



India violated UN sanctions on N Korea

IANS, United Nations

India violated the UN Security Council sanctions on North Korea last year, sometimes even going against its own government orders, by importing metals worth \$2.2 million and exporting jewellery valued at more than \$578,000, according to the UN panel monitoring the sanctions. Some of the imports and exports continued even after the Indian government issued a notification banning them in March last year.

The panel of experts established by the Council said in a recent report that it found that between January and September last year India had imported iron and steel valued at \$1.4 million, iron and steel products worth \$234,000, copper worth \$233,000 and \$526,000 of zinc, ignoring the sanctions. India also exported jewellery worth \$578,994, which included diamonds valued at \$514,823, between January and June.

"All exports (from North Korea) after 4 September 2017 violated paragraph 8 of resolution 2371 (2017), while those before 4 September 2017 violated paragraph 26 of resolution 2321 (2016)," the report said.

Those resolutions demand that countries prohibit the import of iron and iron ore from North Korea.

A 2013 resolution expressly banned export of precious and semi-precious stones to North Korea.

In contrast to its dealings with North Korea, India has in other cases strongly supported strict implementation of Council sanctions and in some cases called for more stringent actions, especially relating to terrorism, and criticised countries opposing those restrictions.

The iron imports continued even after March last year when India's Directorate General of Foreign Trade imposed restrictions on importing iron and iron ore from North Korea, even as it said the sanctions lacked clarity, according to a note from India's UN Mission to the sanctions panel last July.

The identities of those who imported from North Korea or exported to it were not included in the report and it is not known if the Indian government took action against those who made the imports in violation of its orders in March or if an investigation is under way.

A UN source familiar with its sanctions monitoring said that India had not provided details about the importers and exporters and the report relied on trade data compiled by the UN and proprietary information from organisations that gather commercial information on trade.

Kim committed to denuclearisation

Says visiting China FM, backs efforts to end state of war in Korean peninsula

REUTERS, Beijing

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un yesterday told a visiting Chinese diplomat that he is committed to denuclearisation, China's foreign ministry said, as diplomatic efforts to bring lasting peace to the Korean peninsula gather pace.

China is North Korea's most important economic and diplomatic backer, despite its anger at North Korea's repeated nuclear and missile tests, and its support for strong UN sanctions against the North.

However, China has also welcomed moves by North Korea to improve ties with South Korea and the United States.

The Chinese government's top diplomat, State Councillor Wang Yi, is visiting North Korea following last week's historic meeting between South Korean President Moon Jae-in and the North's Kim Jong Un, when both pledged to improve ties.

The North surprised the world several days before the summit by declaring it would dismantle its nuclear test site to "transparently guarantee" its dramatic commitment to stop all nuclear and missile tests.

Meeting in the North Korean capital, Pyongyang, Kim told Wang that recent positive changes on the peninsula were beneficial to a peaceful resolution, China's foreign ministry said in a statement.

"Kim Jong Un said achieving the denuclearisation of the peninsula is the firm position of the North Korean side," the ministry said.

Wang told Kim that North Korea had seized the day and made a decisive decision, bringing positive changes.

Last week's summit talks between the leaders of the two Koreas had brought about an opportunity for a political resolu-

tion, Wang added.

China supported an end to the state of war on the peninsula, North Korea's shift to economic development and the resolution of North Korea's legitimate security concerns during the denuclearisation process, he said.

The 1950-53 Korean War, which technically is still going on because a peace treaty has yet to be signed.

Wang also met North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho.

South Korea's presidential official said high-level inter-Korean talks would be held in mid-May to work on implementing the agreement reached by Kim and Moon.

Meanwhile, reports said Pyongyang has



Reports say North Korea may release US detainees as goodwill gesture ahead of Trump-Kim meeting

moved three Americans detained in North Korea from a labor camp to a hotel ahead of a planned summit between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong Un.

CNN cited an unnamed source in a report on Thursday saying the release of the three men was imminent, adding the groundwork for the move came two months ago when North Korea's foreign minister traveled to Sweden and proposed the idea. Former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, who joined Trump's legal team last month, told the Fox News Channel that North Korea would release the three prisoners soon.

