

Syria threatens to use chemical weapons

EU tightens arms embargo

AP, Beirut

The Syrian regime acknowledged for the first time yesterday that it possessed stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons and said it will only use them in case of a foreign attack and never internally against its own citizens.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Jihad Makdissi said the stockpiles are secure, in an apparent response to widespread international concerns that they could fall into the hands of the disparate bands of rebel forces fighting the government.

"No chemical or biological weapons will ever be used, and I repeat, will never be used, during the crisis in Syria no matter what the developments inside Syria," he said in conference broadcast on state TV. "All of these types of weapons are in storage and under security and the direct supervi-

sion of the Syrian armed forces and will never be used unless Syria is exposed to external aggression."

Meanwhile, European Union yesterday tightened sanctions on Syria and required member nations to board ships and airplanes carrying suspicious cargo to the country, as foreign ministers warned that the escalating violence there was sparking a refugee crisis for its neighbors.

The 27 EU ministers added 29 names to an existing list of over 170 Syrian individuals and companies believed to be associated with the repression, or benefiting from President Bashar Assad's regime. They also endorsed a plan to enforce the bloc's existing arms embargo, requiring inspections on the territory or in the territorial waters of EU states.

Syria is believed to have nerve agents as well as mustard gas, Scud missiles capable of delivering these

lethal chemicals and a variety of advanced conventional arms, including anti-tank rockets and late-model portable anti-aircraft missiles.

Israel has said it fears that chaos following Assad's fall could allow the Jewish state's enemies, to access Syria's chemical weapons and has not ruled out military intervention to prevent this from happening.

A senior US intelligence official said the Syrians have moved chemical weapons material from the northern end of the country, where the fighting was fiercest, apparently to both secure it, and to consolidate it, which US officials considered a responsible step.

But there has also been a disturbing rise in activity at all the installations, so the US intelligence community is intensifying its monitoring efforts to track the weapons and try to figure out whether the Syrians are trying to use them, the official said.

Hezbollah may get chemical arms if Assad govt folds

Says Netanyahu

REUTERS, Washington

The "great threat" to Israel from the Syrian conflict is that the Damascus government may collapse and its stock of chemical weapons and missiles fall into the hands of the Lebanese Islamist group Hezbollah, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday.

Interviewed on the US "Fox News Sunday" television program, Netanyahu said Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government would fall and that he was worried that a chaotic "regime collapse" might leave Syria's weapons sites unguarded.

"We certainly don't want to be exposed to chemical weapons falling into the hands of Hezbollah or some other terror groups. ... It's a great threat," he said.

"We will have to consider our action. Do I seek action? No. Do I preclude it? No," Netanyahu said when asked whether Israel would act alone or prefer the United States to take the lead.

US Senator John McCain said that in



addition to the Israeli concerns, there was a risk that the Syrian government might use chemical weapons against its opponents.

"These are helicopter gunships, tanks, artillery that are slaughtering people, and now there is a risk - and I'm not saying it is going to happen - a risk in his desperation, Bashar al-Assad might use those chemical weapons," McCain said on CNN's "State of the Union with Candy Crowley."

White House Press Secretary Jay Carney told reporters that the chemical weapons arsenal appeared still to be under the Syrian government's control. But a concerned Washington was monitoring the stockpiles and consulting with Syria's neighbours, he said.

"We believe that Syria's chemical weapons remain under Syrian government control," Carney said. "But given the escalation in violence, and the regime's increasing attacks on its own people, we remain very concerned about these weapons."

ARAFAT POISON CLAIM Arabs back global probe

AFP, Doha

Arab officials meeting in Doha have approved an international probe into Yasser Arafat's death, after a report said he may have been poisoned, senior Palestinian official Saeb Erakat said.

Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas "proposed forming an international investigative commission... on the martyrdom of (former) president Arafat" at a meeting of the Arab League's Peace Initiative Committee in Doha on Sunday night, he said.

