

2 hot news

Putin reaches into history to claim Crimea

● CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

While the treaty signed yesterday still needs parliamentary approval, that is regarded as a formality.

Reaching deep into Russian and Soviet history, Mr Putin said he did not seek to divide Ukraine further, but vowed he would protect Russia's national security from what he described as Western, and particularly American, actions that had left Russia feeling cornered. "Crimea has always been an integral part of Russia in the hearts and minds of people," he declared in his address at the Grand Kremlin Palace.

Crimea was part of Russia for

much of the past few centuries, until the Kremlin transferred it to the control of the Ukrainian Soviet Republic in 1954. It remained part of Ukraine when that became a separate country in 1991.

United States Vice-President Joseph Biden, in Warsaw yesterday in a show of support for countries unnerved by the Russian incursion into Ukraine, said: "Russia has offered a variety of arguments to justify what is nothing more than a land grab. But the world has rejected those arguments."

Mr Putin made clear that he would not be cowed by international pressure, which have included a series of

American and European sanctions against prominent political figures that were ridiculed as ineffectual after they were announced on Monday.

"Some Western politicians already threaten us not only with sanctions, but also with the potential for domestic problems," he said. "I would like to know what they are implying — the actions of a certain fifth column, of various national traitors? Or should we expect that they will worsen the social and economic situation, and therefore provoke people's discontent?"

He also rebutted the central Western argument that events in Crimea had been directed by a conventional military intervention. Mr Putin said Russia did not exceed its permitted troop strength of 25,000 soldiers in Crimea as part of a long-standing agreement on the stationing of the Russian

Black Sea Fleet in Sevastopol. There had also been no combat, he added.

Buoyed by the crisis, Mr Putin has vaulted past every line that the US and Europe have tried to draw in recent weeks. US President Barack Obama's sanctions froze assets and banned travel for 11 Russian and Ukrainian figures. The sweep of the sanctions was viewed as relatively modest, but Mr Obama has signalled that he might go further by signing an executive order that would authorise future action against Russia's arms industry and the wealthy business figures who support Mr Putin's governing clique.

"We'll continue to make clear to Russia that further provocations will achieve nothing except to further isolate Russia and diminish its place in the world," Mr Obama said. **THE NEW YORK TIMES**



WORLD UKRAINE ISSUE COULD MUDDY WATERS OF IRAN NUCLEAR TALKS 50

Keppel Club eyes fairways of other golf clubs

● CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Last month, the Government announced its decisions on the leases of various golf clubs. Keppel Club, which has more than 4,500 members, is one of two golf clubs — the other is Marina Bay Golf Course — that will not have their leases extended. The 44 hectares of land that it is sitting on is slated for residential development after the lease expires on Dec 31, 2021. The club has been offered an alternative site — the location of which has not been confirmed — to operate as a social club.

On Monday, the club held a two-hour dialogue with its members on the matter. The discussions got heated at times as the management laid out vari-



If you really want (membership for a social club), why not join another club? Keppel Club is a golfing club.

Mr James Quek
A KEPPEL CLUB MEMBER

ous plans it was considering. Members present did not reach a consensus on which option to pursue. Options overseas include golf courses in The Legends Golf and Country Resort and Tanjong Puteri Golf Resort, both in Johor, and the Ria Bintan Golf Resort.

Responding to TODAY's queries, a spokesperson from The Legends Fort Canning Park, which owns The Legends Golf and Country Resort, said the club has been approached informally. Adding that no official talks have taken place, Club Manager Amy Cheong said: "Some members from Keppel Club approached us in their personal capacity showing interest in a possible collaboration, but there is nothing concrete or official yet."

It is understood that a possible option is for Keppel Club to buy an 18-hole course from The Legends' site in Johor

and use its Fort Canning Park site as a social club.

Among the other clubs TODAY contacted, Laguna National Golf and Country Club declined to comment, while Raffles Country Club and Tanah Merah Country Club said they have not spoken to Keppel Club on potential collaborations. A Raffles Country Club spokesman added that there is "no decision nor intention to collaborate with Keppel Club for the time being".

Keppel Club members whom TODAY spoke to said they were not keen on a social club, as they bought the membership for the golfing facilities. Retiree James Quek, 65, pointed out that there are already several social clubs. "If you really want (membership for a social club), why not join another club? Keppel Club is a golfing club," he said.

He added that he supported a suggestion from members during the dialogue for the club to lower its monthly subscription fees and run down its reserves until the lease is up.

The club management committee said its position is "in line with the members' aspiration to continue having a golf course". "Keppel Club is historically and predominantly a golf club and our golf course is substantially utilised by our members," it said.

Nevertheless, it added that should it fail to acquire a golf course for its members despite all efforts, "we may have no alternative but to consider a social club for the time being".

While some members have suggested letting the club run down its reserves, the management said this will be the "worst-case scenario" that will not be "lightly considered at this moment".

The Manhattan FISH MARKET
ESTD. 1952

\$3.99
FISH 'N CHIPS

BEST DEAL IN TOWN
19 TILL 21 MARCH

Bedok Point • Bugis+ • Causeway Point • Century Square • Changi City Point • City Square • Hougang Mall • JCube • Junction 8
Marina Square • North Point • Plaza Singapura • Suntec City • The Star Vista • United Square • White Sands

MFM Singapore | www.manhattanfishmarket.com