

New N Korean missiles said to threaten US

REUTERS, Berlin

North Korea is deploying new land- and sea-based ballistic missiles that can carry nuclear warheads and may have sufficient range to hit the United States, according to the authoritative Jane's Defense Weekly.

In an article due to appear Wednesday, Jane's said the two new systems appeared to be based on a decommissioned Soviet submarine-launched ballistic missile, the R-27.

It said communist North Korea had acquired the know-how during the 1990s from Russian missile specialists and by buying 12 former Soviet submarines which had been sold for scrap metal but retained key elements of their missile launch systems.

Jane's, which did not specify its sources, said the sea-based missile was potentially the more threatening of the two new weapons systems.

"It would fundamentally alter the missile threat posed by the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) and could finally provide its leadership with something that it has long sought to obtain -- the ability to directly threaten the continental U.S.," the weekly said.

Apart from targeting the United States, South Korea (news - web sites) or Japan, cash-strapped North Korea might seek to sell the technology to countries that have bought its missiles in the past, with Iran a prime candidate, the article added.

Ian Kemp, news editor of Jane's Defense Weekly, said North Korea would only spend the money and effort on developing such missiles if it intended to fit them with nuclear warheads.

"It's pretty certain the North Koreans would not be developing these unless they were intended for weapons of mass destruction warheads, and the nuclear warhead is far and away the most potent of those," he told Reuters.

North Korea pulled out of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty in January 2003 and is locked in long-running crisis talks with the United States, China, Russia, Japan and South Korea over terms for scrapping its atomic weapons program.

The extent of that program remains unclear, although North Korea's deputy foreign minister was quoted as telling a senior U.S. official last year that Pyongyang possessed nuclear weapons.

Jane's said the new land-based system had an estimated range of 2,500 to 4,000 km (1,560 to 2,500 miles), and the sea-based system, launchable from a submarine or a ship, had a range of at least 2,500 km.

"If you can get a missile aboard a warship, in particular aboard a submarine...you can move your submarine to strike at targets such as Hawaii or the United States, just as examples. Whereas it would be much more difficult to actually develop a ground-launched missile to achieve that sort of range," Kemp said.

Until now only the United States, Russia, Britain, France and China have been known to possess submarine-launched nuclear weapons, although there has been speculation that Israel has a similar capability.

Jane's said North Korea appeared to have acquired the R-27 technology from Russian missile experts based in the Urals city of Chelyabinsk. It said one such group was detained in 1992 when about to fly to North Korea, but others visited later.

It said Pyongyang was also helped by the purchase, through a Japanese trading company, of 12 decommissioned Russian Foxtro-class and Golf II-class submarines which were sold for scrap in 1993.

It said the missiles and electronic firing systems had been removed, but the vessels retained their launch tubes and stabilization sub-systems.

NBR intelligence

FROM PAGE 12

about the income of a person to figure out how much one should pay in income tax and act accordingly.

Earlier on Saturday, the Income Tax Department of the NBR issued a circular detailing the power of the CIC which can summon income tax files, investigate them, check accounts, gather evidence and seize files that may appear dubious.

The CIC was formed late last year to monitor and probe irregularities in tax payment and it partially started operation after coming into existence. The CIC has started identifying potential tax evaders and are monitoring 35 large taxpayers.

The government has also expanded the large taxpayer unit (LTU) at the far end of the last fiscal in line with an IMF suggestion to prevent potential large taxpayers from dodging tax.

Injured Bangladeshi

FROM PAGE 12

apartment engulfed in flames. They extinguished the blaze within minutes, rescued Kanta, her daughter and in-laws and took them to St Joseph Regional Health Centre in Bryan. The four were later transferred to John Sealy Hospital's burn unit.

Fire investigators are working to ascertain the cause of the fire. The media reports on Friday and Saturday however speculated that the fire might have been caused by a gas leakage.

A&M spokeswoman Cindy Lawson said the residents of the apartment complex reported of smelling gas and called a housing maintenance worker Friday night. The worker did not find a leak, but shut off the distribution channel connecting Chowdhury's stove to the main gas line replacing it with what is called a flexible line, she said.

Elections

FROM PAGE 1

upcoming elections after considering the current law and order in concerned areas.

"We'll sit to discuss security arrangements and will ask the district administrations to take necessary measures to ensure peaceful atmosphere to have the elections held free and fair," Election Commissioner M Munsef Ali told The Daily Star yesterday.

