

N Korea, Iran share missile know-how

Says UN

AFP, United Nations

North Korea and Iran are suspected of sharing ballistic missile technology, according to a UN sanctions report which China has sought to block, diplomats said yesterday.

A Chinese representative on a UN panel of seven experts on North Korea nuclear sanctions refused to sign on the report, which said prohibited material was moved through a "neighboring third country", according to diplomats.

The country is not named in the report, excerpts of which were passed to AFP, but diplomats said it was China, the isolated north's closest ally.

The New York Times reported that Beijing had put political pressure on the expert not to sign.



PHOTO: AFP

Palestinians carry a wounded protester after Israeli troops opened fire at a mass rally heading towards the Erez border crossing in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday.

Japan widens nuke evacuation zone

AFP, Tokyo

Japan yesterday started the first evacuations of homes outside a government exclusion zone after the March 11 earthquake and tsunami crippled one of the country's nuclear power plants.

Some 4,000 residents of Iitate-mura village as well as 1,100 people in Kawamata-cho town, in the quake-hit northeast, began the phased relocations to public housing, hotels and other facilities in nearby cities.

Their communities are outside the 20-kilometre radius from the Fukushima Daiichi power plant, officially designated as an area of forced evacuation due to health risks from the radiation seeping from the ageing and damaged plant.

The government told people in communities such as Iitate-mura they had to leave, but authorities are unlikely to punish those who choose to stay.

The first batch of evacuees were mostly those with small children and pregnant women, who are considered more vulnerable.

Some 3,000 tons of highly radioactive contaminated waste water has been discovered under reactor one, forcing officials to think of ways to properly pump it out and process it, it said.

SECTARIAN UNREST

Over 50 injured in Egypt

AFP, Cairo

Clashes between Muslims and Christians in the centre of Cairo have left 51 people wounded, the health ministry said yesterday, as Coptic Christians pursued a sit-in protest against the violence.

"Most of the wounded suffer from fractures and bruises," said health ministry official Ayman Ragab, quoted by the MENA news agency.

The clashes broke out Saturday after an altercation between a young Muslim and Coptic Christians who have been staging a sit-in outside the state television building in Cairo since May 7, after sectarian unrest last week that left 15 dead, police said.

IMF head charged over 'sex crime'

BBC ONLINE

The head of the International Monetary Fund, Dominique Strauss-Kahn, has been charged yesterday by New York police over an alleged sex attack on a hotel maid.

Strauss-Kahn, 62, was taken off an Air France plane at JFK airport just minutes before it left for Paris.

Police say he faces three charges, including attempted rape. His lawyers say he denies the claims.

A spokesman for New York's Port Authority said they detained Strauss-Kahn at JFK airport at the request of the New York Police Department (NYPD).

He had been scheduled to meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday, but that meeting has now been cancelled, reports say.

NYPD spokesman Paul Browne said Strauss-Kahn had been charged with a criminal sexual act, attempted rape and unlawful imprisonment relating to an incident involving a 32-year-old woman.

Browne said the allegations had



been made by a 32-year-old woman who worked at a posh Sofitel Hotel near Times Square where Strauss-Kahn was in a \$3,000 per night suit.

"We received a call that a chambermaid in a hotel in midtown Manhattan had been sexually assaulted by the occupant of a luxury suite at that hotel, and that that individual had fled," Browne told the BBC.

"The maid described being forcibly attacked, locked in the room and sexually assaulted," he said.

Strauss-Kahn then made his way to the airport but left his mobile phone and other items behind, Brown said.

"It looked like he got out of there in a

hurry."

The woman has been treated at hospital for minor injuries, said Browne.

The married former French finance minister is also considered a possible Socialist candidate for the presidency.

The BBC's Hugh Schofield, in Paris, says Strauss-Kahn has been riding high in the polls and was seen as having a genuine chance of beating President Nicolas Sarkozy.

Martine Aubry, leader of France's Socialist Party, described news of his arrest as a "thunderbolt" which left her "astounded".

Strauss-Kahn was expected to appear before a New York state court later yesterday, Reuter's reports.

Correspondents say his detention is likely to complicate ongoing efforts to stabilise the finances of struggling eurozone member states.

