

# Turkey ready to let in refugees: Erdogan

## UAE willing to take part in ground intervention

AGENCIES  
Turkey said it was ready "if necessary" to let in tens of thousands of Syrians fleeing a major Russian-backed regime offensive, as aid agencies warned yesterday of a "desperate" situation.

Thousands of people, including many women and children, are stranded at the Turkish border after an exodus triggered by fierce fighting near Syria's second city Aleppo.

"If they reached our door and have no other choice, if necessary, we have to and will let our brothers in,"

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told reporters.

Turkey's Occupied border crossing, which faces the Bab al-Salama frontier post inside Syria, remained closed yesterday to thousands of refugees gathered there for a third day, an AFP reporter said.

They waited desperately for the moment the gate will open, as Turkish aid trucks delivered food inside Syria.

Carrying what few belongings they still have, Syrians queued up in the cold and rain in squalid camps near the Turkish border, waiting for tents being distributed by aid agencies.

Meanwhile, The United Arab Emirates

(UAE) said yesterday it was ready to send ground troops to Syria as part of an international coalition to fight against Islamic State, reports Reuters.

Asked if the UAE was ready to send troops if need be, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash said at a media briefing in the Emirati capital Abu Dhabi: "This has been our position throughout."

"We have been frustrated at the slow pace ... of confronting Daesh," he added, referring to Islamic State by its Arabic acronym.

"We are not talking about thousands of troops but we are talking about troops on the ground that will lead the way ... that will support ... and I think our position remains the same and we will have to see how this progresses," he said.

Gargash added "US leadership on this" would be a prerequisite for the UAE.

The medical aid agency Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said camps for displaced people in the north of Aleppo province were overwhelmed.

"From what MSF can see the situation in Azaz district is desperate, with ongoing fighting and tens of thousands of people displaced," said Muskilda Zancada, the head of the group's Syria mission.

### SYRIA WAR



Residents line up for water as the earthquake damaged water pipes near the Wei Kuan complex building in Tainan, southern Taiwan, collapsed yesterday. Inset: two rescue workers bring down a victim from the collapsed building. Rescuers raced to free around 120 people buried under the rubble of the complex felled by the earthquake that left 31 dead.



PHOTO: AFP

# N Korea defies warnings

## Fires long-range rocket sparking global outrage

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea launched a long-range rocket yesterday carrying what it called a satellite, but its neighbours and the United States denounced the launch as a missile test, conducted in defiance of UN sanctions and just weeks after a nuclear bomb test.

The US Strategic Command said it had detected a missile entering space, and South Korea's military said the rocket had put an object into orbit.

North Korea said the launch of the satellite Kwangmyongsong-4, named after late leader Kim Jong Il, was a "complete success" and it was making a polar orbit of Earth every 94 minutes. The launch order was given by his son, leader Kim Jong Un, who is believed to be 33 years old.

The launch prompted South Korea and the United States to announce that they would explore the feasibility of deploying an advanced missile defence

system in South Korea, which China and Russia both oppose, "at the earliest possible date."

The European Union lashed North Korea's launch of a long-range



rocket as "yet another outright and grave violation" of its obligations and urged Pyongyang to engage in dialogue with the international community.

North Korea's state news agency carried a still picture of a white rocket that closely resembled a previously launched rocket, lifting off. Another showed Kim surrounded by cheering military officials at what appeared to

be a command centre.

North Korea's last long-range rocket launch, in 2012, put what it called a communications satellite into orbit, but no signal has ever been detected from it.

"If it can communicate with the Kwangmyongsong-4, North Korea will learn about operating a satellite in space," said David Wright, co-director and senior scientist at the Global Security Program of the Union of Concerned Scientists.

The rocket lifted off at around 9:30 am Seoul time on a southward trajectory, as planned.

The UN Security Council was scheduled to hold an emergency meeting late on yesterday to discuss the launch, at the request of the United States, Japan and South Korea, diplomats said.

Isolated North Korea had initially given a Feb 8-25 time frame for the launch but on Saturday changed that to Feb 7-14, apparently taking advantage of clear weather yesterday.

