

Seoul plays down Kim’s health report

AFP, SEOUL

South Korea yesterday played down a report that the North’s leader Kim Jong Un was being treated after surgery, as speculation mounted over his absence from a key anniversary.

Pyongyang marked the birthday of its late founder, Kim’s grandfather Kim Il Sung, on April 15 -- by far the most important date in its annual political calendar -- but Kim was not seen in attendance.

Daily NK, an online media outlet run mostly by North Korean defectors, said Kim had undergone a cardiovascular procedure earlier this month and was recovering at a villa in North Phyongan province.

“Excessive smoking, obesity, and fatigue were the direct causes of Kim’s urgent cardiovascular treatment,” it cited an unidentified source inside the country as saying.

No confirmation of the report was immediately available.

But it triggered widespread speculation, with CNN citing a US official saying that Washington was “monitoring intelligence” that Kim was in “grave danger” after undergoing surgery.

The South’s Yonhap news agency, meanwhile, cited an unnamed government official saying that reports Kim was seriously ill were “not true”.

But there were no explicit denials that Kim, who is in his mid-30s, had had some kind of procedure.

Previous absences from the public eye on Kim’s part have prompted speculation about his health. In 2014 he dropped out of sight for nearly six weeks before reappearing with a cane. Days later, the South’s spy agency said he had undergone surgery to remove a cyst from his ankle.



A woman wearing a burqa holds her child as she waits to receive free wheat from the government emergency committee during a government-imposed lockdown on the capital city as a preventive measure against the COVID-19 coronavirus, in Kabul, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

HRW’S ANNUAL REPORT

Pandemic ‘amplifies press freedom threats’

AFP, PARIS

The coronavirus pandemic is exacerbating threats to press freedom around the world, with authoritarian states including China and Iran suppressing details of the outbreak, activists said on Tuesday.

Paris-based Reporters Without Borders (RSF) said in its annual press freedom rankings the pandemic was “highlighting and amplifying the many crises” already casting a shadow on press freedom.

The outbreak had encouraged some regimes to “take advantage of the fact people are stunned and mobilisation has weakened to impose measures that would be impossible to adopt in normal times”, RSF secretary general Christophe Deloire told AFP.

The rankings saw few major changes from last year, with Nordic countries regarded as the most free and isolated states Turkmenistan and North Korea footing the list of 180 countries.

RSF accused China and Iran -- in 177th and 173rd place respectively -- of censoring major coronavirus outbreaks.

Alluding to accusations that Beijing concealed the initial extent of the outbreak, it said China “maintains its system of information hyper-control, whose negative effects for the entire world have been seen

during the coronavirus public health crisis”.

Europe has also not been immune -- Hungary, under Prime Minister Viktor Orban, has passed a special law on false information which was a “completely disproportionate and coercive measure”.

RSF said there was a “clear correlation” between suppression of media freedom in response to the coronavirus pandemic and a country’s ranking in the index.

While Norway topped the index for the fourth year in a row, Finland was again the runner-up.

North Korea took last position from Turkmenistan, and Eritrea continued to be Africa’s lowest-ranked country at number 178.

Published annually by RSF since 2002, the World Press Freedom Index assesses factors such as media independence, self-censorship, the legal framework and transparency based on a questionnaire filled out by experts.

Turkey, where President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been repeatedly criticised for cracking down on press freedom, rose three places to 154th but RSF said this was because of “other countries falling” rather than positive change.

It said censorship of the media, especially online media, has been stepped up in Turkey and the country was “more authoritarian than ever.”

States at UN demand access to vaccines

AFP, UNITED NATIONS

The 193 members of the UN General Assembly on Monday adopted by consensus a resolution that calls for “equitable, efficient and timely” access to any future vaccines developed to fight coronavirus.

The resolution also highlights the “crucial leading role” played by the World Health Organization, which has faced criticism from Washington and others about its handling of the pandemic.

