

Kim 'alive and well': Seoul

AFP, Seoul

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is "alive and well", a top security adviser to the South's President Moon Jae-in said, downplaying rumours over Kim's health following his absence from a key anniversary.

Conjecture over Kim has grown since his conspicuous no-show at April 15 celebrations for the birthday of his grandfather Kim Il Sung, the North's founder -- the most important day in the country's political calendar.

"Our government position is firm," said Moon's special adviser on national security Moon Chung-in, in an interview with CNN. "Kim Jong Un is alive and well."

The adviser said that Kim had been staying in Wonsan -- a resort town in the country's east -- since April 13, adding: "No suspicious movements have so far been detected."

Kim has not made a public appearance since presiding over a Workers' Party politburo meeting on April 11, and the following day state media reported on him inspecting fighter jets at an air defence unit.

Daily NK, an online media outlet run mostly by North Korean defectors, has reported Kim was undergoing treatment after a cardiovascular procedure earlier this month.

Citing an unidentified source inside the country, it said Kim, who is in his mid-30s, had needed urgent treatment due to heavy smoking, obesity and fatigue.



Students wearing face masks leave a school in Beijing after attending class, yesterday. Tens of thousands of students returned to school in Shanghai and Beijing after months of closures as China's major cities gradually return to normality. PHOTO: REUTERS

China, India among top 3 military spenders

AFP, Stockholm

Global military expenditure saw its biggest uptick in a decade in 2019, researchers said yesterday, marking the first year two Asian countries were among the top three spenders.

The world's nations spent a combined \$1.9 trillion (1.78 trillion euros) on their militaries in 2019, according to a report by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI).

Compared to 2018, that represented an annual growth of 3.6 percent, the largest spending growth since 2010.

"Military spending has reached the highest point since the end of the Cold War," Nan Tian, a researcher at SIPRI, told AFP.

Driving the increase are the world's largest spenders, headed by the US, which spent \$732 billion in 2019, a 5.3 percent increase, alone accounting for 38 percent of global spending.

2019 marked the second year of growth in US military spending after seven years of decline.

For the first time, two Asian countries were among the top three, with China and India spending an estimated \$261 billion (up 5.1 percent) and \$71.1 billion (up 6.8 percent) respectively.

"India's tensions and rivalry with both Pakistan and China are among the major drivers for its increased military spending," SIPRI researcher Siemon Wezeman said in a statement.

The world's top five spenders, which also included Russia and Saudi Arabia, together accounted for over 60 percent of total military expenditure.

'Contain your impatience'

UK PM Johnson says too risky to ease lockdown as he joins office

REUTERS, London

Prime Minister Boris Johnson returned to work on Monday after recovering from COVID-19 with a warning that it was still too dangerous to relax a stringent lockdown hammering Britain's economy for fear of a deadly second outbreak.

Looking healthy again after a life-threatening bout of the coronavirus, Johnson compared the disease to an invisible street criminal whom Britons were wrestling to the floor.

"If we can show the same spirit of unity and determination as we've all shown in the past six weeks then I have absolutely no doubt that we will beat it," the 55-year-old said outside his Downing Street home a month and a day after testing positive.

"I ask you to contain your impatience because I believe we are coming now to the end of the first phase of this conflict and in spite of all the suffering we have



so nearly succeeded."

With unemployment soaring, many companies crippled and a recession looming, Johnson said he understood the concerns of business and would consult with opposition parties pressing for clarity on a pathway out of lockdown.

But with Britain suffering one of the world's highest death tolls - 20,732 hospital deaths reported as of Saturday - he stressed it was still a time of maximum risk and there would be no swift lifting of restrictions.

"We simply cannot spell out now

how fast or slow or even when those changes will be made, though clearly the government will be saying much more about this in the coming days," he said.

"We must also recognise the risk of a second spike, the risk of losing control of that virus and letting the reproduction rate go back over one because that would mean not only a new wave of death and disease but also an economic disaster."

The most stringent lockdown in peacetime has left Britain facing possibly the deepest recession in three centuries and the biggest debt splurge since World War Two.

Johnson's government, party and scientific advisers are divided over how and when the world's fifth-largest economy should start returning to work, even in limited form.

The government is next due to review social distancing measures on May 7.

NEWSIN brief

KSA scraps death penalty for minors

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia on Sunday ended the death penalty for crimes committed by minors after effectively abolishing floggings as the kingdom seeks to blunt criticism over its human rights record. The reforms underscore a push by de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to modernise the ultra-conservative kingdom long associated with a fundamentalist strain of Wahhabi Islam.

533 Afghan civilians die in 3 months: UN

AFP, Kabul/Islamabad

More than 500 civilians were killed in Afghanistan in the first three months of the year as violence raged even after an agreement between the United States and the Taliban on withdrawing foreign forces, the United Nations said yesterday. In all, fighting in the first three months caused 1,293 civilian casualties, of which 760 were injuries and the rest deaths, including 152 children and 60 women, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said in a quarterly report.

Israeli strikes kill 3 civilians in Syria

AFP, Damascus

Israeli air strikes near the Syrian capital early yesterday killed three civilians, state media said. Syrian air defences had downed "most" of the Israeli missiles launched from Lebanese air space shortly before dawn, SANA said in an earlier report. Videos published on the agency's website purported to show the Israeli warheads exploding in the sky. 4 people were also injured in the attack.



Fog covers skyscrapers in Curitiba, Brazil. Photo was taken on Sunday. PHOTO: AFP

New antiviral coating can protect surfaces for 90 days

REUTERS, Hong Kong

Researchers at a Hong Kong university say they have developed an antiviral coating which could provide 90 days of "significant" protection against bacteria and viruses such as the one causing COVID-19.

