

Russia opposes new UN draft on Syria

Four generals defect regime, arrive in Turkey

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday said it opposed an "unbalanced" Washington-backed UN draft resolution on Syria as more defections hit Syrian regime.

The warning came amid tense consultations over a draft resolution aimed at showing the Damascus regime that world opinion had turned against it after nearly a year of violence which, according to the opposition, has claimed nearly 8,500 lives.

Meanwhile, four generals who had defected from the Syrian army arrived in Turkey yesterday, Anatolia news agency reported, citing local Turkish sources.

The four were among some 10 high-ranking army officers stationed in cities including Damascus, Homs and Latakia, who crossed the border into Turkey's southern province of Hatay to join the Syrian rebels, the state-run Turkish agency said.

And UN humanitarian chief Valerie Amos, who visited Homs this week, said Assad's government had agreed to join UN agencies

in a "limited assessment" of civilian needs in Syria, but had not met her request for unhindered access for aid groups.

However, Syrian officials had asked for more time, she told a news conference in Ankara after visiting Syrian refugees arriving in growing numbers in border camps in Turkey.

Russia's deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov said the text under discussion yesterday was still "unbalanced".

A draft of the new resolution obtained by AFP "demands" that the Syrian government "immediately" cease all violence and "calls" on opposition groups to "refrain from all violence" once these conditions are met.

And China yesterday announced it too was sending an envoy to Saudi Arabia, Egypt and France to explain its position on Syria.

On the ground, Syrian forces killed 31 people yesterday ahead of UN-Arab League envoy Kofi Annan's visit, opposition activists said.

Tank rounds and mortar bombs crashed into opposition districts in the rebellious central city of Homs, killing 17 people, activists said, reporting 14 deaths elsewhere in Syria.



PHOTO: AFP

US First Lady Michelle Obama, left, and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, right, pose with Aneesa Ahmed of Maldives as she receives the 2012 International Women of Courage Award on Thursday. The prestigious Secretary of State's Award for International Women of Courage annually recognizes women around the globe who have shown exceptional courage and leadership in advocating for women's rights and empowerment, often at great personal risk.



Dead people on Myanmar voter list!

AFP, Ottawa

Aung San Suu Kyi expressed concern Thursday that dead people were appearing on voter rolls in Myanmar ahead of upcoming by-elections, speaking in a meeting in Yangon with Canada's foreign minister.

"A lot of dead people seem to be prepared to vote on the first of April. We can't have that, can we? And other things like that," the pro-democracy leader told John Baird, according to a Canadian pool media report issued in Ottawa.

Suu Kyi said she has asked the election commission "to do something about this," vowing also that her National League for Democracy party "would complain loud and long" for remedies.

In a statement, Baird said he was "very concerned to learn about a good number of irregularities" on voters lists, but also commended President Thein Sein and his government for their commitment to reform.

Baird also presented Suu Kyi with a Canadian citizenship certificate during the visit.

Canada's parliament in 2007 named Suu Kyi an honorary citizen, a title for foreigners bestowed only on four others: Swedish Holocaust hero Raoul Wallenberg, South Africa's former president Nelson Mandela, Tibet's spiritual leader the Dalai Lama and the Aga Khan, leader of the world's Ismaili Muslims.

Libya seeks US help to hunt down Gaddafi loyalists

AFP, Washington

Libya's interim Prime Minister Abdel Rahim al-Kib on Thursday appealed for US help to get the "remnants" of the Gaddafi regime and finally bring to an end what he called the "war of liberation."

Kib appeared to suggest he wanted members of the ousted regime of slain dictator Muammar Gaddafi handed over for justice.

"One of the things we did request help with from Madame secretary was the remnants of the past regime," Kib said during a press conference with US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton after they met in Washington.

"They've been a nuisance and they've been causing problems and we need them back to give them proper justice... And we also need the funds they have stolen from the Libyan people to come back to the Libyan people."

Saadi Gaddafi, one of Gaddafi's sons, told Al-Arabiya television from Niger last month that a nationwide rebellion is brewing against the country's new rulers as he vowed to return to his homeland.

Gaddafi's daughter Aisha angered her Algerian hosts in November when she called

for the overthrow of Libya's interim government.

"After we get those remnants of the past regime, it will be over," Kib said, referring to what he called "the war of liberation." He said the US private sector can help rebuild the country while he promised to continue the country's transition to democracy.

The US official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, was hard pressed to say whether Gaddafi supporters posed "an imminent danger," but he acknowledged that the country's borders were not completely sealed to people and weapons.

Meanwhile, Libyan militias have promised to turn over to the interim government strategic sites, such as airports and border crossings, that they have held since capturing them in last year's uprising.

The commitments were made as the government in Tripoli struggles to exert its control over the country, and as Libya's proposed national charter was unveiled at a conference in Misrata ahead of June elections to a constituent assembly that will finalise a new constitution.



PHOTO: AFP

Britain's Catherine, The Duchess of Cambridge, (L) and Queen Elizabeth II watch a fashion show at De Montfort University, in Leicester, central England on Thursday. Queen Elizabeth II was welcomed by a cheering crowd of thousands as she began her diamond jubilee tour of Britain accompanied by Prince William's wife Catherine.

Romney urges rivals to quit race

GUARDIAN ONLINE

Mitt Romney's campaign team has appealed for his rivals to quit the Republican presidential race, claiming that it is near impossible for them to catch him after the Super Tuesday results and that by staying in they are boosting President Barack Obama's re-election chances.

