

# NEWS IN brief

## Kenya 'kills' Shebab intel chief

Kenya's army said yesterday it had killed the intelligence chief of the Shebab Islamist insurgent group and 10 other commanders in an air strike in Somalia. Kenya celebrated what it called a "major blow" to the al-Qaeda-linked group with the killing of Mahad Karate, who has a \$5 million US bounty on his head. The Shebab however dismissed the claim as "baseless".

## Erdogan's son probed for money laundering

Italian prosecutors are investigating the son of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan for money laundering amid accusations he smuggled large amounts of cash into the country, a judicial source said yesterday. A probe was launched into Bilal Erdogan after Italian authorities were petitioned by Turkish businessman Murat Hakan Uzan to investigate a purported "getaway operation" from Turkey to Italy.

## Ghana highway bus crash kills 53

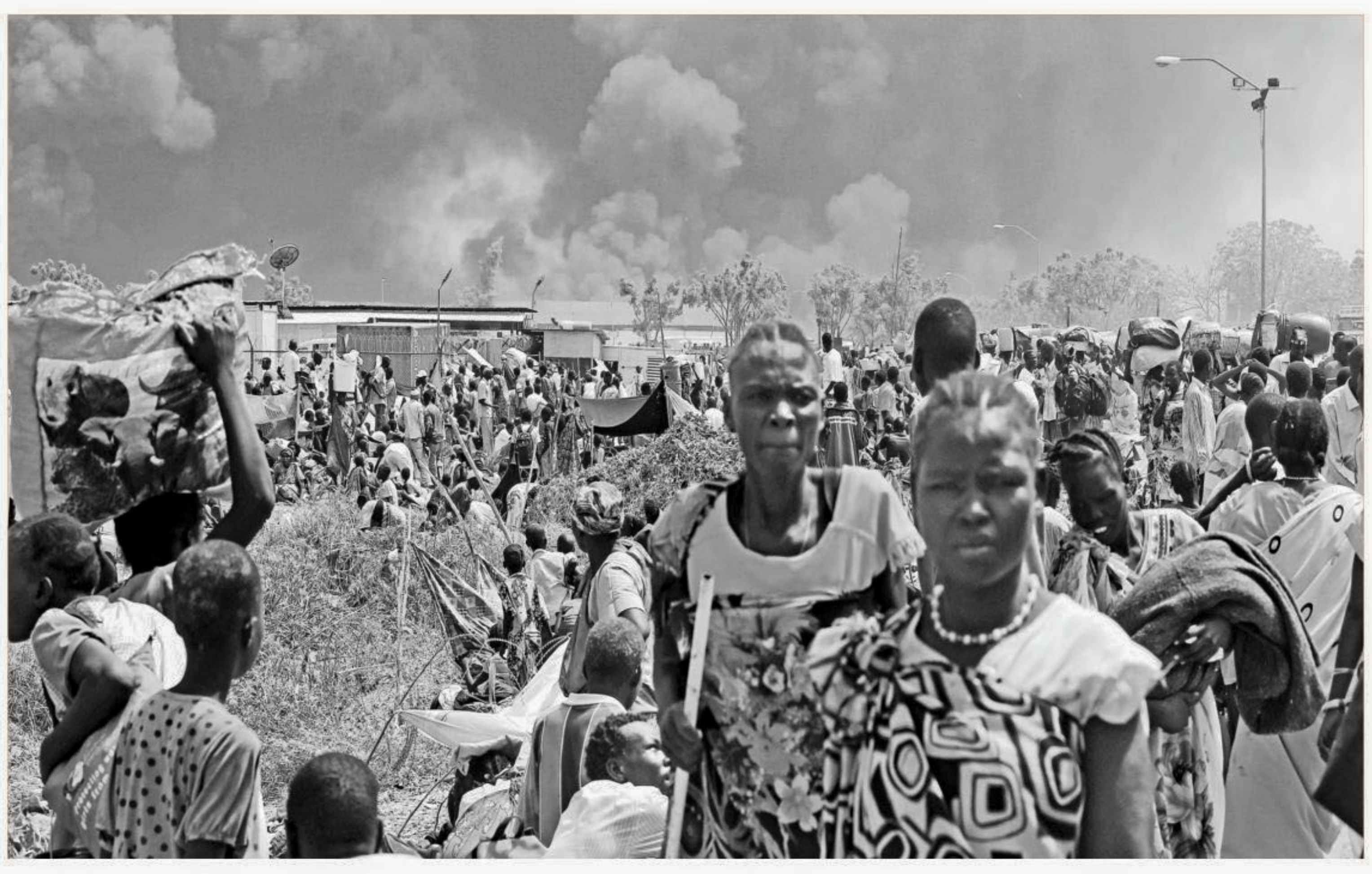
At least 53 people died when a passenger bus collided with a truck carrying tomatoes on a Ghana highway, police said yesterday after one of the country's most deadly road disasters. The head-on collision between the government-operated bus heading to the northern town of Tamale and the cargo truck happened Wednesday evening. At least 23 people are currently receiving treatment in

