

China

Man held over 'Firewall'

Party complains about 'fake' Twitter account

BEIJING, Sept 18, (Agencies): The youth wing of China's ruling Communist Party on Monday said it had complained to social network Twitter about a fake account set up in its name that has tweeted sarcastic comments about the Communist Party.

China under its President Xi Jinping blocks Twitter and other Western sites, such as Facebook and Google, but that has not stopped some state media and government departments from setting up Twitter and Facebook accounts in Chinese and English as they seek to expand their global footprint.

In a brief statement on its Weibo account, China's answer to Twitter, the Youth League labelled the @ComYouthLeague Twitter account "completely fabricated", saying it had asked for it to be "handled". The statement did not elaborate.

It displayed a screenshot of the account with the phrase "fake goods" stamped across it in Chinese.



Xi

A second picture showed the Youth League's official social media accounts, including those on Weibo and WeChat. It did not include any foreign social media sites.

Twitter did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The account the Youth League labelled as fake sent its first tweet on Sept 12, and has sent 10 tweets to date.

One linked to an article on the official Xinhua news agency about a Chinese being detained for selling VPN services that help people skirt internet curbs and asked why people needed to do this, if China had such a "wonderful internet culture".

It is not clear who set up the account, but it calls itself the Youth League's official Twitter account and carries a link to the League's official website.

Adding to the confusion, another Twitter account claiming to be the Youth League's, @ccylichina, was also launched last week, though its content conforms to the party's point of view. Neither account is officially verified by Twitter.

The Youth League did not answer telephone calls seeking comment.

The Youth League has 88 million members aged between 14 and 28, mainly party and government officials who have been groomed for decades as potential future rulers.



China holds over 'Great Firewall': Chinese authorities have detained a software developer for selling computer services that allow internet users to evade China's "Great Firewall," which blocks access to thousands of websites, from Facebook to Twitter to some news outlets, a media report said Monday.

The software developer, who is from the coastal province of Jiangsu, near Shanghai, was arrested in late August and held for three days for building a small business to sell virtual private networks, the Global Times newspaper reported, citing the official Xinhua news agency. VPNs create encrypted links between computers and allow Chinese web users to see blocked sites by hiding the address from government filters.

Subscribers paid 10 yuan, or about \$1.50, for one month of the developer's service. Authorities also seized the developer's earnings, which totaled 1,080 yuan, or about \$165.

Some internet businessmen have faced far harsher punishments: Earlier this year, a 26-year-old entrepreneur who sold VPN services in Dongguan, near Hong Kong, was sentenced to nine months in prison.



Chinese space official promoted: A senior Chinese space official and military officer has been promoted to run the People's Liberation Army's key equipment development department, the military said on Monday, part of a reshuffle ahead of next month's Communist Party congress.

China's armed forces, the world's largest, are ramping up their capabilities with new equipment like aircraft carriers and stealth fighters as the country pursues a more assertive stance in the disputed East and South China Seas and seeks to project power far from home shores.

In a brief story on its website about a military technology exhibition in Beijing, the Defence Ministry named Li Shangfu as the new head of the military's Equipment Development Department. It gave no other details of his appointment.

According to his official resume, Li was previously director of one of China's main satellite launch sites in Xichang in the southwestern province of Sichuan and has been involved in missions to explore the moon.

The U.S. Defense Department has highlighted China's increasing space capabilities, saying it was pursuing activities aimed at preventing other nations from using space-based assets in a crisis.



Suspected Japanese spy arrested: Chinese authorities on Monday arrested a Japanese citizen suspected of spying, local state media said.

The arrest was made in the port city of Dalian in the northeastern Liaoning province, which borders North Korea, the official Dalian Daily's online report said.

The report said Ken Higuchi was being investigated by the Dalian City National Security Bureau on suspicion of spying against China, and that prosecutors had approved his arrest.

The character given for Higuchi's first name could also be the names Takeshi or Takeru.

It was unclear from the report, however, whether Higuchi was a new case or whether he had been detained earlier, and the latest development was his formal arrest.

China detained six Japanese nationals in March on suspicion of illegal activities. Four of the six returned to Japan in July, three of whom were there doing geological research into hotspots, according to their employer.



Shanghai temple moves hall on rails: The main hall and statues of a century-old Buddhist temple in central Shanghai have been moved 30 metres (100 feet) on rails to ease crowding at the popular site.

As many as 100,000 people visit the Jade Buddha Temple every day and Chinese authorities were concerned about overcrowding and the fire risk created by visitors burning incense.

The solution? To delicately place the 2,000-tonne Mahavira Hall on specially-constructed rails and move it slightly northwards to create more space in adjacent areas.

The job, which involved elevating the building by a metre, was completed on Sunday after just two weeks of works.



