

By Agence France-Presse, Updated: 4/26/2010

## WHO chief visits N.Korea: state media

**The head of the World Health Organisation began a visit to Pyongyang Monday, along with a delegation from the Red Cross, North Korea's official media reported.**



WHO director-general Margaret Chan and her party arrived in the North Korean capital at the same time as one led by Massimo Barra, chairman of the Standing Commission of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) reported.

The agency did not disclose the purpose of Chan and Barra's visit but an earlier report from China's official Xinhua news agency said Chan would visit hospitals and medical care establishments in the impoverished, secretive state.

KCNA said North Korea's government hosted a reception for Chan's delegation.

Chan, a former director of health services in Hong Kong, was appointed director-general of the Swiss-based WHO in 2006.

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Chan's visit to Pyongyang comes amid reports of a severe food crisis in North Korea. Good Friends, a Seoul-based welfare group with contacts in the North, said in February 2,000 people had starved to death there this winter.

A growing number of North Koreans have fled their homeland, which has relied on outside aid to help feed its people since a famine in the 1990s killed hundreds of thousands.

The WHO office in Pyongyang was not immediately available for comment on Chan's visit.

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