

China will not protect Syria

AFP, Beijing

China will not protect the regime of Syria's President Bashar al-Assad, Premier Wen Jiabao said yesterday, after Beijing drew international ire for vetoing a UN resolution on the country.

Wen's comments, during an EU-China summit, came after the United Nations' top human rights representative said the world body's inaction had "emboldened" the Syrian government to use overwhelming force against its own civilians.

"China will absolutely not protect any party, including the government in Syria," Wen told reporters in Beijing.

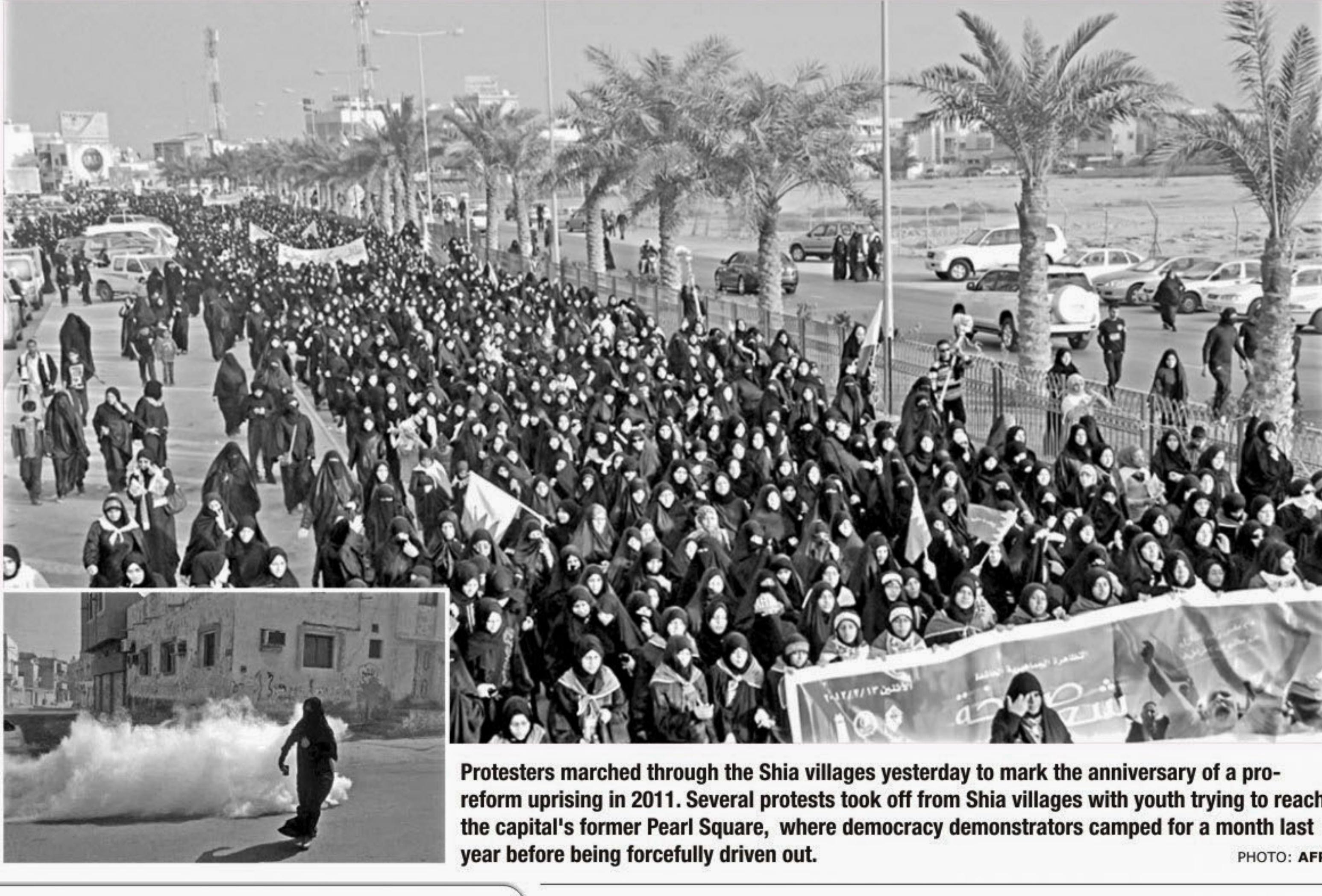
China and Russia have faced a barrage of criticism for blocking a UN Security Council resolution condemning the bloody crackdown on protests in Syria, including from Arab nations with which Beijing normally has good ties.

Syria flatly rejected UN allegations of crimes against humanity yesterday, even as monitors said troops killed at least six civilians in the heaviest shelling of the protest city of Homs for days.

Navi Pillay, the top human rights representative at the United Nations, said on Monday that the world body's inaction had "emboldened" Syria's government to unleash overwhelming force against its own civilians.