The 15 municipalities that are going to polls are --- Thakurgaon, Nilfamari, Haragachha, Nababganj, Rahanpur, Meherpur, Monirampur, Sathkira, Kalapara, Daulatkhan, Borhanuddin, Charfashon, Kabirhat, Lakhipur, and Patia.

The EC Secretariat yesterday directed the 11 district administrations to stagger the polls in two days in line with the election schedule.

For municipality that is situated in district headquarters, additional district magistrate has been appointed as the returning officer (RO) while district election officer as assistant returning officer (ARO). For municipality in upazila, upazila nirbahi officer (UNO) has been appointed as RO and upazila election officer as ARO.

Local government election is officially held non-politically, but it turns out to be political, as local leaders and activists of different political parties' contest polls involving the parties' local units with electioneering.

Fema, Brotee claim Gazipur-2 by-poll fair

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Two local election-monitoring agencies yesterday claimed that by-poll election in Gazipur-2 constituency was fair, peaceful, impartial and free from administrative interference.

Brotee and Fair Election Monitoring Agency (Fema) placed their separate reports on the by-election at a joint press conference at the Jatiya Press Club.

Muhammad Abdul Matin, secretary general of the Fema, said except some stray incidents, the by-poll was peaceful, impartial and free from any government influence.

According to the Fema report, voters turn out was 52 percent while Brotee found it to be 53 percent. Brotee said average turn out of women voters was 25 percent.

Sharmin Brotee, executive director of Mused, said the by-poll proved that if the government and Election Commission want to hold a fair and peaceful election they can do it.

Out of total 195 centres, 98 percent polling centres was free from any violent incidents, 82 percent was free from fake votes and the administration played a laudable role at 90 percent polling centres, Sharmin said.

Although fake votes were cast at centre Nos. 140, 145, 160 and 158, most centres were free from the illegal practice, she added.

The by-poll also proved that the failure in the by-election in Dhaka-10 constituency was for lack of political will not for administrative incapability and inefficiency, Sharmin said.

Brotee engaged 120 poll observers on the polling day while the Fema deployed two trained observers at all polling centres.

Salma Ali, vice president of the Fema, chaired the press briefing and Borhan Uddin Ahmed, Fema's chief coordinator, also spoke.

Huge plan

FROM PAGE 1

very beginning of the flood.

The prime minister assured the people of all possible rehabilitation measures, including health services. Adequate doctors and medicines have been kept ready to tackle any post-flood outbreak of diseases, she said.

The poor people would also be provided with VGF (vulnerable group feeding) cards, she added.

Local MP Salauddin, Communications Minister Nazmul Huda, Prime Minister's Political Secretary Harris Chowdhury, M Mosaddek Ali MP, among others, were with the prime minister during her visit to flood-affected areas.

WFP plans

FROM PAGE 1

rice, pulse, oil and high-energy biscuits to three million people.

WFP Country Representative and Chairman of DERG Douglas Casson Coultis in a statement yesterday said: "We are getting strong indications that donors are prepared to be generous. These unprecedented early contributions to the first state of our operation enable us to get large amounts of food straight to the homeless and vulnerable people."

He, however, warned that flood situation may turn cataclysmic in mid-August when the next monsoon rains will be unable to drain into the water-logged ground.

Seven banks

FROM PAGE 1

corporate governance, insider lending, increasing amount of defaulted and fictitious loans and capital and provision deficit, among other things.

Sources at the BB said the banks were put under the early warning system as default loans of some of them were on the rise and some others had weak internal control and management. AB Bank had 21.45 percent classified loans against outstanding loans, IFIC Bank 24.19 percent, NBL 28.80 percent, SIBL 10.03 percent, One Bank 6.06 percent, BCBL 28.13 percent and Shahjalal Bank 1.65 percent till March 31.

Two of the banks have counted Tk 300 crore in losses in foreign exchange dealing, leaving one of the two banks without any operating profit last year.

HC asks govt

FROM PAGE 1

right to get speedy trial. To implement the verdict, it also directed the government to seek assistance from Blast and other legal aid organisations.

Advocate Syed Ziaul Hasan moved the litigation for Blast while Deputy Attorney General Adilur Rahman stood for the government.

The Daily Star in its December 23, 2003 report said as many as 155 inmates of Dhaka Central Jail have been incarcerated without trial for five or more years because the prosecution witnesses did not show up for deposition.

Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs Minister Moudud Ahmed told The Daily Star the situation is being monitored and the ministry 'would take measures' for the deserving accused to get bail after assessment of their cases.

India defers JRC meet

FROM PAGE 1

Committee of Experts (JCE), which works under the JRC, last month to discuss water sharing of the 54 common rivers including Teesta.