## 40 men get death over 2014 Tikrit massacre

An Iraqi court yesterday sentenced 40 men to hang over the June 2014 massacre by Sunni jihadists and allied militants of hundreds of military recruits in Tikrit, the judiciary said. The criminal court in Baghdad found 40 of 47 defendants guilty of involvement in the "Speicher" massacre, named after the base near where the victims were captured before being executed.

## Venezuela hikes petrol price sixty-fold

Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro Wednesday ramped up gasoline prices for the first time in two decades, from \$0.01 to \$0.60 per liter, and devalued the bolivar currency in a bid to salvage the economy from crisis. The move risks sparking protests in a volatile country where citizens are struggling with soaring inflation and shortages of basic goods such as cooking oil.



South Sudanese civilians flee fightings in the northeastern town of Malakal yesterday, where gunmen opened fire on civilians sheltering inside a United Nations base, killing at least five people, the latest in a string of atrocities in the war-torn nation, the UN said. The camp houses over 47,000 civilians.

# N Korea prepares for attack on South

## Says Seoul spy agency

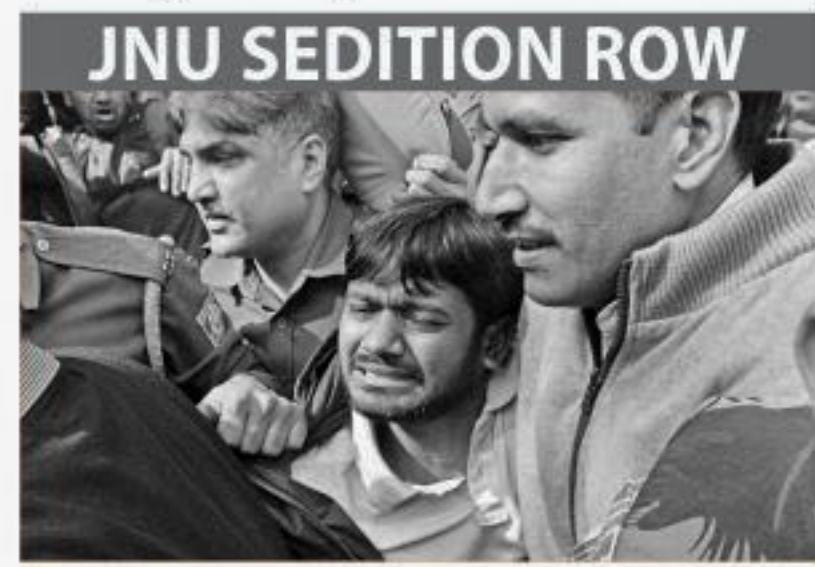
South Korea's spy agency has told ruling party officials that North Korean leader Kim Jong Un recently ordered preparations for launching attacks on South Korea, in the latest sign of high tensions on the Korean peninsula after the North's recent nuclear test and missile launch. One official from the Saenuri Party who attended yesterday's closed-door briefing by the National Intelligence Service says Kim's spy agency has begun work to implement his order to "actively muster capabilities" to launch cyber and other attacks on South Korea. North Korea has a history of attacks against South Korea, but it is impossible to independently confirm what's really happening in the secretive North Korea. The Saenuri official refused to say whether the briefing discussed how the information has been obtained. He requested anonymity because he wasn't authorized to speak to media on the briefing. The spy agency said the attacks could target anti-Pyongyang activists, defectors and government officials. The comments come a day after four of the most advanced US fighter jets flew over South Korea in a clear show of force against North Korea amid a festering standoff over its nuclear and missile ambitions. The international standoff over North Korea deepened earlier this month when Pyongyang ignored repeated warnings by regional powers and fired a long-range rocket carrying what it calls an Earth observation satellite. Washington, Seoul and others consider the launch a prohibited test of missile technology.