The resolution, which was drafted by Mexico and received US support, calls for strengthening the “scientific international cooperation necessary to combat COVID-19 and to bolster coordination,” including with the private sector.

The call for cooperation comes as research laboratories and pharmaceutical manufacturers launch expensive efforts to develop vaccines and other therapeutics that could be critical in fighting the pandemic, which has already killed more than 170,000 people and sent world economies into tailspin.

Lockdown worsens LatAm’s ‘domestic hell’

AFP, BUENOS AIRES

Weeks of confinement imposed by the coronavirus pandemic is taking a chilling toll on women and girls across Latin America, where the number of calls to helplines have soared, made by victims of domestic violence who cannot flee.

Appeals to help women experiencing violence in the home have doubled in recent weeks, from the United Nations to Pope Francis -- Latin America’s first pontiff.

“The confinement is plunging thousands of women into hell, trapped with an attacker who they are more afraid of than the coronavirus,” said Victoria Aguirre from the Argentine NGO MuMaLa, which campaigns against violence related to macho culture.

In Argentina, 18 women have been killed by their partner or ex-partners during the first 20 days of a mandatory quarantine instituted by the government from March 20. Appeals to helplines in Argentina are up nearly 40 percent.

The country is still reeling from the shocking murder of Cristina Iglesias and her seven-year-old daughter Ada, killed by her mother’s partner in the early days of the lockdown. Their two bodies were found buried in the backyard of their home in a town in Buenos Aires province.

Elsewhere, police -- alerted by neighbors -- arrived in the nick of time to save a woman whose husband attacked her with a hammer.

A staggering 3,800 women were murdered in Latin America in 2019, an 8 percent increase on the previous year, according to preliminary data from the Observatory for Gender Equality at CEPAL, the UN’s Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

“Unfortunately, many women and girls are particularly exposed to violence precisely where they should be protected, in their own homes,” said UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who issued a call for a domestic violence “ceasefire” as lockdowns extended into April.

The situation is similarly grim in Mexico, Brazil, Chile and elsewhere, where measures taken by the authorities often fall far short of properly protecting victims.

In Mexico, around 200 women have been murdered since quarantine measures began. In Sao Paulo, the epicenter of Brazil’s virus outbreak, reports of domestic violence have risen by 30 percent since the state government imposed a stay-at-home order.

In Chile, which has opted for selective confinement in the most affected areas plus a nighttime curfew, complaints of domestic violence are up 500 percent in Providencia, an upper class neighborhood in the capital Santiago.



PHOTO: AFP

Amnesty: Saudi carried out Record executions in 2019

Saudi Arabia executed a record 184 people last year, according to Amnesty International, which said it was the highest number the rights organisation has ever recorded in a single year in the country. In its 2019 global review of the death penalty published on Tuesday, Amnesty reported Saudi Arabia stepped up its use of the death penalty even as the rest of the world saw a decline in executions, including in the Asia-Pacific region. The majority of executions were for drug-related offences and murder. Only 20 countries are responsible for all known executions worldwide.

Netanyahu, Gantz agree to form unity govt

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reached a historic deal Monday with one-time rival parliament speaker Benny Gantz to form a unity government, ending the country’s worst-ever political crisis. The three-year agreement allows Netanyahu, 70, to stay in office for 18 months, during which he is due to stand trial on corruption charges he has long denied. Gantz, 60, will then take over as premier for the remaining 18 months as Netanyahu bows out after 12 years in office -- the longest premiership in Israeli history. Netanyahu, head of the right-wing Likud party, had squared off against Gantz in three inconclusive elections over the past year, but neither had secured enough support to form a viable governing coalition.