# What rocket launch may mean for world

AP, Seoul

North Korea launched a long-range rocket yesterday. Already, world leaders are lining up to condemn the launch. For help on what it all means, some things to consider about the North's latest move:

**SATELLITE LAUNCH OR MISSILE TEST?**  
Washington, Seoul and others consider the launch a banned test of missile technology. That suspicion is based on the fact that Pyongyang has been openly pushing to manufacture nuclear-tipped missiles capable of striking the US mainland and that the technology used to launch a satellite-carrying rocket into space can be applied to fire a long-range missile.

Simply speaking, a rocket is called a space launch vehicle when it is used to send up a satellite into orbit, but it becomes a missile when its payload is a warhead. Getting a rocket into orbit takes less than 10 minutes. A missile would take about 30 minutes to travel from North Korea to the continental US, experts say.

**WHAT'S NEW ABOUT THIS LAUNCH?**  
After several repeated failures, North Korea successfully put a satellite into orbit aboard its three-stage Unha-3 rocket in December 2012. The North's space agency said yesterday that it successfully put a new Earth observation satellite, the Kwangmyongsong 4, or Shining Star 4, into orbit less than 10 minutes after liftoff, and vowed more such launches. The United States and South Korea are still analysing the launch.

South Korean defence officials say that a North Korean missile developed earlier than the Unha-3 rocket of 2012 has an estimated potential range of up to 10,000 kilometres, which puts Hawaii and the northwest coast of the US mainland within reach.

Outside analysts say the successful flight of a rocket loaded with a satellite weighing about 1 ton would mean the North could probably develop a nuclear-armed long-range missile.

**CONSEQUENCES**  
It's almost certain that the North will be slapped with fresh UN sanctions for the launch. But critics are skeptical over whether any new sanctions can stop North Korea from continuing to pursue its nuclear and rocket programs because China, North's last major ally and biggest aid benefactor and a veto-wielding power in the UN Security Council, is unwilling to cooperate on any harsh punishment on the North.

The launch gives Kim, the North's young leader, a chance to burnish his image domestically ahead of a landmark ruling Workers' Party convention in May.

Because the North claims the launch as a success, it may think it has increased leverage in diplomatic negotiations and eventually propose talks with the United States and South Korea to try to win concessions, said Koh Yu-hwan, a professor at Seoul's Dongguk University.

# NEWS IN brief

**'Sangin on verge of falling to Taliban'**  
BBC ONLINE

The key district of Sangin in the southern Afghan province of Helmand is once again on the verge of being overrun by the Taliban, according to an Afghan army commander. The commander, who wishes to remain anonymous, said most of the district had already been taken. He said the Afghan government now controls just a few square kilometres of Sangin city.

**Tunisia completes barrier with Libya**  
AFP, Ras Jedir

Tunisia on Saturday completed the construction of a barrier along its border with Libya, months after attacks on its national museum and a beach resort that killed dozens of tourists. Defence Minister Farhat Horchani told reporters that the construction of berms and water-filled trenches marks "an important day" for Tunisia in its struggle against "terrorism".

**Yemeni shelling kills two in Saudi**  
AFP, Riyadh

A Saudi soldier and a civilian have been killed in cross-border shelling from rebel-controlled northern Yemen, authorities said late Saturday. A Saudi patrol was hit on Saturday morning in the southwestern region of Assir, killing the soldier, the interior ministry said in a statement carried by state news agency SPA.

**Israeli soldier stabbed, attacker shot**  
AFP, Jerusalem

An Israeli soldier was stabbed and lightly wounded in the southern city of Ashkelon yesterday and the assailant was shot, Israeli police said, the latest in a four-month wave of such attacks. Another soldier grabbed the wounded soldier's gun and shot the attacker after the stabbing near a bus station, the police said, without providing further details on the assailant's condition.