The United States called the rare double veto a "travesty", while one Syrian opposition group said it had handed Assad's regime a "licence to kill".

Since the crackdown was launched less than a year ago, more than 6,000 people have been killed, monitors say.



Protesters marched through the Shia villages yesterday to mark the anniversary of a pro-reform uprising in 2011. Several protests took off from Shia villages with youth trying to reach the capital's former Pearl Square, where democracy demonstrators camped for a month last year before being forcefully driven out.

PHOTO: AFP

Gaza's only power station closes

BBC ONLINE

The authorities in Gaza yesterday said the Palestinian territory's only power station has shut down because of a lack of fuel.

The closure is believed to be caused by a shortage in fuel being supplied through smuggling tunnels from Egypt.

Power cuts, already common, are expected to increase. The station provides around 30-40% of Gaza's electricity.

The rest of the electricity used by the territory is supplied by Israel.

The Gaza Power Company said the strip would soon be "swimming in a sea of darkness".

Supplies of fuel smuggled into the territory have diminished due to the recent Egyptian political unrest.

PROTESTING BSF'S BORDER BRUTALITY Bangladeshi hackers shut down 20,000 Indian sites

DECCAN CHRONICLE
ONLINE

In the first major hacking spree of the year, Black HAT Hackers, a Bangladeshi based group hacked into nearly 20,000 Indian websites including that of Indian Border Security Force.

The group based in Bangladesh posted in their community page that their action was in response to the killings by BSF personnel in the border. BSF's website www.bsf.nic.in was completely damaged in the process.

One hacker belonging to the Black Hat Hackers posted in the Facebook fan page of the group: "We don't have any personal issues with Indians. But the brutality of BSF as well as Indian Govt has forced us to do this."

While another posted, "India supported us in 1971, now they're killing us!!! An open

enemy is better than a false friend.

"I don't care even if death comes... I'll keep fighting for my motherland until we get victory...!!!" reads another post.

The group also hacked www.paisacontrol.com website popular Stock

Tips, StockNews website.

The hackers after defacing many websites posted: Indian Border Security Force (BSF), Stop killing Bangladeshi at border. Bangladeshi Hackers group named 3xp1r3 Cyber Army also has hacked into more than 700 other Indian websites.

After hacking 20,000 Indian sites the Black Hat posted on internet celebrating their hacking episode.

The hackers also posted the videos of alleged brutality of the BSF personnel at the border.

Santorum, Romney tie in polls

AFP, Washington

US Republican presidential candidates Mitt Romney and Rick Santorum are in a dead heat following the latter's sweep of three state nomination votes last week, according to two national polls.

A Pew Research Center poll carried out February 8-12 found that Santorum, a Christian conservative and former senator, had surged to the forefront with 30 percent compared to former Massachusetts governor Mitt Romney at 28 percent.

The same poll a month ago put Romney at 31 percent, more than double Santorum's 14 percent, indicating the dramatic nature of the latest turn in the volatile battle to take on Democratic President Barack Obama in November.

Arab decision to fuel Syria civil war fears

REUTERS, Cairo

After a bruising meeting in a five-star Cairo hotel, Arab foreign ministers led by Gulf states hinted to Syrian President Bashar al-Assad that unless he halts his violent crackdown, some Arab League members might arm his opponents.

The message was folded into Article 9 of a League resolution passed on Sunday that urges Arabs to "provide all kinds of political and material support" to the opposition, a phrase that includes the possibility of giving weapons to Assad's foes.

Diplomats at the meeting confirmed this interpretation.

Arabs are striving to unite the world around their drive to push Assad to end the killing, but have gained little traction.

They had to scrap a floundering Arab monitoring mission to Syria. When they sought UN Security Council support for a transition plan under which Assad would step aside, Russia and China vetoed the Western-backed U.N. draft resolution.

Moscow is an old ally of Syria and its top arms supplier.

Sunday's Arab League meeting raised the stakes. Its implicit shuffle towards backing military resistance to Assad's forces was meant to add pressure on the Syrian leader and his Russian and Chinese allies. Yet it also risks leading to a Libya-style conflict or sectarian civil war that everyone wants to avoid.

"It is unacceptable for Assad to practice all types of killing of civilians while we stand silent," one Arab ambassador said, explaining the rationale behind the resolution that returned the Syria issue to the United Nations with a call for a joint U.N.-Arab peacekeeping force.

"We will back the opposition financially and diplomatically in the beginning but if the killing by the regime continues, civilians must be helped to protect themselves.

NEWS ANALYSIS

The resolution gives Arab states all options to protect the Syrian people," the envoy said.

"All options" is diplomatic language that leaves room for a military response. Two other diplomats spelled it out more explicitly, saying the resolution could allow arms transfers.