Chad repays \$100m Angola debt with cattle

Angola has received a herd of more than 1,000 cattle from Chad, a government official said Monday, the latest shipment of an unusual debt repayment deal. The landlocked central African country, impoverished despite its oil revenues, contracted a \$100 million (92-million-euro) debt with Angola in 2017. As repayment, Angola agreed to take 75,000 cattle, for delivery over five years from 2020, to help it develop its beef industry. After oil, livestock is Chad’s second largest source of export earnings. The deal works well for Angola, which is keen to revive its livestock farming sector as part of efforts to diversify the oil-dependent economy. The second largest crude producer in sub-Saharan Africa spends \$350 million each year to import meat for its 30 million people.

SOURCE: AFP



A woman (C) is whipped by the religious police in a public building in Banda Aceh yesterday, as punishment after he was caught in close proximity with a man who is not her husband in a hotel.

‘Worst yet ahead of us’

Warns WHO, urges unity, solidarity

AGENCIES

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the director-general of the World Health Organization, has warned that “the worst is yet ahead of us” if the world doesn’t unite to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

“Without national unity and global solidarity, trust us, the worst is yet ahead of us,” he said during a press briefing.

Tedros compared the virus to the 1918 flu that killed 675,000 people in the US and tens of millions of people around the world. But he argued that the world now has the technology to prevent “that kind of crisis.”

“Let’s prevent this tragedy,” he said. “It’s a virus that many people still don’t understand.”

Ghebreyesus didn’t explain exactly how he expects the virus’ toll to intensify, but he argued that partisanship and political divisions are exacerbating the crisis.

“The cracks between people and the cracks between parties is fueling it,” he said. “Don’t use this virus as an opportunity to fight against each other or score political points. It’s dangerous. It’s like playing with fire.”

Ghebreyesus said there were no secrets at the UN agency after being blasted by the United States for allegedly downplaying the initial COVID-19 outbreak in China.

The virus, which emerged late last year in the Chinese city of Wuhan, has so far infected nearly 2.5 million people globally and killed more than 170,000, according to an AFP tally.

Washington is the biggest contributor to the WHO but Trump is freeing funding, alleging that the organisation mismanaged and covered up the spread the virus.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

LATEST UPDATES

DEATH TOLL CROSSES 170,000

The worldwide death toll from the novel coronavirus pandemic rose to 171,249 yesterday, according to a tally from Johns Hopkins University at 1130 GMT yesterday. More than 2,494,915 declared cases have been registered. In US, the death toll stood at 42,364 with 787,960 infections. Italy is the next most-affected country with 24,114 deaths and 181,228 confirmed infections. It is followed by Spain with 21,282 fatalities, France with 20,294 deaths and Britain with 16,550 deaths.

GLOBAL HUNGER COULD DOUBLE

The number of people facing acute food insecurity could nearly double this year to 265 million due to the economic fallout of COVID-19, the United Nations’ World Food Programme (WFP) said. The impact of lost tourism revenues, falling remittances and travel and other restrictions linked to the coronavirus pandemic are expected to leave some 130 million people acutely hungry this year, adding to around 135 million already in that category.

NEW CASES IN NORTHWEST CHINA

A northwestern province on the frontline of China’s coronavirus battle yesterday reported its first cases in nearly three weeks, all involving travellers from overseas, as imported infections started to level off elsewhere. The province of Shaanxi reported 21 new infections from abroad, as well as seven cases with no clinical symptoms, all travellers on a commercial flight from Moscow bound for the Chinese capital of Beijing.

AUSTRALIA EASES RESTRICTIONS

Declaring Australia was on the road to recovery with new coronavirus infections almost stamped out, Prime Minister Scott Morrison yesterday said hospitals will resume many elective surgeries and schools will be re-opened for more children. As part of broad social distancing restrictions, Australia in March banned all non-emergency surgeries to free-up hospital beds amid expectations of a surge in coronavirus cases. Schools were also closed.