In this photo provided by South Korea Defense Ministry, US Air Force B-1B bomber, F-35B stealth fighter jets and South Korean F-15K fighter jets fly over the Korean Peninsula during a joint drills, on Sept 18. Monday's flyovers came three days after North Korea fired an intermediate-range missile

over Japan into the northern Pacific Ocean in apparent defiance of US-led international pressure on the country. The North conducted its sixth nuclear test on Sept 3 and was subsequently hit with tough, fresh UN sanctions, (AP)

North Korea

'Sanctions will spur N. Korea to hasten nuke plans'

US flies bombers over Korea

SEOUL, South Korea, Sept 18, (Agencies): The US military flew advanced bombers and stealth jets over the Korean Peninsula and near Japan in drills with South Korean and Japanese warplanes on Monday, three days after North Korea fired a missile over Japan.

The United States often sends powerful military aircraft in a show of force in times of heightened animosities with North Korea. The North launched its latest missile as it protested against tough new UN sanctions over its sixth nuclear test on Sept. 3.

Monday's flyovers over the Korean Peninsula involved two B-1Bs and four F-35Bs from the US military and four F-15K fighter jets from South Korea, according to the South Korean and US militaries. The US and South Korean planes practiced attacks by releasing live weapons at a firing range in South Korea, the US Pacific Command said in a statement.

The US warplanes also conducted formation training with Japanese fighter jets over waters near the southern island of Kyushu, according to the Pacific Command.

Since Kim Jong Un took power in North Korea in late 2011, his nation has tested weapons at a torrid pace. The country flight-tested two intercontinental ballistic missiles in July. Its nuclear test in September was its most powerful to date.

Many experts say it's only a matter of time until Kim achieves his stated objective of possessing reliable nuclear-tipped missiles capable of striking anywhere in the mainland US.

State media on Saturday quoted Kim as saying that North Korea's final goal "is to establish the equilibrium of real force with the US and make the US rulers dare not talk about military option" for the North.

Alarmed by North Korea's advancing weapons programs, many conservatives in South Korea have called

for the reintroduction of US tactical nuclear weapons in the South. But the liberal-leaning government of President Moon Jae-in said it has no intention of requesting that the US bring back such weapons.

South Korean Defense Minister Song Young-moo told lawmakers on Monday that it is "not proper" to reintroduce US nuclear weapons. He previously said the idea should be "deeply considered" by the allies, inflaming already-heated debate on the issue.

Meanwhile, China's Communist Party newspaper on Monday criticized the United States for demanding that Beijing put more pressure on North Korea to rein in its weapons programs.

"The so-called 'China's responsibility theory' is essentially moral kidnapping," the People's Daily said in a commentary. It also noted that sanctions should not harm "legitimate economic and trade exchanges between North Korea and the outside world" and the lives of everyday people.

Frustrated

China accounts for about 90 percent of North Korea's trade and sends largely free crude oil shipments to the North. Beijing has been increasingly frustrated with North Korea's nuclear drive, but it still doesn't want the North to collapse and cause a wave of refugees to cross the border into China and American troops to move into North Korea.

China's foreign ministry said Monday that military threats being made by North Korea and the US were counterproductive.

"Some related parties keep sending threatening messages both in words and deeds that include warnings of military actions to each other," ministry spokesman Lu Kang told reporters at a regular briefing. "But actually, these kinds of actions didn't help solve

the problem but further complicate the situation, which do no good to the resolution of the peninsular issue."

Instead, he said, the international community should strictly implement the sanctions imposed on North Korea by the UN Security Council.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel also said in comments reported Monday by the Bild daily that the world should wait for the sanctions to bite, but that "visions and courageous steps" such as direct negotiations with North Korea are also needed.

In a related news, in Beijing, the official Xinhua news agency said China and Russia began naval drills off the Russian far eastern port of Vladivostok, not far from the Russia-North Korea border.

Those drills were being conducted between Peter the Great Bay, near Vladivostok, and the southern part of the Sea of Okhotsk, to the north of Japan, it said.

The drills are the second part of China-Russian naval exercises this year, the first part of which was staged in the Baltic in July. Xinhua did not directly link the drills to current tension over North Korea.

China and Russia have repeatedly called for a peaceful solution and talks to resolve the issue.

Meanwhile, the more sanctions the United States and its allies impose on North Korea, the faster it will move to complete its nuclear plans, the reclusive nation's official KCNA news agency said on Monday, citing a foreign ministry spokesman.

The latest sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council represent "the most vicious, unethical and inhumane act of hostility to physically exterminate the people of the DPRK, let alone its system and government," the spokesman said on Monday, using the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.