Slain journalists remembered

AFP, Kabul

Afghanistan's slain journalists were remembered on World Press Freedom Day yesterday, days after the deadliest attack on the country's media since the fall of the Taliban in 2001.

Ten journalists, including Agence France-Presse chief photographer Shah Marai, were killed Monday, underscoring the dangers faced by the media as the war-torn country slips deeper into violence.

A double suicide blast in Kabul on Monday, claimed by the Islamic State group, left 25 people dead including Marai and eight other journalists, while BBC reporter Ahmad Shah was killed in a separate attack in eastern Khost province.

Afghanistan was last year ranked the third most dangerous country in the world for journalists by Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

Afghan media outlets have condemned the government's failure to protect them, particularly at the scene of suicide attacks where secondary blasts are a constant concern.

Around 100 journalists held a vigil outside the BBC's Broadcasting House in London on Thursday to pay tribute to the fallen journalists, observing a minute's silence while carrying pho-

tographs of Shah.

The attack on the Afghan journalists comes amid increasing concerns over press freedom across Asia, including in the Philippines, Myanmar and Pakistan.

On the same day as the Afghan journalists were killed, Philippine radio broadcaster Edmund Sestoso was shot by assailants in the southern city of Dumaguete, said Human Rights Watch. Sestoso died Tuesday.



"The world is getting worse for journalists," Director of BBC News Francesca Unsworth told AFP at the London vigil.

"It's being normalised by politicians that journalists are not there to serve the people, that they are the enemy in some way. It's a very dangerous precedent."

A collaborative of press advocates



Pakistani police try to stop journalists during a rally to mark World Press Freedom Day in Islamabad, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP



A copy of The Daily Telegraph is seen on a newstand with a nearly full-page photo of French President Emmanuel Macron with the cartoon head of Pepe le Pew, the lovelorn French skunk, in Sydney, yesterday. Macron faced heavy criticism after he described the wife of Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull as "delicious" during a visit to Sydney.

Toilet water for train tea in India

AFP, Kolkata

An Indian tea vendor caught on video taking water from a train toilet before selling his drinks to passengers has been fined amid heightened concern in India over food safety.

The vendor on the Chennai-Hyderabad Express was caught after footage of him and two others coming out of a toilet with large cans used to serve tea and coffee on Indian trains was widely shared.

Indian Railways said in a statement that the "incident has been inquired into in detail" and that the tea seller had been fined the equivalent of \$1,500.

The video was made on a train at Secunderabad in Telangana state. Out of the three vendors seen only one was licensed.

YEMEN CIVIL WAR

Where parents see their children starve to death

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The young mother stepped onto the scale for the doctor. Even with all her black robes on, she weighed only 38kg. Umm Mizrah is pregnant, but starving herself to feed her children.

And her sacrifice may not be enough to save them. The doctor's office is covered with dozens of pictures of emaciated babies who have come through Al-Sadaqa Hospital in Aden, casualties of a three-year war in Yemen that has left millions of people on the edge of famine.

Mothers like Mizrah are often the only defence against the hunger that has killed thousands. They go without meals, they sleep to escape the gnawing in their stomachs. They hide bony faces and emaciated bodies in voluminous black abaya robes and veils.

The doctor asked the mother to get back on the scale holding her son, Mizrah. At 17 months, he was 5.8kg - around half the normal weight for his age.

He showed all the signs of "severe acute malnutrition," the most dire stage of hunger. His legs and feet were swollen, he wasn't getting enough protein. When the doctor pressed a finger into the skin of his feet, the indentation lingered.



Around 2.9 million women and children are acutely malnourished; another 400,000 children are fighting for their lives, in the same condition as Mizrah.

Nearly a third of Yemen's population - 8.4 million of its 29 million people - rely completely on food aid or else they would starve. That number grew by a quarter over the past year.

Aid agencies warn that parts of Yemen could soon start to see widespread death from famine. More and more people are reliant on aid that is already failing to reach people.

The war, now three years old, drags on interminably between Yemen's Shiite Houthis rebels who hold the country's north and the Saudi-led coalition, armed and backed by the United States, which has sought to bomb the rebels into submission with a relentless air campaign in support of the Yemeni government.

It is unknown how many have died, since authorities are not able to track cases. Save the Children late last year estimated that 50,000 children may have died in 2017 of extreme hunger or disease, given that up to 30 per cent of children with untreated cases of severe acute malnutrition die.