It is one year since the last JRC meeting took place in August 2003 in New Delhi, though the 1972 Ganges Water Sharing Treaty dictates four JRC meetings to be held every year.

Officials of the water resources ministry said they had written to their Indian counterparts several times urging them to hold a JRC meeting immediately but without any positive response from New Delhi.

Bangladesh very soon will send a reminder to its big neighbour about holding a JCE meeting, they added.

"We will write to them soon to reschedule the talk," said M Omar Faruque Khan, secretary of the water resources ministry.

The JCE headed by the water resources secretaries of the two neighbours has been working for the last seven years to find out ways for a permanent or long-term formula of bilateral water sharing of seven important rivers -- Teesta, Dharala, Dudhkumar, Monu, Khowai, Gomti and Muhuri.

"We are very much optimistic about resolving the issue at bilateral level. But our Indian counterparts are not in the right track and are not taking the inconveniences (their acts are causing) to Bangladesh into consideration," said a top government policymaker

asking not to be named. As the water flow in the Teesta, one of the major common rivers, in the lean season (November to May) has dwindled to 300 to 400 cusecs from 5,000 cusecs over the last few years, Bangladesh wants an immediate agreement to save its ecological balance and get its due share. Bangladesh's policymakers allege, since inception of the JCE in 1997, 'no significant progress has been made in resolving the water sharing issue due to the headstrong attitude of our neighbour'.

In different parleys of the JRC, Bangladesh has repeated asked for an immediate agreement on sharing the Teesta water in line with the provisions of the 30-year Ganges Water Sharing Treaty. But, India all through has maintained a shrewd stance saying, before reaching such an agreement, 'it needs a five-year scientific study to examine the water flow in Teesta'.

The Article IX of the Ganges Water Sharing Treaty said bilateral treaties would be drawn up for water sharing of all common rivers. Faruque Khan yesterday expressed concern at India's dilly-dallying, which has pushed the whole issue of equitable water sharing of the common rivers into uncertainty. He told The Daily Star Bangladesh wants joint management of all the common rivers as soon as possible, because, "it is a question of our survival as we live downstream."

30 million need food

FROM PAGE 1

moon and pressure of receding waters from upstream engulfed vast low-lying areas in and around Barisal divisional headquarters and other parts of the southern region, our correspondent from Barisal said.

Much of Palashpur, Amanatganj Char, Vatakhali, Balurmah, Christian Para, Sagardi, Rice Research Institute Road, Rupatali, Battala, Nabaganj and Dargabari in Barisal city are reeling under water.

Hundreds of panicked families in the lowlands criss-crossed by canals struggled to move to higher ground or take their valuables to safety.

The local weather office says the sudden flooding may rage through next 72-96 hours until the pull of full moon slackens.

The Water Development Board and port authorities are not equipped to measure water levels in runoff-swollen rivers, but experts say the Kirtonkhola, Bishkhali, Paira and Ilisha were flowing above danger marks.

Residential and commercial areas and farmlands, especially seedbeds, went under water.

LIVING IN FILTH

Homeless people waiting in long queues at a school compound in Old Dhaka jostled to grab cooked food and drinking water offered by local volunteers, Reuters quoted witnesses as saying.

"Hundreds of families crammed into the school shelter live a loathsome life with filth, stinks and flies all around," a witness said.

At Bosila on the capital's outskirts, CARE Bangladesh, the local arm of the U.S. charity, is handing out 20,000 litres of drinking water daily to villagers marooned by the floods.

"We collect water from the river and purify it at a portable treatment plant before distributing it among the

UN meets

FROM PAGE 1

the official death toll in the deluge yesterday rose to 628 with 39 overnight deaths, disaster management ministry reported.

Unconfirmed reports, however, indicated that the figure could be as high as 800 caused by drowning, snakebites, boat capsizes and landslides, apart from diseases.

Despite continued recession of water levels in most rivers, millions of people across the country were languishing in makeshift shelters or remained marooned amid crying need for food and pure water.

"In today's meeting we have assessed the extent of damage in different sectors caused by the deluge...but we are yet to estimate the total loss in terms of money," UN Resident Coordinator and WFP Country Representative Douglas C Coultis told newsmen emerging from the "closed door" meeting.

"We'll estimate the loss in terms of money very soon," he said when asked to comment on the initial government assessment that the current spate of deluge caused a loss of nearly \$6.6 billion. World Food Programme (WFP) estimated the damage to be worth \$7 billion.