The committee has approved the proposal.

Earlier this month an investigation by the Qatar-based Al-Jazeera news channel found elevated levels of the radioactive substance polonium on some of Arafat's belongings, reviving suspicions that the veteran leader may have been poisoned.



PHOTO: AFP

Firemen arrive to fight fire next to a mobilhome in Avinyonet de Puigventos village, near Figueras yesterday. A wildfire whipped up by strong winds in northeast Spain has left three people dead and more than 20 injured, trapping thousands of residents indoor.

Thousands flee violence in Assam, 17 killed

REUTERS, Guwahati

At least 17 people, including a six-month-old child, were killed and many wounded in fighting between indigenous tribes and Muslim settlers at the weekend in India's northeastern Assam state, police said yesterday.

Authorities imposed a night-time curfew to prevent more violence and federal troops moved into remote areas to deal with threats of more violence.

About 50,000 villagers fled their homes and took shelter in relief camps out of fear, said Donald Gilfollon, a senior civil servant in the Kokrajhar district, adding that 37 camps were set up to help the refugees and more would be opened if needed.

Sparking the clashes, unidentified men killed four youths on Friday night in the state's Bodo tribe dominated Kokrajhar district, police and district officials said. In retaliation, armed Bodos attacked Muslims, suspecting them to be behind the killings.

Police said unidentified groups set ablaze houses, schools, and vehicles, firing indiscriminately from automatic weapons in populated areas. The body of a six-month-old child was

found by villagers on a river bank along with the body of a woman on Sunday, police said.

"Seventeen people have died in the violence. Many people have left their homes because of insecurity and they are living in relief camps," a senior police officer, who asked not to be named, told Reuters by phone.

Ringed by China, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Bhutan, India's northeast is home to more than 200 ethnic and tribal groups and has been racked by separatist revolts since India's independence from Britain in 1947.

Strong anti-immigrant and anti-Muslim sentiment against Bangladeshi settlers has emerged among Hindu and Christian tribes in recent years.

"The situation is tense and more security forces are (being) sent to far flung areas," S.N. Singh, Assam's inspector general of police, told reporters.

Businesses, offices and schools remained closed yesterday, and streets were deserted. "We can't think of going back home. Our village is vulnerable to attacks and the government failed to give us protection," resident Hiranya Musaharay said by phone from Kokrajhar town where he was staying with relatives.

Pakistan's EC takes oath

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's first independent election commissioner was sworn into office yesterday ahead of general elections widely expected within months.

Fakhrudin Ebrahim, a former judge and ex-governor of southern province Sindh took oath before Supreme Court chief justice Iftikhar Muhammad Chaudhry, the court said.

Ebrahim's appointment to the Election Commission of Pakistan has been welcomed by the ruling coalition and political opposition parties.

"It has been my dream to present a democratic Pakistan to our new generation," the new commissioner said.

Pakistan's president previously had the power to appoint the election commissioner, but a constitutional amendment in 2010 demanded an independent election commission and commissioner.

NEWS IN brief

Team Anna has "proof" of corruption against Pranab

THE HINDU ONLINE

Team Anna on Sunday claimed it has "proof" of corruption against Pranab Mukherjee and it would be made public on July 25 when they launch an indefinite fast coinciding with his swearing-in as President.

"The Prime Minister is corrupt... now we have a corrupt President as well," Team Anna member Arvind Kejriwal said.

Kejriwal was speaking at a rally here to drum up support for Team Anna's indefinite fast in the national capital from Wednesday. He said they were ready for a "fight to the finish" and would not be

Top Indian female revolutionary dies aged 97

AFP, New Delhi

Top Indian female revolutionary Lakshmi Sehgal, who fought Allied forces during World War II, died yesterday following a heart attack, a doctor said. She was 97.

Sehgal, who fought against Britain and its allies in an all-female regiment organised by Indian radical Subhash Chandra Bose, was hospitalised last Thursday after suffering a heart attack in the northern city of Kanpur.