NEWS IN brief

Lanka cops arrest presidential aide

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lankan police caught a top aide of President Maithripala Sirisena in the act of allegedly accepting a bribe from a foreign investor yesterday, an anti-corruption official said. Sirisena's Chief of Staff, I H K Mahanama, was arrested with some \$133,000 that he apparently received to release state land for a private sugar company anti-graft commissioner Neville Guruge said.

Pakistan sets April temperature record

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

An April global record temperature has been set in the city of Nawabshah, Pakistan. A maximum of 50.2 degrees Celsius (122.3 degrees Fahrenheit) was reported on Monday. Nawabshah, with a population of 1.1 million, lies in Sindh province, around 180km to the northeast of Karachi.

Sudan closes 13 diplomatic missions

AFP, Khartoum

President Omar al-Bashir has ordered the closure of 13 Sudanese overseas missions and job cuts at the foreign ministry due to an economic crisis in his country, state media reported yesterday. Bashir's order comes days after he fired foreign minister Ibrahim Ghandour after he said Sudanese diplomats abroad had not been paid for months.

Pakistan opens new Islamabad airport

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan's long-awaited new airport in the capital Islamabad opened its doors yesterday, after years of delays. The new airport is set to be able to handle more than nine million passengers annually.

2 teenagers gang raped in India

One commits suicide

REUTERS, New Delhi

Two teenagers have been gang raped in separate incidents in India in the past four days, highlighting a rape epidemic that shows no sign of abating despite tougher penalties introduced last month.

Police said they had not made any arrests in either case.

One victim was a 16-year-old girl who committed suicide after being raped by eight men on Sunday in the Nuh district of the northern state of Haryana, senior police official Nazneen Bhasin told Reuters.

On Tuesday, a 19-year-old woman was raped by five men, including the driver of an autorickshaw she hailed in another district of the same state.

The driver duped the woman into believing that she had missed her bus and offered to drop her off at another bus depot, said a police spokesman, Ravindra Kumar, citing the victim's complaint. She was then taken to a deserted area near Gurugram town and raped by the driver and four accomplices who were waiting there, Kumar said.

"A case of gang rape has been registered after the medical examination of the victim confirmed the same," Kumar said.

The incidents come less than a month after India approved the death penalty for the rape of girls younger than 12, and increased the prison term for the rape of older girls and women following nationwide disgust over a particularly gruesome rape and murder of a Muslim girl in Jammu & Kashmir state.

Israel parliament gives power to Netanyahu to declare war

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

The Israeli parliament has voted in favour of granting Israel's prime minister the power to declare war, solely with the approval of the defence minister.

The vote on Monday amended a law which previously required the whole cabinet to vote on such a move, transferring that authority to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Avigdor Lieberman, his defence chief.

The Knesset approved the amendment 62 to 41, allowing Netanyahu and Lieberman to declare war in "extreme situations".

The change was introduced by Netanyahu shortly before his theatrical presentation in which he claimed to present proof of Iran having secretly pursued a nuclear programme.

According to the Israeli Haaretz newspaper, the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and the Constitution, Law and Justice Committee initially voted against the proposal, but it was later approved by the Knesset during a second and third reading.

Although Netanyahu would currently require approval by Lieberman, it is not uncommon for Israeli prime ministers to be

appointed as minister of defence during their time in office.

David Ben-Gurion, Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak and Shimon Peres all served as ministers of defence during their stint as prime minister.

Netanyahu's speech on Monday came against a backdrop of sustained efforts by the US and its allies in the Middle East to cancel, or at least renegotiate, the 2015 nuclear pact signed between Iran and the US, France, Russia, Germany, China, the UK and the European Union.

He claimed that Iran, after signing the nuclear deal, intensified its efforts to hide files pertaining to its nuclear programme.

Iranian state TV called Netanyahu's accusations propaganda.

Netanyahu has been a leading critic of the nuclear agreement, saying it fails to prevent Iran from gaining nuclear weapons capability.

He has also welcomed US President Donald Trump's pledges to withdraw from the Iran deal if it is not changed.

Trump praised Netanyahu's presentation as "good", saying it and other recent events show he has been "100 per cent right" about Iran.