Super Tuesday, the biggest night of a campaign that began on 3 January, resulted in Romney taking six of the 10 states at stake.

But Rick Santorum, boosted by his three wins on Tuesday, stubbornly refused to quit. The former House Speaker, Newt Gingrich, too was out campaigning and refusing to pull out.

With about 20 out of the 50 states having voted in Republican primaries and caucuses, Romney has accumulated only about a third of the 1,144 delegates to the Republican convention in August that he needs to secure the nomination.

According to the Associated Press,



Romney added about 200 delegates to his tally on Super Tuesday, bringing him total to 415. Santorum has 176, Gingrich, 105 and Paul, 47.

Adding in Super Tuesday, Romney has now won 13 states, Santorum six and Gingrich, two. Paul has yet to record a win.

But despite his advantages in dollars and organisation, Romney failed to make a decisive break on Super Tuesday, unable to put together a winning coalition of voters that would knock out his opponents.

However Romney is clearly ahead in the nomination race. While upcoming states did not look favourable to him the big states that will follow California, New York and New Jersey would all go for Romney, as well as smaller states such as Connecticut and Rhode Island. He might also win Illinois, observers predict.

With the delegation lead he has, Romney is surely in the comfort zone and far ahead of the rest to take on Obama for the White House in November.

US drone kills 8 in Pakistan

AFP, Miranshah

A US drone killed at least eight militants yesterday when it fired two missiles on a vehicle in Pakistan's tribal badlands near the Afghan border, security officials said.

The attack took place in the Shaktoi area of South Waziristan, part of the tribal belt that Washington considers a global hub of Taliban and Al-Qaeda militants.

Another security official based in Peshawar and an intelligence official based in South Waziristan confirmed the attack and death toll.

The area is a stronghold of militants belonging to Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan, an umbrella militant group led by warlord Hakimullah Mehsud.

Greece clinches debt swap, averts bailout

AFP, Athens

Greece clinched a high-stakes debt swap yesterday, paving the way for an urgent bailout needed for the stricken eurozone member to avoid default.

Some 83.5 percent of its private creditors tendered bonds for exchange, amounting to approximately 172 billion euros of debt, the Greek finance ministry announced early yesterday.

The success of the debt swap plan means Greece will be able to avoid a devastating default as early as March 20 that could have cost the eurozone one trillion euros and sent shockwaves around the globe.

The news sent Asian markets sharply higher Friday, with shares in Tokyo closing at their highest level in seven months.

A little before the official take-up rate was announced, IMF head Christine Lagarde said the risk of crisis in the eurozone has been "removed" for now.

"Real risk of a crisis, of an acute crisis, has been, for the moment, removed," Lagarde said in an interview with US broadcaster PBS.

World to meet on looming water crisis

AFP, Marseille

A global gathering of policymakers, corporations and specialists unfolds in this southern French city from Monday to ponder the future of water, fast emerging as one of the century's crunch challenges.

Staged every three years, the World Water Forum will look at the darkening shadow of water scarcity but also the opportunities this offers to make money from "blue gold."

As many as 20,000 participants from 140 countries are expected for the six-day event, including scores of ministers for the environment and water.

Already, more than 2.5 billion people are in need of decent sanitation and nearly one in 10 has yet to gain access to "improved" drinking water, as defined under the UN's 2015 development goals.

The coming decades will be even more challenging.

The world will have to feed and house a population set to rise from seven billion to nine billion by mid-century. Prosperity in emerging countries will fuel a meat-eating, car-driving lifestyle that is water-gluttonous.

Totting up the figures, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reckons demand for water will rise by 55 percent by 2050.



This surge will occur just when global warming will bite deeply, especially in a parched belt stretching across North Africa, the Middle East and South Asia, say climate scientists.

According to a study published last month in the journal PLoS One, water scarcity already affects at least 2.7 billion people in 201 river basins for at least one month each year.

Intensifying demand is stoking tension within countries over water rights, and friction between nations over rivers and aquifers that straddle borders. One country in seven is more than 50-percent dependent on water from outside national boundaries.

Options for tackling the water crisis focus in particular on curbing waste, for which realistic pricing is essential, says the OECD.

For city consumers, use of "grey" water (for instance, soapy water from washing machines) to flush toilets, rather than treated water, is another futuristic scenario.

But the biggest and earliest gains could be in the countryside, which accounts for 92 percent of humanity's water footprint.

Farmers use some 200 million litres (50 million gallons) of water per second, a figure that experts say could be easily reduced by investment in smarter irrigation.



Many people wonder why they keep attracting relationships that don't work out, or that repeat the same dysfunctional patterns as past partners. Often, relationships can bring out the worst in ourselves and in the other person. Then a lot of others are spending their whole life in relationships that are no longer "soul mates", it has become like "cell mates".

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About Shafin de Zane

Shafin de Zane, CHT, MNLP is an internationally recognized author, spiritual teacher, hypnotherapist and coach. The author of *Redefine Your Reality* and creator of One Meditation, as well as multiple other bestselling products and home study courses, Shafin uses variety of powerful healing techniques including hypnosis, profound meditation practices, spiritual counseling etc to transform his students. His student base includes over 100,000 people in over 90+ countries and he regularly conducts workshops in different parts of the world.

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"...Today is the last day of the class and I don't know how I am going to say thank you to Shafin. How do you say thank you to the person who changes your whole perception of reality? I don't know. But I wish him all the luck and a long life. This man is an asset to humanity." *Laura, Singapore*

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