The mother of two daughters slipped into a coma following a brain haemorrhage and was in critical condition until she died, a hospital doctor said.

Egypt releases detainees after Morsi decree

AFP, Cairo

Egypt yesterday began to release detainees held by the military following a decree last week by President Mohamed Morsi, security officials told AFP.

"Prison authorities have begun releasing the detainees," an official told AFP.

Morsi, who was sworn in last month as Egypt's first elected civilian president, on Thursday issued an order to pardon 572 people convicted by military tribunals.

Their release comes on a public holiday marking the 1952 military coup d'etat that ultimately led to the overthrow of the monarchy in Egypt.

The Egyptian president had ordered the formation of a committee to review the cases of civilians



Lakshmi Sehgal

Philippines refuses to budge on South China Sea row

REUTERS, Manila

Philippine President Benigno Aquino refused to budge yesterday on a territorial dispute with China, asking Beijing to respect Manila's rights in the South China Sea and announcing plans to upgrade military capabilities.

Addressing a joint session of the Philippine Congress for the third time since his election in 2010, Aquino asked the Filipino people to unite behind his government's efforts to resolve the dispute peacefully.

"If someone enters your yard and told you he owns it, will you allow that?," Aquino said. "It's not right to give away what is rightfully ours. And so I ask for solidarity from our people regarding this issue. Let us speak with one voice."

The South China Sea has become Asia's biggest potential military flashpoint as Beijing's sovereignty claim over the huge

area has set it against Vietnam and the Philippines, as the three countries race to tap possibly huge oil reserves believed to lie under the seabed.

Malaysia, Taiwan and Brunei also have claims on parts of the sea.

The row was a central issue at an acrimonious Southeast Asian regional summit last week that ended with members failing to agree on a concluding statement for the first time in 45 years.

Aquino said the Philippines had shown restraint by pulling out its navy ship and replacing it with a civilian vessel when Chinese fishing boats entered Scarborough Shoal, which lies in the South China Sea about 124 nautical miles west of the main Philippine island of Luzon.

The Philippines insists it has sole jurisdiction over the uninhabited shoal because it lies within the country's 200 mile exclusive economic zone.

Hasina flies to London

FROM PAGE 20

During her five-day stay, the prime minister will hold important bilateral meetings with leaders of the UK government and opposition, British MPs, the Commonwealth Secretary General and other heads of government participating at the Olympic Games.

"A number of appointments, including media interviews, have already been set while efforts are on to make appointments with some more UK government leaders," said a foreign ministry senior official.

Foreign Minister Dipu Moni left here for London last night in advance to ensure the premier's meetings with the heads of government.

Hasina's entourage will include Ambassador-at-Large Mohammad Ziauddin, some senior officials of the PMO, foreign ministry and her support staff, official media and security teams, sources said.

As per the programme schedule, the prime minister will leave Dhaka by a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight on

Wednesday at 10:00am. On her arrival, she will be received by the Bangladesh High Commissioner in the UK at the London Heathrow Airport.

On the first day of her visit, Hasina will attend an iftar with the Bangla print and electronic media persons in the UK at Hotel St Pancras Renaissance, where she will be staying.

On July 26, Commonwealth Secretary General Kamalesh Sharma, Lord Ahmed of Wimbledon and the All Party Parliamentary Group for Bangladesh will call on her separately.

The BBC and the Sunday Times will also interview the Bangladesh prime minister that day.

On July 27, Leader of the Labour Party Edward Miliband will call on Hasina at her hotel suit. Besides that, Channel 4 will interview Hasina.

The UK chapter of Awami League Advisory Committee will also call on the prime minister at her hotel.

Hasina will then move for the Royal reception and the opening ceremony of the London Olympics at Buckingham Palace. Her

Majesty Queen Elizabeth II will host the reception on Friday afternoon.

