

N Korea fires two short-range missiles into the sea

North Korea fired two short-range ballistic missiles into the sea Wednesday in what appeared to be a statement of defiance as the United States deployed a nuclear-armed submarine to South Korea for the first time in decades. The launches came as the US and the US-led United Nations Command worked to resolve the highly unusual situation involving a US soldier who crossed into North Korea while on a tour of a border village Tuesday afternoon, AP reported. South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that from 3:30 to 3:46 a.m. North Korea fired two missiles from an area near the capital Pyongyang that flew about 550 kilometers before landing in waters east of the Korean Peninsula. The Japanese military said the missiles landed outside of Japan's exclusive economic zone and no damage to ships or aircraft was reported. The flight distance of the two missiles roughly matched the distance between Pyongyang and the South Korean port city of Busan, where the USS

Kentucky arrived Tuesday afternoon in the first visit by a US nuclear-armed submarine to South Korea since the 1980s. Japanese Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada told reporters the missiles flew on a low trajectory, reached about 50 kilometers (31 miles) in altitude and may have made irregular maneuvers in flight. That language has been used in the past to describe a North Korean weapon modeled after Russia's Iskander missile, which is designed to be maneuverable in flight to improve its chances of evading missile defenses. The South Korean Joint Chiefs of Staff condemned the North Korean launches as "major provocation" that threatens peace and stability in the region and said the South Korean and US militaries were closely monitoring the North for further weapons activities. Wednesday's launches marked the North's first ballistic activity since July 12, when it flight-tested a new solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile that demonstrated potential range to reach deep into the US



A TV screen shows a file image of North Korea's missile launch during a news program at the Seoul Railway Station in Seoul, South Korea, on July 19, 2023. **AHN YOUNG-JOON/AP**

mainland. That launch was supervised by the country's leader Kim Jong-un, who vowed to further bolster his country's nuclear-fighting capabilities in the face of

expanding US-South Korean military activities, which he blamed for worsening the security environment on the Korean Peninsula. Tensions have rose in the

region in recent months as the pace of both North Korean weapons tests and US-South Korean joint military drills have increased in a cycle of tit-for-tat.

NEWS IN BRIEF

More than 700 sentenced to prison over French riots: Minister



AFP - More than 700 people have been sentenced to prison over riots in France late last month, the country's justice minister said Wednesday while lauding the fast-track trials that have alarmed some defence lawyers. In total, 1,278 verdicts have been handed down, with over 95% of defendants convicted on a range of charges from vandalism, theft, arson or attacking police officers.

UN slashes cash aid to Syrian refugees



AP - The UN food agency said Tuesday it will reduce monthly cash aid for 120,000 Syrian refugees living in two camps in Jordan because of what it described as an "unprecedented funding crisis." Jordan is a country of 11 million people and hosts some 1.3 million refugees from Syria. Most of them live in towns and cities across the kingdom, while several tens of thousands have settled in two camps - Zaatari and Azraq. Starting in August, the monthly cash allowance for camp residents will be reduced from \$32 to \$21, the World Food Program said.



Italy put 23 cities on red alert as temperatures could reach 46 Celsius on Wednesday, one of the global hotspots as a wave of extreme heat, wildfires and flooding wreak havoc from the United States to China. An intensifying heatwave has hit southern Europe during the peak summer tourist season, breaking records including in Rome and bringing warnings about an increased risk of deaths and heart attacks,

A firefighter tries to extinguish a wildfire burning near the village of Kandyli, near Athens, Greece, on July 19, 2023. **STELIOS MISINAS/REUTERS**

Reuters reported. Wildfires burned for a third day west of the Greek capital Athens, with air water bombers resuming operations at first light and firefighters working throughout the night to keep flames away from coastal refineries. Fanned by erratic

