

N Korea vows retaliation over rocket, food aid

China calls for denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula

AFP, Seoul

North Korea has warned of retaliation after the US scrapped food aid over its rocket launch, raising fears of a new nuclear test, as China reportedly suspended a refugee deal with its wayward ally.

In a defiant statement late Tuesday, the nuclear-armed North said it was no longer bound by a bilateral agreement to halt testing of nuclear weapons and long-range missiles after Washington suspended much-needed food aid.

"We have thus become able to take necessary retaliatory measures, free from the agreement," its foreign ministry said, accusing Washington of hostile acts.

South Korean analysts said they expect the North to follow up by staging a third nuclear weapons test, or

launching another long-range missile.

"With the February agreement broken down in practice, the North will likely take many of the steps the US and South Korea have long feared, including another nuclear test and a long-range missile test," said Paik Hak-Soon of the South's Sejong Institute think-tank.

The North staged atomic weapons tests months after its long-range rocket launches in 2006 and 2009.

The North also rejected condemnation by the United Nations Security Council, including its ally China, of the failed launch last Friday.

Japan's Yomiuri Shimbun newspaper said Wednesday that China has suspended the refugee repatriation deal because it was not consulted about the launch, seen by the US and its allies as a covert test of ballistic

missile technology.

The suspension reflects Beijing's displeasure with its troublesome neighbour which "did not show the necessary attention to its friend China," it quoted one unidentified official as saying.

Meanwhile, China's foreign ministry yesterday called for the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Liu Weimin made the comments at a regular briefing, adding that all parties should exercise calm and restraint as they work toward a negotiated solution.

Pyongyang insists its botched satellite launch was not a missile test and did not breach the February deal with Washington, under which it vowed to suspend uranium enrichment and nuclear and missile tests in return for food.

EU to ease Myanmar sanctions

AFP, Strasbourg

The European Union will ease its sanctions imposed on Myanmar further after recent pro-democracy steps taken by the country, EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton said Tuesday.

"In January, we suspended the visa bans on the Government of Myanmar. At the end of this month, we will do more," Ashton told the European Parliament.

Decisions would be taken by EU foreign ministers at their next meeting in Luxembourg on Monday. She did not elaborate.

The EU was widely expected to authorise investments and imports of sensitive products but the lifting of an arms embargo does not seem to be on the agenda.

Ashton said she would travel to Myanmar April 28-30.

Suu Kyi to travel abroad after 24 years

REUTERS, Yangon

Nobel Peace Prize laureate and newly elected lawmaker Aung San Suu Kyi will travel outside Myanmar for the first time in 24 years after accepting invitations to visit Norway and Britain in June, her party said yesterday.

Her travel caps months of dramatic change in Myanmar, including a historic by-election on April 1 that won her a seat in a year-old parliament that replaced nearly five decades of oppressive military rule.

Her trip will include a visit to British city Oxford, where she attended university in the 1970s, said National League for Democracy (NLD) party spokesman Nyan Win.

"But I don't know the exact date yet," Nyan Win said, adding he did not know which country she would visit first. She has previously indicated that it would be Norway.

Suu Kyi, 66, was first detained in 1989, and spent 15 of the next 21 years in detention until



her release from house arrest in November 2010, refused to leave the country during the brief periods when she was not held by authorities, for fear of not being allowed to return.

Suu Kyi was invited to visit Britain when she met Prime Minister David Cameron in Yangon on Friday. At the time, she said the fact that she would consider the offer,

rather than reject it outright, showed "great progress" had been achieved in Myanmar.

Suu Kyi's long refusal to leave Myanmar characterised her steely determination to defy the ruling junta, which offered to release her from house arrest to be with her late husband, Michael Aris, who died of cancer in Britain in 1999.

The daughter of assassinated independence hero Aung San visited Myanmar in April 1988 to take care of her dying mother, Khin Kyi, a former ambassador to India and Nepal.

'Stop your husband'

UN wives urge Syrian first lady

REUTERS, United Nations

The wives of UN ambassadors from Britain and Germany targeted Syria's first lady on Tuesday with an online appeal to "stop your husband" in his yearlong bid to quash a popular uprising that has left thousands dead.

The video contrasts the lavish lifestyle of 36-year-old Asma al-Assad, wife of President Bashar al-Assad and mother of three, with the images of dead and injured Syrian children.