Smuggled guns are filtering into Syria but it is not clear if Arab or other governments are backing any such transfers.

Iraqi security officials say there are signs Sunni Muslim insurgents are beginning to cross the border to join Syrian rebels. Smugglers are cashing in as prices double for weapons reaching Syria concealed in commercial traffic.

For now, however, such weaponry cannot match the firepower that Assad's military can bring to bear, analysts say, but that could change if Assad fails to heed Arab peace calls.

Sunni-ruled Gulf states, broadly driven by a desire to oust Assad, an ally of their

Shi'ite regional rival Iran, have the financial and political muscle to push through calls to isolate the Syrian leader. Wealthy Gulf countries, Bahrain apart, have also emerged with few scars from the wave of Arab uprisings.

"I don't see the way forward in Syria as being Western boots on the ground in any form, including in any peacekeeping form. I think they would need to come from other countries, rather than Western nations," British Foreign Secretary William Hague said.

Syria would have to agree before such a force could deploy. It accepted the unarmed Arab monitors, but only after weeks of foot-dragging, and swiftly rejected Sunday's Arab resolution.

The acid test will be Russia's response, with China expected to follow Moscow's lead, analysts say. For now, Russia has said it will consider the Arab appeal but without much enthusiasm.



PHOTO: AFP

The US aircraft carrier Abraham Lincoln yesterday sailed through the Strait of Hormuz, close to the coast of Iran, for the second time in recent weeks amid escalating tensions.

Sudan breaks truce, strikes S Sudan

AFP, Juba

Sudanese warplanes dropped several bombs wounding four soldiers in a contested area claimed by South Sudan, breaking a fresh non-aggression pact between the two sides, Juba's army spokesman said yesterday.

"Sudanese Armed Forces airplanes bombed the Jau area in Unity state on Sunday, wounding four of our soldiers," South Sudanese army spokesman Philip Aguer told AFP.

Sudan Sudan -- which declared independence from former civil war enemies in north Sudan in July -- has accused Khartoum of carrying out several bombing raids in frontier regions of its territory, claims denied by the northern army.

The bombings took place in oil-rich areas along the disputed border with the rump state of Sudan, which both sides claim as theirs. The Jau area has seen several bombings in recent months as well as fighting between the two sides.

The region borders Sudan's Southern Kordofan state where rebels -- once part of the ex-guerrilla turned official South Sudanese army -- are battling the Khartoum government forces.

Sudan and South Sudan signed a non-aggression pact late Friday over the disputed border in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa, a move praised by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

DETENTION WITHOUT TRIAL Israeli court rejects Palestinian's appeal

AFP, Jerusalem

An Israeli military court on Monday rejected an appeal by a Palestinian prisoner who has been on hunger strike for more than eight weeks over his detention without charge, his lawyer Jawad Bulus said.

The judge at the military appeals court rejected the appeal and approved the administrative detention order, Bulus told AFP.

Adnan has now been on hunger strike for 58 days -- longer than any Palestinian prisoner before him, and Israel is under increasing international pressure to resolve the situation by either charging him or freeing him.

He began refusing food a day after his arrest and is now said to be close to death.

Israel has not made any public allegations against Adnan, a one-time spokesman for Islamic Jihad.

The Israeli military confirmed the appeal had been rejected in a statement, saying the administrative detention order would stand unchanged.

The court's decision prompted a furious reaction from the Palestinian Authority, with prisoner affairs minister Issa Qaraqa saying the rejection of the appeal was tantamount to murder.

Radical cleric Qatada released in UK

AFP, London

Islamist cleric Abu Qatada, once described as Osama bin Laden's right-hand man in Europe, was released from a British prison Monday on extremely tight bail conditions.

Qatada, who is fighting extradition to Jordan, was released from Long Lartin high-security jail in Worcestershire, central England, and will have to obey a 22-hour-a-day curfew at his home in London.

The 51-year-old is considered a serious risk to Britain's national security and has spent most of the last six years in jail.

Ahead of his release, the Home Office interior ministry said it would "exhaust all avenues" to ensure his extradition to Jordan, where he was convicted in his absence of involvement in terror attacks in 1998.

But the European Court of Human Rights has ruled that Britain cannot deport the Jordanian to his homeland because evidence used against him in any trial there may have been obtained through torture.

SOAS, University of London

The School of Oriental and African Studies (SOAS) is a world-leading institution specialising in the study of Africa, Asia and the Middle East. Located in central London, SOAS offers courses in Law and Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities and Languages and Cultures.

A representative from SOAS will be visiting Bangladesh to give a presentation on undergraduate and postgraduate study opportunities and to offer individual counselling for prospective students at the British Council.

Friday 17th February 2012
1pm - 5pm

British Council Dhaka

This seminar will be conducted in English. For enquiries and reservations, please contact the British Council by e-mail at education@bd.britishcouncil.org