# RSS imposing flawed, dead ideology on students

Says Rahul Gandhi as protests spread; SC worried over violence

India's Congress vice-president Rahul Gandhi yesterday said, "RSS is trying to impose its flawed ideology on the students of the nation and we won't let that happen." "This nation will prosper because of our students' imagination.. imposing an ideology on them will not benefit the nation," the Congress VP told reporters after meeting President Pranab Mukherjee about the events at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) that have snowballed into a major controversy about free speech. Last week, a JNU student leader, Kanhaiya Kumar, was arrested on charges of sedition for alleged anti-national slogans at an event during which there were protests against the 2013 hanging of Parliament attack convict Afzal Guru, reports TNN. "If anyone is involved in anti-national activities, he should be punished but nationalism can't be an

excuse to impose a particular ideology on students," Rahul said. "Nationalism is in my blood. I have seen my family making sacrifices again and again for this country." Meanwhile, protests spread across India yesterday, with students and



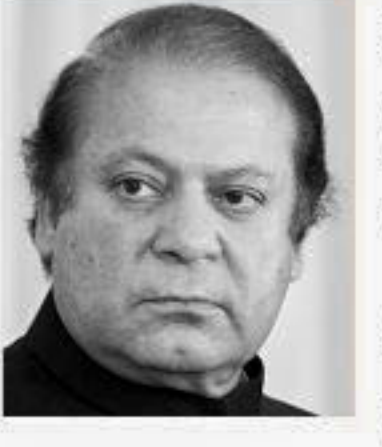
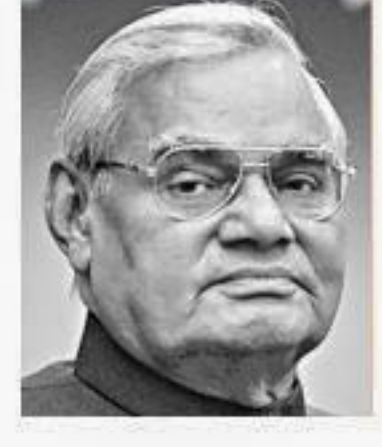
teachers in at least 10 cities demanding the release of Kanhaiya, reports AP. An estimated 5,000 people chanting "release Kanhaiya Kumar" and "down with state terrorism" marched through Delhi city centre in one of the biggest student protests India has seen years.

India's Supreme Court has expressed concern over the violence and asked for a report. Kanhaiya yesterday directly approached the Supreme Court for bail claiming threat to his life in Tihar Jail. The court suggested that they would consider it today. It has also made Delhi's top police official, BS Bassi, directly responsible for Kanhaiya's safety. Separately, JNU teachers yesterday questioned the "scope" of a university probe panel investigating the alleged raising of anti-national slogans on campus. The teachers demanded that more members should be included in the high-level committee. Meanwhile, India's government yesterday told top public universities to fly the country's flag on campus to promote national unity, as thousands protested in the capital's streets against the arrest of a student for sedition.

# Kargil was a 'backstab' for Vajpayee: Pak PM

Pakistani PM Nawaz Sharif on Wednesday acknowledged that Pakistan's occupation of Kargil in 1999 was a "misadventure" and a "stab in the back" of his former counterpart Atal B Vajpayee. The admission by Sharif comes at a time when both countries are locked in efforts to kickstart the comprehensive bilateral dialogue (CBD) which they had announced last December. The CBD is the new name for the composite dialogue process launched in 1998 when both Vajpayee and Sharif were at the helm as prime ministers. The dialogue had been stalled after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Government sources in New Delhi said Sharif's admission had not been communicated to them officially. However, an official said that, if true, this was a very positive development. Sharif's comments are important in the context of the Pathankot attack. The

attack, just before the scheduled meeting between the foreign secretaries in January this year seemed to envelope the government with a sense of deja vu, coming as it did weeks after Modi's Lahore initiative which saw him attending Sharif's daughter's wedding. There was a feeling that the Pakistani agencies had again backstabbed India by allowing Jaish terrorists to attack the Pathankot airbase. This led to India backing out of the talks between the foreign secretaries scheduled for January 15. With India still not convinced about Pakistan's action to bring the Pathankot plotters to justice, the talks remain on hold indefinitely. Pakistani officials said Sharif has repeatedly in the past few years reached out to India saying that he wanted an improvement in ties. Soon after he became PM again in 2013, Sharif had, in fact, said that he wanted to take off from where he had left in 1999 in relations with India.



# Free 'all political prisoners'

UK urges Maldives

Britain on Wednesday urged the release of "all political prisoners" in the Maldives following the jailing of Islamist leader Sheikh Imran Abdulla. Junior foreign minister Hugo Swire said Imran's conviction on terrorism charges "raises worrying questions about freedom of speech, the rule of law and the government's commitment to democracy." Maldives on Tuesday sentenced Imran, the leader of the country's main Islamist party, to 12 years in jail. The opposition Adhaalath Party (AP) leader was charged under a 1990 anti-terrorism law for allegedly inciting unrest during an anti-government rally last May on the capital island Male. His imprisonment comes 11 months after the highly controversial jailing of the country's main opposition leader Mohamed Nasheed, who last month obtained prison leave to undergo urgent surgery in London. Swire said that Tuesday's conviction was a "backward step" after the granting of Nasheed's medical leave and called for further action. "I urge the government to work towards greater judicial independence and to restore confidence in democracy," he said in a statement on the government's website.