In a brief statement posted online yesterday, an IMF spokeswoman acknowledged Strauss-Kahn's arrest and said the organisation would not comment on the case.

Saudi woman defies driving ban

AFP, Jeddah

A Saudi mother said yesterday she defied a ban on women drivers in the ultra-conservative kingdom by getting behind the wheel for four days without being stopped.

Najla al-Hariri, a housewife in her mid-30s, said she drove non-stop for four days "to defend her belief that Saudi women should be allowed to drive."

"I don't fear being arrested because I am setting an example that my daughter and her friends are proud of," Hariri told AFP.

Besides to being banned from driving, Saudi women cannot travel without authorisation from their male guardians.

NEWS IN brief

Egypt FM Nabil al-Arabi named Arab League chief

AFP, Cairo

Egyptian Foreign Minister Nabil al-Arabi was unanimously elected Arab League chief yesterday, an AFP correspondent at the Arab League headquarters in Cairo said.

Arabi stood up to salute the delegates who gave him a standing ovation after Omani Foreign Minister Youssef bin Alawi, who chaired the session, presented him as

Belarus jails opposition leader for 5 years

AFP, Minsk

Belarus on Saturday jailed opposition leader Andrei Sannikov for five years on charges of organising protests after the disputed re-election of authoritarian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Sannikov, 57, is the most prominent figure in a series of trials of opposition figures arrested after the December 19 elections which Lukashenko swept with almost 80 percent of the vote, but were slammed as flawed by observers.

Britain called the trial "a new low for the rule of law in Belarus", while the United States condemned the conviction as "politically motivated".

Egypt's former first lady set for heart surgery

CNN ONLINE

Suzanne Mubarak, wife of toppled Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, was expected to undergo open-heart surgery yesterday night, the manager of the Sharm el-Sheikh Hospital said.

Egypt's former first lady suffered a heart attack Friday after being questioned in a corruption investigation, Mohamed Fatah Allah said. She has been treated in the intensive care unit.

Taliban on Twitter as Afghan rebels enter Internet age

AFP, Kabul

The Taliban once banned all television, music and cinema in Afghanistan, but now they are fighting their war via Twitter, the online messaging network that revolutionised global communication.

The Islamist extremists sent out their first tweet in English on May 12 claiming "enemy attacked in Khake-Safid", with a link to their website for more details about rebel fighters killing "at least 6 puppet police".

LIBYA WAR

UN in new bid for truce

British military chief urges wider targeting

AFP, Tripoli

The UN special envoy was yesterday headed for Libya to urge a ceasefire between Muammar Gaddafi's troops and rebels seeking to topple the strongman, as an anti-regime revolt entered a fourth month.

The head of Britain's armed forces, meanwhile, said Nato should widen its bombing campaign to ensure Gaddafi doesn't manage to cling to power, while Pope Benedict XVI called for negotiations to end the violence.

Abdul Ilah al-Khatib said in Athens he would travel to Tripoli after UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon earlier in the week had said the special envoy would hold talks in the Libyan capital with PM Baghdadi Mahmudi.

Ban in Geneva said he had urged Mahmudi on Tuesday to halt attacks on civilians immediately and called for "immediate verifiable ceasefire negotiations towards the peaceful resolution of the conflict and unimpeded access to humanitarian workers."

General David Richards, Britain's chief of

the defence staff, told the Sunday Telegraph more military action was needed against the Libyan strongman.

"The vice is closing on Gaddafi, but we need to increase the pressure further through more intense military action," he said.

The general said he wanted Nato member states to support the targeting of Gaddafi's regime, not just targets which pose an immediate threat to civilians.

"At present, Nato is not attacking infrastructure targets in Libya. But if we want to increase the pressure on Gaddafi's regime then we need to give serious consideration to increasing the range of targets we can hit."

On the battlefield, rebels made new progress in their advance from the western port city of Misrata, which they freed in fierce fighting earlier in the week from a two-month siege by Kadhafi's forces.

The alliance has been accused by the Libyan regime of failing to comply with its mandate by going after civilian targets and putting Kadhafi himself in their crosshairs.

