference. Also the test now includes scores for UK Spouse Visa and partner applications
- The web address for The Test of English for

International Communication has changed

- Cambridge ESOL (English for speakers of other languages) has amended the title of one of their tests from 'International Legal English Certificate' to 'Cambridge English Legal'
- Trinity College tests now have a two year expiry date

Once an application has now been made in a UK Immigration category that requires you to provide an example of your English Language ability, applicants must give evidence showing that they have passed an appropriate test on the list.