The meeting of the DERG or local consultative group of the donors came a few days after the UN announced that it would launch an international appeal for the 30 million flood victims of Bangladesh.

Meeting sources said World Health Organisation (Who) and other health-related organisations projected a "severe" health situation during the post-flood period, saying the waterborne and other diseases were likely to claim lives of thousands unless urgent precautions were taken.

JOURNALIST MURDER

Criminals' release sparks surprise

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Khulna

The release of two alleged criminals from the custody of detectives in Khulna four hours after arrest on Sunday afternoon prompted sharp reactions from senior police officers and other people.

Witnesses said a team of detectives arrested Bachchu, 38, and Kamal, 34, bodyguards of Asaduzzaman Litu, main chargesheeted accused in the Dainik Janakantha journalist Shamsur Rahman murder case, and seized a revolver from Bachchu.

"I have opened a probe into the allegation of releasing the two," said Deputy Commissioner (South) Akbar Ali of Khulna Metropolitan Police.

Officer-in-Charge Mosharef Hossain of Khulna Police Station said he was aware of the allegation and added: "I received many phone calls about the allegation."

Locals lynch 'mugger', beat his accomplice in Sutrapur

Shop owner stabbed

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

Angry locals yesterday pounded to death an alleged mugger and severely beat his accomplice at Sutrapur in the capital.

A mob held Halim Khan, 18, and his associate Abbas on Pyaridas Road at around 1:45am soon after a local milk vendor raised alarm as a gang of four muggers snatched his cash, witnesses said.

The enraged crowd punched the pair before police rescued them 45 minutes later, they added.

They were admitted to Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) where Halim died at around 5:00am, police said.

Claiming her son innocent, the victim's mother Rabeya Begum said Halim was a vegetable vendor and was going to Shyambazar during the incident.

In another incident, muggers stabbed Mohammad Biplob, a tailoring shop owner, and looted Tk 6000 from him at Malibagh in Khilgaon at around 3:00pm yesterday. He was undergoing treatment at the DMCH.

"Local criminals Mahibul, Nabi, Nasir, Ripon waylaid me in front of Malibagh Community Centre and looted the cash after stabbing me indiscriminately," Biplob claimed.

Students block Dhaka-Ctg highway for 2 hours

STAFF CORRESPONDENT, Ctg

Transport workers yesterday allegedly pushed out a private university student from a running bus, prompting sophomores to put up barricade on Dhaka-Chittagong highway at Sitakunda in Chittagong.

Refusing to drop Mohammad Parvez, a first year student of law at International Islamic University, Chittagong (IIUC), near the university's Kumira campus, helper of an Uttara Paribahan inter-district bus pushed him out of the speeding vehicle at around noon, witnesses said.

Parvez was seriously injured in the incident, they added. Hearing the incident, IIUC students went on the rampage and blocked the highway at around 1:00pm.

Agitating students removed the barricade at around 3:00pm following a meeting among the university authorities, local administration and transport workers.

The meeting decided to construct a speed-breaker on the road and set up a bus stop in front of IIUC's permanent campus in Kumira, sources said.

Illegal

FROM PAGE 1

As the DCC bulldozer and policemen entered the narrow lane at about 2:15pm, dozens of BNP adherents blocked their way, locals said.

"We have helped Falu Bhai (Dhaka-10 lawmaker Mosaddek Ali Falu) win the recent election and we'll not allow you to demolish our office, which was established in 1992," local BNP leader Rafiqul Islam told the officer-in-charge of Tejaogaon Police Station before the DCC team went into action.

JP activists 'mildly' protested the demolition drive. However, no BCL activist was present during the incident, locals added.

More than 50 ruling party leaders led by Helaluddin, vice-president of BNP's Ward No. 39, chanted slogans against the complex's owners and lay down on the street in front of the bulldozer to revoke the DCC drive. Police, however, cleared the road without using any force and the demolition work began at around 3:00pm.

The assistant estate officer said, "Although the DCC has postponed all eviction drives in the city for an indefinite period way to the recent flood, we had to clear the spot today as Bashundhara City would be inaugurated on August 5."

US oil strikes

FROM PAGE 12

Saudi Arabia has said it would produce 9.5 million barrels per day (bpd) in August, which would be just one million bpd below the country's full capacity.

Purnomo's comments echoed those Monday of Algerian Oil Minister Chakib Khelil, who said OPEC had done all it could to stop this year's oil price rally.

"OPEC can do nothing," Khelil told reporters in Algiers.

Bailiffs have given Russia's largest oil company, YUKOS, one month to pay back taxes, but the company said Monday that the Tax Ministry had begun an investigation into its 2002 accounts.