The coating, called MAP-1, took 10 years to develop and can be sprayed on surfaces that are frequently used by the public, such as elevator buttons and handrails, researchers at the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) say.

"These places are frequently touched, and, at the same time, serve as a very effective medium for transmission of diseases," said HKUST Adjunct Professor Joseph Kwan, one of the chief researchers in the team that developed the product.

The coating that forms after spraying has millions of nano-capsules containing disinfectants, which Kwan says remain effective in killing bacteria, viruses and spores even after the coating



has dried.

Unlike common disinfecting methods such as diluted bleach and alcohol, MAP-1 is further boosted by heat-sensitive polymers that encapsulate and release disinfectants upon human contact, Kwan said.

It is non-toxic and safe for skin and the environment, the researchers say.

Following clinical tests this year at a Hong Kong hospital and a home for the elderly, the coating has been made available for commercial purchase by Germagic, a unit of the university's industrial partner, Chiaphua Industries Ltd.

The coating was approved for official

and mass consumer use in February, and will hit Hong Kong stores next month.

With help from a local charity, the non-toxic coating has already been sprayed around the homes of more than a thousand low-income families in the city.

"I feel like it has strengthened our protection against the virus," said Lu Ha-yu, a mother of two who lives in a 110-square-foot subdivided unit that was recently sprayed with the coating.

The researchers said shopping malls, schools and sport training facilities in the city have adopted the coating.

Applying the coating at schools costs HK\$20,000 (\$2,600) to HK\$50,000, depending on the size of the sprayed area. The company also plans to introduce 50ml and 200ml domestic use versions with prices ranging from HK\$70-250.

Hong Kong reported no new coronavirus cases on Sunday, keeping the total at 1,038 infections and four deaths.

Refrain from violating fundamental rights: UN

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief yesterday warned that countries flouting the rule of law in the name of fighting the novel coronavirus pandemic risk sparking a "human rights disaster".

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet called on countries to refrain from violating fundamental rights "under the guise of exceptional or emergency measures."

"Emergency powers should not be a weapon governments can wield to quash dissent, control the population, and even perpetuate their time in power," she warned in a statement.

"They should be used to cope effectively with the pandemic -- nothing more, nothing less."

Her comments came after more than 200,000 people have perished in the pandemic and nearly three million have been

infected worldwide by the novel coronavirus since it surfaced in China late last year.

Bachelet acknowledged that states have the right to restrict some rights to protect public health, but she insisted that any restrictions should be necessary, proportionate and non-discriminatory, and also limited in duration.

"Shooting, detaining, or abusing someone for breaking a curfew because they are desperately searching for food is clearly an unacceptable and unlawful response. ...

"In some cases, people are dying because of the inappropriate application of measures that have been supposedly put in place to save them," Bachelet said.

The UN rights chief also warned that efforts to rein in dangerous misinformation around the pandemic was in some cases being used as an excuse to crack down on legitimate free speech.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার
ডিভিশনাল কন্ট্রোলার অব একাউন্টস এর কার্যালয়
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ডিভিশনাল কন্ট্রোলার অব একাউন্টস, সিলেট এর একটি পুরাতন পাজারো জীপ নং- সিলেট ঘ-১১০-১৬৫ বিক্রয়ের নিমিত্ত সীলমোহরকৃত দরপত্র আহ্বান করা যাচ্ছে। গাড়ীখানা ডিভিশনাল কন্ট্রোলার অব একাউন্টস, সিলেট কার্যালয়ের নীচ তলায় সকাল ৯.৩০ ঘটিকা হতে বিকাল ৩.০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে পরিদর্শনের জন্য উন্মুক্ত রয়েছে। উল্লেখ্য যে, ১-০৯১১-০০০০-২৬৮১ খাতে ১০০০/- (এক হাজার টাকা মাত্র) টাকা অফেরতযোগ্য ট্রেজারী চালানের মাধ্যমে বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংকে জমা দিয়ে চালানের মূলকপিসহ নিম্নস্বাক্ষরকারীর নিকট অফিস চলাকালীন সময়ে আবেদন করে গাড়ীর বিস্তারিত বিবরণ সম্বলিত সিডিউল ত্রয় করা যাবে। দরপত্র আগামী ০৭-০৫-২০২০ খ্রিঃ তারিখ বেলা ১.০০ ঘটিকার মধ্যে সংশ্লিষ্ট কার্যালয়ের প্রশাসন শাখার অডিট এন্ড একাউন্টস অফিসারের কাছে রক্ষিত টেন্ডার বক্সে জমা দিতে হবে। উল্লেখ্য যে, দরপত্রের সাথে জামানত হিসেবে যে কোন সিডিউল ব্যাংক হতে উদ্ধৃত মূল্যের ১৫% ব্যাংক ড্রাফট/পে-অর্ডার (ফেরতযোগ্য) আয়ন ও ব্যয়ন কর্মকর্তা, ডিভিশনাল কন্ট্রোলার অব একাউন্টস, সিলেট এর অনুকূলে জমা দিতে হবে এবং ঐ দিনই বেলা ২.০০ ঘটিকায় উপস্থিত দরদাতাগণের সম্মুখে (যদি কেহ উপস্থিত থাকেন) প্রাপ্ত দরপত্রসমূহ খোলা হবে।

অসম্পূর্ণ দরপত্র বাতিল বলে গণ্য হবে। কোন কারণ দর্শানো ব্যতিরেকেই কর্তৃপক্ষ যে কোন বা সকল দরপত্র গ্রহণ/বাতিল করার ক্ষমতা সংরক্ষণ করেন।

নবদুলাল তালুকদার
ডেপুটি ডিভিশনাল কন্ট্রোলার অব একাউন্টস
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