"Stand up for peace, Asma. Speak out now. For the sake of your people. Stop your husband," asks the video. "Stop being a bystander. No one cares about your image. We care about your action."

The video asks viewers to sign a petition at www.change.org demanding the London-born first lady speak out to "stop the bloodshed."

It was produced by Sheila Lyall Grant, the wife of Britain's UN envoy, and Huberta von Voss-Wittig, the wife of Germany's UN



ambassador. Britain and Germany are both members of the UN Security Council.

"We strongly believe in Asma's responsibility as a woman, as a wife and as a mother. As the vocal female Arab leader that she used to be, as a champion of female equality, she can not hide behind her husband," Lyall Grant and Wittig said in a statement.

A former investment banker, Asma al-Assad once cultivated the image of a serious-minded woman inspired by Western values.

But she appears to have continued a life of luxury shopping during the uprising against the four-decade rule of the Assad family. E-mails exchanged with her husband, obtained by Britain's Guardian newspaper, apparently showed they were buying pop music and luxury goods on the Internet during the conflict.

The European Union has banned Asma al-Assad from traveling to the EU or shopping from European companies.



PHOTO: AFP

Thailand's Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra (L) shakes hands with Chinese President Hu Jintao during a visit to the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. Yingluck is in China on a four-day official visit.

Mamata among world's most influential people

PTI, New York

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has been named among the 100 most influential people in the world by the prestigious Time magazine in its 2012 list, which also includes US President Barack Obama, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and billionaire investor Warren Buffet.

Apart from Banerjee, advocate Anjali Gopalan, who works for the rights of gays and the transgendered in India, is the only other Indian in the list released by the magazine.

The 2012 list is topped by American basketball sensation Jeremy Lin.

In recent days, Banerjee's government has been criticised for choice of newspapers for state and state-aided libraries and a professor's arrest over circulation of a cartoon featuring the chief minister.

Time said Banerjee, 57, spent years struggling on the margins but ultimately she proved to be the "consummate politician."



NEWS IN brief

Warren Buffett has prostate cancer

AFP, Washington

US tycoon Warren Buffett announced Tuesday that he has early-stage prostate cancer, and indicated he had no intention of stepping down as head of his investment firm Berkshire Hathaway.

In a letter to his company's shareholders, released after the stock markets closed, Buffett disclosed he had been diagnosed with Stage I prostate cancer last Wednesday and would undergo radiation treatment beginning in mid-July.

Imaging tests revealed no cancer elsewhere in his body, the ebullient 81-year-old investor said.

With his big glasses and preference for Cherry Coke, Buffett is known for his humble manner and modest tastes despite amassing billions as the mastermind and chief executive of Berkshire.

Chirac won't vote for Sarkozy

AFP, Paris

France's former right-wing leader Jacques Chirac will spurn his successor Nicolas Sarkozy and vote for his Socialist rival in Sunday's first-round presidential vote, a close friend said Tuesday.

French historian Jean-Luc Barre, who helped Chirac write his memoirs, said the former president was not joking when he said he would back Hollande, who has spent most of his political life in Chirac's home region of Correze.

A source in Chirac's office refused an opportunity to deny the report or express backing for Sarkozy, who is a member of the same UMP party.

Chirac, who was president from 1995 to 2007, ruffled conservative feathers last year when he said he would vote for Hollande rather than Sarkozy.

China reports bird flu outbreak

AFP, Beijing

Agricultural authorities in northwest China have culled about 95,000 chickens after an outbreak of the H5N1 bird flu virus, state press reported yesterday.

The outbreak in Touying township of the Ningxia region was discovered on Friday last week after over 23,000 chickens began showing symptoms, Xinhua news agency said, citing the Ministry of Agriculture.

The ministry said the "epidemic is now under control", the report said, while work teams have been sent to the area to step up prevention measures.

China is considered one of the nations most at risk of bird flu epidemics because it has the world's biggest poultry population and many chickens in rural areas are kept close to humans.

Sudan, South Sudan clash on new front

REUTERS, Khartoum

Sudan and South Sudan accused each other of launching attacks on a new front near their contested border, stoking fears of a return to all-out war in the oil-producing region.

The reports of the fresh fighting south of the Sudanese town of Mairam late on Tuesday came as the UN Security Council discussed imposing sanctions on the African neighbors if they did not stop the escalating border clashes.