ITALY EASES LOCKDOWN

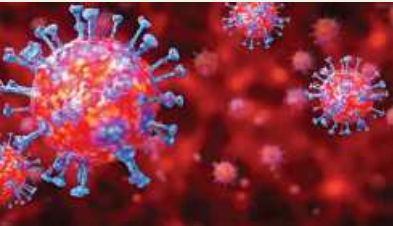
Italy has announced its plans for the gradual reopening from a lockdown imposed to fight the coronavirus emergency that will be applied starting from May 4. After the government shuttered businesses not deemed essential to the supply chain on March 22, calls have recently been growing from industry lobbies to reopen some activities to prevent an economic catastrophe.

WHO GRADUAL LIFTING OF LOCKDOWN

The World Health Organization yesterday warned that any lifting of lockdowns to contain the spread of the novel coronavirus must be gradual, and if restrictions were to be relaxed too soon, there would be a resurgence of infections. Lockdown measures have proved effective, and people must be ready for a new way of living to allow society to function, it said.

CORONAVIRUS ‘MAP’

Researchers at the Carnegie Mellon University in the US unveil a coronavirus “heat map” powered by Facebook and Google data which is aimed at helping track the spread of the disease and plan for reopening society.



SOURCE: AFP

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department

Office of the Executive Engineer, Pirojpur

www.lged.gov.bd

স্বরাষ্ট্র মন্ত্রণালয়

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Memo No. 46.02.7900.000.07.001.2020-809

Date: 21.04.2020

e-Tender Notice No. 21/2019-2020 (OTM)

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of works office of the undersigned.

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Package No. & name of work	Last selling date & time	Closing date & time
1.	426733	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-02 Construction of 20.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Kadamtala UP-Durgapur UP Via Bhairampur Madrasa and Faragir Mazar Road at ch.3030km. Road ID 579803006	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM
2	426734	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-03 Construction of 42.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Shikder Molik UP-Kolakhal UP Upto Gojalia Lonch Ghat via Ghophat & Chalissha Hat. Road at ch.7941 km. Road ID 579803009	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM
3	426735	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-04 Construction of 14.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Kadamtala UP-Durgapur UP Via Bhairampur Madrasa and Faragir Mazar Road at ch.5600 km. Road ID 579803006	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM
4	426736	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-05 Construction of 51.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Kolakhal UP-Ranipur Ghat Via Ghophat & Tona High School Road at ch.0005 km. Road ID 579803010	02.06.2020 05.00 PM	03.06.2020 01.00 PM
5	426737	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-06 Construction of 15.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Bailul Huda Dakhal Madrasa-Badokhal via kh Nuani Madrasa at ch.1020 km. Road ID 579805111	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM
6	426738	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-07 Construction of 12.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Dakhin Gazipur Custom Sikder-Bari-Malek Khalifa Bari via Morju Kha at ch.0350 km. Road ID 579805114	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM
7	426739	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-08 Construction of 10.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Shankarpasha Beltala R&H to Namajpur Muhuri Bari Ahsan Habib Road at ch.0750 km. Road ID 579805023	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM
8	426740	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-09 Construction of 18.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Vijora R&H-Namajpur Primary School-Batazore Hat at ch.0050 km. Road ID 579804024	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM
9	426741	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-10 Construction of 18.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Kadamtala UP-Durgapur UP Via Bhairampur Madrasa and Faragir Mazar Road at ch.4480 km. Road ID 579803006	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM
10	426742	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-11 Construction of 16.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Shikder Molik UP Upto Gojalia Lonch Ghat via Ghophat & Chalissha Hat Road at ch.4840 km. Road ID 579803009	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM
11	426743	IBRP/Piroj/Sadar/Brg-12 Construction of 16.00m Long RCC Girder Bridge on Shikder Molik UP-Kolakhal UP Upto Gojalia Lonch Ghat via Ghophat & Chalissha Hat Road at ch.6020 km. Road ID 579803009	18.05.2020 05.00 PM	19.05.2020 01.00 PM

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited through online at any branches of registered banks branches. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)

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