**Rwanda massacre: French general testifies**  
AFP, Paris

A French general has testified for the first time in a probe into the role of French forces during the 1994 Rwandan genocide, sources close to the case said yesterday. General Jean-Claude Lafourcade was questioned in particular over claims that France's UN-mandated Operation Turquoise, which he led, left ethnic Tutsis to be slaughtered by Hutu killers in the western Bisese hills in June 1994, the sources said.



Members of the Garda Public Order Unit and riot police confront protesters at an anti-racism demonstration against the launch of an Irish branch of PEGIDA in Dublin, Ireland. Germany's anti-Islam PEGIDA movement staged rallies in several cities across Europe on Saturday to protest against the arrival of hundreds of thousands of migrants from the Middle East and Africa.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Don't interfere in kingdom's affairs

## Saudi King calls on other countries

REUTERS, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia's King Salman yesterday called on other countries not to interfere in the kingdom's internal affairs in what appeared to be a rebuke to Riyadh's main foe Iran, which it accuses of attempting to stir unrest.



"It is our right to defend ourselves, without interfering in the affairs of others. We call on others to not interfere in our affairs," Salman said in a speech opening the annual Janadriya cultural festival in Riyadh, state news agency SPA reported.

"We cooperate with our Arab and Muslim brothers in all areas in defending our lands and ensuring

their independence and guarding their government systems as sanctioned by their peoples," he added.

Salman did not elaborate, but his remarks seemed aimed at Iran, which Riyadh accuses of destabilising Arab states and spreading sectarianism by backing militias in Syria, Lebanon, Iraq and Yemen and fomenting unrest in Bahrain and Saudi Arabia.

Iran denies seeking to destabilise the region or incite sectarian hatred. It in turn accuses Riyadh of fomenting discord by backing rebels in Syria, going to war in Yemen and propagating an ultra-conservative Sunni Muslim school that declares Shias heretical.

# ZIKA OUTBREAK

## 3,100 Colombian women infected

REUTERS, Bogota

More than 3,100 pregnant Colombian women are infected with the mosquito-borne Zika virus, President Juan Manuel Santos said on Saturday, as the disease continues its rapid spread across the Americas.

There are so far no recorded cases of Zika-linked microcephaly in Colombia, Santos said. The government is now uncertain about a previous projection for up to 500 cases of Zika-linked microcephaly, based on data from other countries battling the disease, he said.

Meanwhile, armed with brooms, spades and hoes, Hondurans by the thousands took part in a day of national mobilisation to try and eradicate mosquitoes carrying the Zika virus. Some 200,000 residents of this Central American nation spent Saturday ridding homes of standing water and fumigating areas suspected of harboring larvae from the virus-carrying mosquito.

Brazil is investigating the potential link between Zika infections and more than 4,000 suspected cases of microcephaly.

# Rubio assailed by rivals

## Trump strong in US Republican debate

AFP, Manchester

Surging Republican hopeful Marco Rubio wilted under sustained attack in the latest US presidential debate, denting his stature going into tomorrow's New Hampshire primary dominated by frontrunner Donald Trump.

The telegenic, 44-year-old Florida senator -- who polls suggest has the best change of winning the White House for the Republicans -- was savaged by his rivals late Saturday for his lack of experience, floundering on a debate stage where he often shines.

A strong showing in New Hampshire would confirm Rubio as the establishment candidate-of-choice for the nomination after his strong third-place finish in Iowa, behind Trump and evangelical US senator Ted Cruz.

Chris Christie, Jeb Bush and John Kasich, meanwhile, need to wrest some of the

momentum away from Rubio if they are to keep their presidential dreams alive as the voting schedule shifts south and west.

The most sustained attack was waged by New Jersey governor Christie, a no-nonsense former federal prosecutor who has campaigned hard in New Hampshire and denigrated Rubio for being controlled by his team.

"Marco, the thing is this. When you're president of the United States... the memorized 30-second speech where you talk about how great America is at the end of it doesn't solve one problem," Christie said.

The senator was mocked for repeating the same rehearsed line over and over again -- doing exactly what Christie criticized him for.

"Let's dispel with this fiction that Barack Obama doesn't know what he's doing. He knows exactly what he's doing," Rubio said on a loop.