There has been growing alarm over the worst violence seen since South Sudan split away from Sudan as an independent country in July under the terms of a 2005 peace settlement.

South Sudan seized the contested oil-producing Heglig region last week, prompting Sudan's parliament to brand its former civil war foe an "enemy" on Monday and to call for a swift recapture of the flat savanna region.

Both countries are highly dependent on oil. Any protracted fighting would severely damage their economies and disrupt the surrounding region.

Distrust runs deep between the neighbors, who are at loggerheads over the position of their border, how much the landlocked South should pay to transport its oil through Sudan and the division of national debt, among other issues.

Sudan said it had repulsed an attack on Tuesday by South Sudan's armed forces (SPLA) near the Bahr al-Arab river, known as the Kiir River in the south.

Web freedom faces greatest threat ever Warns Google's founder

GUARDIAN ONLINE

The principles of openness and universal access that underpinned the creation of the internet three decades ago are under greater threat than ever, according to Google co-founder Sergey Brin.

In an interview with the Guardian, Brin warned there were "very powerful forces that have lined up against the open internet on all sides and around the world". "I am more worried than I have been in the past," he said. "It's scary."

The threat to the freedom of the internet comes, he claims, from a combination of governments increasingly trying to control access and communication by their citizens, the entertainment industry's attempts to crack down on piracy, and the rise of "restrictive" walled gardens such as Facebook and Apple, which tightly control what software can be released on their platforms.

He said five years ago he did not believe China or any country could effectively restrict the internet for long, but now says he has been proven wrong. "I thought there was no way to put the genie back in the bottle, but now it seems in certain areas the genie has been put back in the bottle," he said.



Sergey Brin

Britain destroyed records of colonial crimes

AGENCIES

Thousands of documents detailing some of the most shameful acts and crimes committed during the final years of the British empire were systematically destroyed to prevent them falling into the hands of post-independence governments, an official review has concluded.

Those papers that survived the purge were flown discreetly to Britain where they were hidden for 50 years in a secret foreign office archive, beyond the reach of historians and members of the public, and in breach of legal obligations for them to be transferred into the public domain.

The archive came to light last year when a group of Kenyans detained and allegedly tortured during the Mau Mau rebellion won the right to sue the British government. The foreign office promised to release the 8,800 files from 37 former colonies held at the highly secure government communications centre at Hanslope Park in Buckinghamshire.

The foreign office says it is now releasing "every paper" it can.

But academics say the Foreign Office's "failure" to deliver the archive for decades has created a "legacy of suspicion".

In particular, the first batch of papers reveals: Official fears that Nazis - pretending to catch butterflies - were

plotting to invade East Africa in 1938; Secret plans to deport a Greek Cypriot leader to the Seychelles despite launching talks with him to end a violent rebellion in Cyprus in 1955; Concerns over the "anti-American and anti-white" tendency of Kenyan students sent to study in the US in 1959 - the same year Barack Obama's Kenyan father enrolled at university in Hawaii.

The papers at Hanslope Park include monthly intelligence reports on the "elimination" of the colonial authority's enemies in 1950s Malaya; records showing ministers in London were aware of the torture and murder of Mau Mau insurgents in Kenya, including a case of a man said to have been "roasted alive"; and papers detailing the lengths to which the UK went to forcibly remove islanders from Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.

Among the documents that appear to have been destroyed were: records of the abuse of Mau Mau insurgents detained

by British colonial authorities, who were tortured and sometimes murdered; reports that may have detailed the alleged massacre of 24 unarmed villagers in Malaya by soldiers of the Scots Guards in 1948; most of the sensitive documents kept by colonial authorities in Aden, where the army's Intelligence Corps operated a secret torture centre for several years in the 1960s; and every sensitive document kept by the authorities in British Guiana, a colony whose policies were heavily influenced by successive US governments and whose post-independence leader was toppled in a coup orchestrated by the CIA.

The archive contains official documents from the former territories of Aden, Anguilla, Bahamas, Basutoland (Lesotho), Botswana, British Indian Ocean Territories, Brunei, Cyprus, Kenya, Malaya, Sarawak and the Seychelles.



Soldiers check identity papers of suspected Mau Mau members at gunpoint

শুভ নববর্ষ ১৪১১

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Gulshan
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