The prime minister will leave the palace by a "protected coach" for the Olympics Stadium and attend a brief reception at the Olympic Family Lounge. She will witness the event which may continue until 12 midnight.

On July 28, First Secretary of the State and Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, UK and Northern Ireland William Hague, All Europe Awami League, All Europe Bangabandhu Parishad, British Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce (BBCC) and Bangladesh Caterers' Association (BCA) will make separate call on the premier at her hotel suit.

She will attend an iftar to be hosted by the Bangladesh community in the UK at Park Plaza Westminster Hotel. Hasina is scheduled to leave London at 4:00pm (London time) on July 29 by a Biman Bangladesh Airlines flight and expected to arrive at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport at 8:30am on July 30.

South Asia's river rifts threaten "water wars"

REUTERS, Kanazulwan

As the silver waters of the Kishanganga rush through this north Kashmir valley, Indian labourers are hard at work on a hydropower project that will dam the river just before it flows across one of the world's most heavily militarised borders into Pakistan.

The 330-MW dam is a symbol of India's growing focus on hydropower but also highlights how water is a growing source of tension with downstream Pakistan, which depends on the snow-fed Himalayan rivers for everything from drinking water to agriculture.

Islamabad has complained to an international court that the dam in the Gurez valley, one of dozens planned by India, will affect river flows and is illegal. The court has halted any permanent work on the river for the moment, although India can still continue tunnelling and other associated projects.

"There is definitely potential for conflict based on water, particularly if we are looking to the year 2050, when there could be considerable water scarcity in India and Pakistan," says Michael Kugelman, South Asia Associate at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington.

A US intelligence report in February warned fresh water supplies are unlikely to keep up with global demand by 2040, increasing political instability, hobbling economic growth and endangering world food markets.

A "water war" is unlikely in the next decade, it said, but beyond that rising demand and scarcities due to climate change and poor management will increase the risk of conflict.

In South Asia three major river systems - the Indus, the Ganges and the Brahmaputra - sustain India and Pakistan's breadbasket states and many of their major cities including New Delhi and Islamabad, as well as Bangladesh.

India, as both an upper and lower riparian nation, finds itself at the centre of water disputes with its eastern and western downstream neighbours -- Bangladesh and Pakistan -- which accuse New Delhi of monopolising water flows.

Relations between Indian and Bangladesh cooled partly over the construction of the Farakka Barrage (dam) on the Ganges River, which Dhaka complained to the United Nations about in 1976. The issue remains a sore point even now.



Romney headed to Britain, Israel

AFP, Washington

White House hopeful Mitt Romney, bruised by US President Barack Obama's recent campaign attacks, embarks on a major diplomatic mission this week to meet the leaders of Britain, Israel and Poland.

The six-day overseas trip, his first since clinching the Republican Party's nomination in April, will allow Romney to drill into Obama's foreign policy, including the president's stance on Israeli-Palestinian peace talks and his withdrawal of plans for a missile defence system in Poland.

According to a preliminary schedule sent out yesterday by Romney's campaign, the candidate is set to meet with British Prime Minister David Cameron and top cabinet officials, as well as Labour Party leader Ed Miliband and former prime minister Tony Blair.

Two renowned INDIAN doctors are coming on 28th July 2012 at BD Info Center of PEERLESS HOSPITAL, KOLKATA

NEUROLOGY
Dr. DEBASHISH CHOWDHURY
MBBS, MD (Neuro), DM
Sr. Consultant, Neuromedicine
PEERLESS HOSPITAL, KOLKATA

PSYCHIATRY
Dr. PARTHA SARATHI NANDI
MBBS, MD, DPM
Head of the Department, PSYCHIATRY
PEERLESS HOSPITAL, KOLKATA

CALL FOR APPOINTMENT
HELP LINE: 01965512202, 01965512203
DHAKA INFO CENTER OF PEERLESS HOSPITAL, KOLKATA
House- 394, Main Road- 01, Mirpur DOHS, Mirpur-12, Dhaka