Founder of Blackwater in new UAE deal



Erik Prince

AFP, Washington

The billionaire founder of Blackwater Worldwide, a scandal-plagued US security firm accused of abuses in Iraq, was hired by the crown prince of Abu Dhabi to put together an 800-member battalion of foreign troops, The New York Times reported yesterday.

Citing unnamed US officials and corporate documents, the newspaper said that Erik Prince, who came to live in the United Arab Emirates last year after his security business faced mounting legal problems in the United States, is using \$529 million from the sheikdom to complete the mission.

The force is intended to conduct special operations missions inside and outside the country, defend oil pipelines and skyscrapers from terrorist attacks and put down internal revolts, the report said.

Such troops could be deployed if the Emirates faced unrest or were challenged by pro-democracy demonstrations in its crowded labour camps in the oil fields or democracy protests like those sweeping the Arab world this year, the paper noted.

The UAE's rulers also hope that the troops could blunt the regional aggression of Iran, the country's biggest foe, the report said.

Their training camp is located on a sprawling Emirati base called Zayed Military City, according to the report.

US FLOODS

Louisiana gates open to save cities

BBC ONLINE

US army engineers have opened yesterday floodgates in Louisiana that will inundate up to 3,000 sq miles of land in an attempt to protect large cities along the Mississippi River.

It is hoped the move on Saturday will ease pressure on Baton Rouge and New Orleans.

This is the first time in four decades the level of the Mississippi has forced the floodgates to be opened.

About 25,000 people and 11,000 buildings could be adversely affected.

Fed by rainwater and the spring thaw, the Mississippi and its tributaries have caused massive flooding upstream, and officials have said the flooding in Louisiana is the worst since 1927.

Kennedy's first mistake

Book reveals his inexperience led to Cold War

REUTERS

It was the first, live televised press conference in US history, and President John F Kennedy beamed his 200-watt smile as he looked across the assembled media gathered in the cavernous, newly opened State Department auditorium.

He had real news for them: Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev had released two captured American airmen, which Kennedy could sell as an early demonstration that he could handle Moscow more effectively than had his predecessors.

However, in what would be the first mistake of his five-day-old presidency, the new president instead was privately obsessing on what he considered a Khrushchev declaration of escalated Cold War against him.

The young and inexperienced president, who had not yet assembled his Soviet experts for a policy review, thought a Khrushchev speech in early January contained Khrushchev's true intentions. Thus, he failed to realise many Soviet good will gestures, including the unprecedented publication of the US president's full inaugural address in the Soviet media.

This early Kennedy judgment call on Khrushchev would shape the rest of the year, though it was based on faulty analysis.

Nine days later, to add insult to injury, speaking like a leader who had discovered the great purpose he had been seeking, He said:

"Each day, the crises multiply. Each day, their solution grows more difficult. Each day, we draw nearer the hour of

maximum danger. I feel I must inform the Congress that our analyses over the past ten days make it clear that, in each of the principle areas of the crisis, the tide of events has been running out and time has not been our friend."

Seldom has history provided a better example of the dangers that come with a newly elected US president who, though convinced of his own instincts and brilliance, lacks the experience or context to weigh the data that begins to flood him.

Kennedy's hawkish turn toward the Soviet Union prompted Khrushchev to dramatically retreat from his early efforts to woo Kennedy. On February 11, Khrushchev's will was turned into a resolve after a party meeting where his rivals called for a policy shift about US.

Kennedy's response may have seemed understandable at the time. In his January speech, Khrushchev had said, "We will beat the United States with small wars of liberation. We will nibble them to exhaustion all over the globe, in South America, Africa, and Southeast Asia."

The US envoy to Moscow duly sent a cable to Kennedy informing the rhetoric.

But what he failed to tell Kennedy was that there really was nothing new in what Khrushchev had said. His speech was merely a belated briefing to Soviet ideologists and propagandists on the conference of eighty-one Communist parties the previous November.

Kennedy considered Khrushchev's words "game changing," but they only became so because of the young president's overreaction to them.



PHOTO: AFP

Flood Water of Mississippi river has been released by the US Army Corps of Engineers at the Morganza Spillway on Saturday in Morganza, Louisiana.