Afghan security forces patrol following an operation against Islamic State (IS) militants in Achin district in Nangarhar province on Wednesday. Security forces launched anti-militant operations on February 12, in Achin district, killing at least 46 armed insurgents and wounding 20 others, Pakistan army said.



# 'Until God says come'

Turning 92, Mugabe clings on to power

When UN chief Ban Ki-moon urged African leaders not to cling to power at a summit last month, Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe responded by saying he would continue "until God says 'come'". Mugabe turns 92 on Sunday and, judging by those comments, has no intention of stepping down - despite being Africa's oldest leader and the only president Zimbabwe has known since independence in 1980. His life presidency aspirations could frustrate the feuding big-hitters of his ruling ZANU-PF party who have been trying for years to position themselves for a post-Mugabe political era. Critics blame Mugabe for many of the problems facing the country. They say his policies, including the seizures and redistribution of white-owned commercial farms, drove one of Africa's most promising economies into nearly a decade of deep recession until 2008 that cut its output almost in half. They also say Zimbabwe's sluggish economy and low productivity - the jobless rate is around 85 percent - has left it ill-equipped to deal with the drought. For his part, Mugabe defends his land seizures as necessary to correct colonial injustices and says the economy has fallen victim to sanctions by Western countries that are punishing him for seizing white-owned land.

# Ready to manufacture F-16 in India

Says fighter jet maker Lockheed Martin

US fighter jet maker Lockheed Martin yesterday said it is ready to manufacture F-16 aircraft in India and supports the ongoing talks between the two countries to set up the first manufacturing facility, one of the largest projects under the 'Make in India' initiative. "We are ready to manufacture F-16 in India and support the Make in India initiative," Phil Shaw, chief executive of Lockheed Martin India Private Ltd told reporters at the Singapore Airshow 2016. But the American corporation's executive did not commit any time-frame to have the plant operational, saying the group supports the ongoing government-to-government talks. Shaw expressed strong interest in having the F-16 made in India "soon" without elaborating on the time-frame,

linking it to the progress of the government-to-government talks. Currently, Lockheed Martin manufactures one jet a month from its plant in the US and has a series of contracts and joint ventures in India with over 1,000 employees. It has supplied six C130J Super Hercules planes to India in 2011 and will be delivering another six helicopters next year. Industry observers said Lockheed Martin's "wish to manufacture F-16 is based on the strong demand from the Indian armed forces and would want to lower the cost of the planes for exports by using the low-cost capability in India". "Certainly, Lockheed Martin would want to exploit the engineering skill and low cost capabilities in India and make F-16 very competitive in the fighter jet markets," a well-informed source said.



# Pak Taliban kill 9 cops in northwest

Taliban gunmen killed at least nine Pakistani policemen in twin attacks overnight in a northwest tribal district that borders Afghanistan, officials said yesterday. Two separate groups of militants struck almost simultaneously at a police checkpoint in the Pandiyali area of Mohmand district where they killed seven, and at a solar-powered tube well in Michni area of the same region where they shot dead two police who were standing guard. "The attacks came at around 1:00 am. The militants struck suddenly and killed them without giving them a chance to fight back," Naveed Akbar, an administration official in the region, told AFP.

# SOUTH CHINA SEA DISPUTE 'China should respect int'l court ruling': US, EU

The United States and the European Union warned China on Wednesday that it should respect an international court ruling expected later this year on its dispute with the Philippines over territory in the South China Sea. China claims virtually all the South China Sea and rejects the authority of the Permanent Court of Arbitration in the Hague hearing the dispute, even though Beijing has ratified the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea on which the case is based. Amy Searight, US deputy assistant secretary of defense for South and Southeast Asia, said the United States, the European Union, and allies like Australia, Japan and South Korea must be ready to make clear that the court's ruling must be binding and that there would be costs to China for not respecting it if lost the case. "We need to be ready to be very loud and vocal, in harmony together, standing

behind the Philippines and the rest of the Asean claimants to say that this is international law, this is incredibly important, it is binding on all parties," she told a seminar at Washington's Center for Strategic and International Studies. Searight said the message to China, if it did not respect a negative ruling, should be, "we will hold you accountable." "Certainly, reputational cost is at stake, but we can think of other creative ways to perhaps impose costs as well," she said without elaborating. The Hague tribunal has no powers of enforcement and its rulings have been ignored before. Manila has said the court may hand down a ruling before May. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei said he had "noted" the comments, and repeated China's opposition to the arbitration case and refusal to participate. "The Philippines' "scheme would never succeed", he told a daily news briefing in Beijing.