YUKOS owes almost \$7 billion in back taxes for 2000 and 2001 and analysts have said any bills for later years could bring the total toward \$10 billion.

It pumps one fifth of production in Russia, the No.2 supplier after Saudi Arabia, but has had its bank accounts and assets frozen, raising fears that its

IDA okays \$200m dev loans

UNB, Dhaka

The International Development Association (IDA), World Bank's soft-lending window, will provide \$200 million equivalent to Tk 1,204 crore to Bangladesh as development-support credits.

An agreement to this effect was signed in Dhaka yesterday between the government of Bangladesh and the IDA.

Badiur Rahman, additional secretary, Economic Relations Division, and David Hughart, acting head, World Bank Office, Dhaka, signed the agreement on behalf of their respective sides.

The credits, at a rate of three-fourths of one percent service charge per annum, will be made in one single tranche. The loan is repayable in 40 years, including 10 years' grace period.

The loan is the second "in a planned series of programmatic operations" in the context of a medium-term reform framework, alongside the Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) supported by the IMF, an official announcement said.

It said the credits aimed at enhancing Bangladesh's growth and poverty reduction prospects through continued support to implementation in key areas of the country's poverty reduction strategy.

The poverty reduction strategy focuses on acceleration of pro-poor growth, promoting good governance, investing in human development, promoting women's advancement and ensuring social protection.

The operation builds on the experiences in implementing the First Development Support Credit (\$300 million) provided by the IDA in a single tranche in June last year, which has already shown "good outcomes in terms of exports, growth and better incentives for private sector investment".

Development Support Credit-II is also expected to play a crucial role in enhancing poverty reduction and encouraging the private sector growth.

Violence rips

FROM PAGE 12

A third officer was wounded in the blast, said Zayed Mohammed, a doctor at al-Yarmouk hospital. At the hospital, a bloodied policeman lay on a bed, bandages wrapped around his stomach and leg.

Police in Iraq have repeatedly been targeted by insurgents pressing a campaign to destabilize the interim government. The guerrillas see police as collaborators with American coalition forces.

From April 2003 to May 2004 alone, 710 Iraqi police were killed out of a total force of 130,000 officers, authorities said.

In the holy city of Najaf, US forces fought yesterday with gunmen protecting radical Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr's house in clashes that killed one woman and wounded three people. The US military had no immediate comment.

At least six US military vehicles entered the Zahra area in Najaf near al-Sadr's house, which is protected by his militia, the Mahdi Army, witnesses said.

Barrages of gunfire and mortar rounds set cars on fire before Iraqi police intervened and the US forces withdrew, witnesses said.

"One woman was killed and we have three injured," said Ajwak Kadhim, director at Al-Hakim Hospital in Najaf, 100 miles south of Baghdad.

Ali al-Yassiri, a Baghdad spokesman for al-Sadr, said US troops briefly surrounded al-Sadr's house in Najaf but then withdrew from the city. He said the fighting ended and the Mahdi Army was patrolling the area.

Al-Sadr, who is wanted by US forces for the April 2003 murder of a moderate cleric in Najaf, was in his house at the

sales may dry up at a time when global production is running close to full tilt.

"Stronger-than-expected demand has eaten into world spare capacity, which has been eaten into further by problems in Iraq. Now there is the uncertainty of YUKOS," said David Thurtell, commodities strategist at Commonwealth Bank of Australia.

Industry estimates indicate that OPEC, which accounts for about 40 percent of supply, is pumping close to 30 million bpd of crude for the first time since 1979.

The group, which raised its official production limits to 26 million bpd on Aug. 1, has been producing way over its self-imposed ceiling to try and dampen soaring prices.

The official limits exclude Iraq, where exports are expected to reach between 1.7 and 1.8 million bpd this month as operations recover from a series of sabotage attacks earlier this year.

Oil traders are nervous that strong demand is preventing global stocks from building ahead of peak winter demand.

The US Energy Information Administration (EIA) will release its weekly oil stocks report Wednesday, which is expected to show declines in national crude and gasoline inventories although distillate tanks are forecast to rise.

The weekly report is closely monitored as a barometer for demand in the world's biggest oil consumer.

Eight analysts surveyed by Reuters predicted the EIA would show a 300,000 barrel dip in crude stocks in the week to Bangladesh as development-support credits.

Distillate stocks, including key winter heating oil, were seen rising by 1.4 million barrels.

Nasa launches

FROM PAGE 12

slip into orbit around the small, hot planet.