South Korean President Moon Jae-in and his wife Kim Jung-sook wave before leaving for the United States at the Seoul military airport in Seongnam, South Korea, on Sept 18. (AP)



Abe



Duterte

Asia

Abe to decide poll timing: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said he will decide on the timing of a snap general election after he returns on Friday from a trip this week to address the United Nations.

"Regarding the dissolution of the lower house, I would like to refrain from commenting on every question, but I would like to make a decision when I return home," Abe told reporters on Monday as he left for New York, according to a Foreign Ministry transcript.

Abe is considering calling a general election, the third since he swept to power in December 2012, as early as Oct. 22, to take advantage of a rebound in his approval ratings after a series of scandals for this coalition government, and disarray in the main opposition party, government and ruling party sources told Reuters on Sunday.

Abe is scheduled to speak at the UN General Assembly and the New York Stock Exchange on Wednesday, and is seeking to arrange meetings with US President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in before returning to Japan on Friday. (RTRS)



'Set up UN rights office': Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte on Monday invited the United Nations' human rights monitor to set up office in the country and join all anti-narcotic operations, amid growing public and global criticism of his bloody war on drugs.

"I will personally through an official channel invite the human rights commission to set up a satellite office here," Duterte told reporters after attending the wake of a slain policeman, referring to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

"I will tell police station commanders, do not operate without a representative of the UN human rights commission and everybody must wear a camera so it will all be transparent."

The comments were a marked change from Duterte's usual disdain for the United Nations, which he once threatened to withdraw from after UN human rights experts and rapporteurs expressed concern about the huge death toll in his signature war on drugs.

Thousands of people, mostly poor urban Filipinos, have been killed since he took office in June 2016.

The OHCHR had no immediate comment on Duterte's remarks.

Duterte has also made a public debate with UN envoys a prerequisite for any visit or investigation related to the anti-drug campaign.

His outreach to the United Nations comes as the Philippine National Police

(PNP) comes under heavy criticism over the deaths in August of two teenagers. Police say they were killed in self defence, but activists and political opponents have said it was cold-blooded murder. (RTRS)



Man held over murder of Japanese: Indonesian police have arrested a man over the murder of an elderly Japanese couple whose bodies were found burned beyond recognition on the holiday island of Bali.

The scorched corpses of Nurio Matsuba, 76, and his 73-year-old wife Hiroko were discovered on September 4 by their Indonesian foster son in Jimbaran, a resort area in the southern part of the island.

Police detained a 25-year-old Balinese man, identified as I Putu Astawa, for the

fatal stabbings early Monday.

Investigators, who are not looking for any other suspects, believe the murders were an opportunistic robbery gone wrong.

"His motive in committing the murder is his debt. Putu owed Rp 10 million (\$750). He took a shortcut which was theft," Bali Police spokesman Hengky Widjaja said at a press conference.

Police allege he tied up and gagged Hiroko, who was killed first, before killing her husband, using a knife he found at the front door.

Later in the evening, Astawa returned to the house and set the bodies alight with gasoline and a lighter, police believe.

Widjaja said Astawa entered the



Putu Astawa (center), a suspect in the murder of an elderly Japanese couple in the Indonesian resort island of Bali, is escorted to a press conference at the Denpasar police station on Bali island on Sept 18. Indonesian police have arrested a man over the murder of an elderly Japanese couple whose bodies were found burned beyond recognition on the holiday island of Bali. (AFP)

Matsuba's home intending to steal money, but "because the victims fought back, he murdered them". (AFP)



Fuel pipe leak disrupts flights: Thousands of airline passengers were stranded in Auckland Monday after a pipeline leak cut jet fuel supplies to New Zealand's largest airport, forcing planes to remain grounded, authorities said.

The pipeline operator, Refining NZ, said repairs would take at least a week, possibly two, raising the prospect of ongoing major disruption.

Air New Zealand said 2,000 passengers were affected by flight cancellations on Monday alone as it attempted to minimise fuel usage.

It said the leak meant fuel supplies at Auckland airport were down to 30 percent of normal capacity and some long-haul flights were having to make additional refuelling stops in Brisbane and Fiji.

"Aviation is a critical transport industry and the lifeblood for tourism. We are naturally extremely disappointed with this infrastructure failure," the airline said.

Refining NZ said it believed the pipeline from its refinery to the airport was accidentally damaged by a digger and a 30-strong team was working around the clock to fix the pipe.

But the danger posed by spilled fuel was slowing progress.

"We need to be absolutely clear that it is safe to work in before we can start welding in the new section of pipe," it said.

Deputy Prime Minister Paula Bennett said it was not the government's fault that such an important piece of infrastructure had been left so vulnerable.

"It's a private company that owns it and you would expect them to have better contingency plans," she told Radio New Zealand.

"(It's) a very rare occurrence, it hasn't happened for 30 years and we don't expect it to happen again." (AFP)