Europe battles heatwave, fires Record temperatures scorch China

winds, the fires have gutted dozens of homes, prompted hundreds of people to flee and blanketed the area in thick smoke. Temperatures could climb to 43C today, forecasters said. In China, which this week was hosting US climate envoy John Kerry for talks, tourists defied the heat to visit a giant thermometer showing surface temperatures of 80C. In Beijing, which set a new record as temperatures remained above 35C for the 28th day in a row, Kerry expressed hope that cooperation to combat global warming could redefine troubled ties between the two superpowers. A global pattern of heatwaves that have scorched parts of Europe, Asia and

the US this week have thrown that challenge into sharp relief. Temperatures remained high across much of Italy on Wednesday, with 45-46C expected on the Mediterranean island of Sardinia and some inland areas of Sicily likely to see temperatures in the mid-40s. The health ministry said it would active an information hotline and teams of mobile health workers visited the elderly in Rome. While the heatwave appears to be subsiding in Spain, residents in Greece were left surveying the wreckage of their homes after the wildfires. Spain warned of the risk of wildfires in most of the country though residents were allowed to return to

their homes in La Palma Island where a blaze that raged for five days was stabilised in one sector, although it remained active elsewhere. In Germany, the heatwave sparked an unlikely discussion on whether workplaces should introduce siestas for workers. In South Korea, heavy rain has pummelled central and southern regions since last week. Fourteen deaths occurred in an underpass in the city of Cheongju, where more than a dozen vehicles were swamped on Saturday when a river levee collapsed. In the southeastern province of North Gyeong-sang, 22 people died, many from landslides and swirling torrents. In India, flash floods, land-

slides and accidents related to heavy rainfall have killed more than 100 people in the north of the country since the onset of the monsoon season on June 1, where rainfall is 41% above average. In recent days, temperatures in Xinjiang and other parts of Asia, as well as Europe and the United States have shattered records. These unprecedented temperatures have added new urgency for nations around the globe to tackle climate change. With the world's two biggest economies at odds over issues ranging from trade to Taiwan, Kerry told Chinese Vice-President Han Zheng on Wednesday that climate change must be handled separately to broader diplomatic problems.

A lose-lose situation ...

This invitation was seen as a challenge to Netanyahu, who had been waiting for an invitation from the US for more than seven months. Yedioth Ahronoth, an Israeli newspaper, highlighted Netanyahu's long wait for a US invitation and regarded the Israeli president's invitation instead of the prime minister's as a significant snub, marking the second time in less than a year such an occurrence had taken place.

During his meeting with Herzog, US President Joe Biden stressed the need for a consensus-based approach to address the contentious judicial reform plan. This plan aims to bring changes to Israel's judicial system, limiting the powers of the Supreme Court and granting cabinet members greater authority in judicial matters. However, the bill has sparked unprecedented internal protests in Israel for the past seven months. In his meeting with Her-

zog, Biden indirectly supported the internal protests against Netanyahu's cabinet, commending what he described as the strength of democracy in Israel. The situation remains tense as Israel navigates through this period of political upheaval and uncertainty. The US and other supporters of Israel in Europe are not only opposing the contentious judicial reform bill but also expressing their disapproval of Israel's settlement policy and the hardline positions held by some members of Netanyahu's cabinet. The extremist

cabinet in Israel is facing internal pressure while also failing to make progress in one of its crucial regional initiatives - the Abraham Accords aimed at normalizing relations with Arab countries. This effort has been hindered, especially in recent months, as relations between Iran and Saudi Arabia have shown signs of warming, affecting the dynamics of the Arab countries' relations with Iran. The outcome of the judicial reform bill presents a lose-lose situation for Netanyahu. If the cabinet withdraws the bill, it will

be seen as an internal defeat for the prime minister, weakening the foundation of the ruling extremist coalition and providing a significant achievement for internal rival factions. On the other hand, if Netanyahu persists in advancing the bill, external pressure will continue to mount, leading to further isolation of the cabinet from Israel's supporters, while internal protests could escalate into violence. This ongoing situation, characterized by internal protests, external pressure, and internal instability, leaves a murky outlook for

the future of Israelis. The Elnashra website recently published the findings of a new academic study conducted by Israel's "ERI" research institute, revealing a serious crisis of trust between Israeli youth and the authorities. The study indicates that a majority of young people (54%) have admitted to experiencing deteriorating internal relations and feelings of personal insecurity and instability, prompting them to consider emigrating from Israel. Considering the current conditions in Israel and the growing opposition

to Netanyahu's cabinet, it is plausible that the far-right coalition may meet the same fate as previous coalitions in recent years, resulting in its collapse and potentially marking the end of Netanyahu's political life. However, what remains uncertain is whether Netanyahu's future will involve a peaceful retirement as a citizen or if he will face legal repercussions due to the criminal cases pending in the judicial system. Some speculate that his pursuit of judicial reforms might be related to his personal situation in this regard.