

Nuclear weapons prevent war: Kim

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North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has called his country's nuclear weapons a solid security guarantee and a "reliable, effective" deterrent that could prevent a second war on the Korean Peninsula.

Kim made the remarks on Monday as he celebrated the 67th anniversary of the end of the 1950-1953 Korean War at a reception for war veterans in Pyongyang, according to a report by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday.

The speech signalled once again that the North Korean leader has no intention of giving up his nuclear arsenal despite the United States's attempts to get him to do so.

Kim said North Korea had developed nuclear weapons to win the "absolute strength" to prevent another war.

"Now we are capable of defending ourselves in the face of any form of high-intensity pressure and military threats from imperialist and hostile forces," he said.

"Thanks to our reliable and effective self-defensive nuclear deterrent, there won't be any war on this land again, and our country's safety and future will be firmly guaranteed forever."

The Korean War, which pitted Soviet and China-backed troops from the north against US-led United Nations forces, killed an estimated two million people and destroyed cities and villages on both sides of the border.

The three-year conflict ended with an armistice and not a peace treaty, leaving North and South technically at war.

Kim entered this year with a promise to bolster his nuclear programme and threatened to unveil a new "strategic" weapon. He also said he would no longer be bound by a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests.



A statue symbolising Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe taking a deep bow to "comfort woman" is pictured at Korea Botanic Garden in Pyeongchang, South Korea, yesterday. The statue has sparked an angry response from Japan, which has warned its neighbour of diplomatic consequences.

PHOTO: REUTERS

INDIA-CHINA BORDER STAND-OFF

Troops pullback almost complete

Claims Beijing; Delhi to impose 'quality curbs' on 371 China goods

AGENCIES

Chinese and Indian troops have "completed disengagement" on most parts of the disputed border between their two countries, China's foreign ministry said yesterday, after violent clashes broke out earlier this year.

Tensions soared between the world's two most populous nations in June after the deadliest fighting in decades erupted between Indian and Chinese troops on the Himalayan border.

"The situation on the ground continues to cool down and de-escalate," foreign ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said at a regular press briefing.

"The frontline border troops of the two countries have already completed disengagement at most places," he told reporters in Beijing.

Wang said the two sides were preparing for a fifth round of talks between military commanders at an unspecified date.

After the clash on June 15, Chinese



and Indian officials met and agreed to take steps to ease the situation.

But the nuclear-armed neighbours have continued to reinforce the border between Ladakh and Tibet. India has deployed thousands more troops and is conducting extra military flights over the mountainous region.

Meanwhile, anti-China sentiment has soared in India since the fight, which sparked street protests and calls for Chinese products to be banned in the nation of 1.3 billion people.

The Indian government has now banned dozens of Chinese apps including the highly popular video-sharing platform TikTok over national

security and privacy concerns.

Meanwhile, India is believed to be mulling import curbs on over 371 categories of goods which are largely imported from China.

According to a report published in The Times of India, items such as toys, steel tubes and bars, electronics, telecom items, heavy machinery, paper, rubber articles and glass will be brought under mandatory Indian Standards (IS) regime by next year.

The measure will put a halt on imports of sub-standard items, according to the report.

Under the initiative, India plans to reduce its non-essential imports and increase exports.

Quoting Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) director general Pramod Kumar Tiwari, the report said most of the 371 items listed are Chinese products. While the idea is to eliminate sub-standard imports, it seems that the move is directed towards importing as less as possible from China.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC RECOVERY

China, India's neighbours agree on four-point plan

THE STATESMAN/ANN

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi has held the first joint virtual conference with his counterparts from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Nepal during which he proposed a four-point plan to contain the novel coronavirus pandemic, boost economic recovery and resumption of the BRI (Belt and Road Initiative) infrastructure projects.

Addressing the meeting, which is the first involving the four countries, Wang proposed the four-point action plan including consolidating the consensus on unity and fight against the pandemic, avoiding politicisation and stigmatisation of the coronavirus and firmly support the World Health Organization (WHO) in playing its due role to jointly building global health community. The US has accused the WHO of siding with China on the outbreak of the coronavirus.

Wang said when the Chinese vaccine is developed, China will improve the accessibility of vaccines to the three countries and help them strengthen their public health systems.

He also urged the countries to take part in China-led mega projects under BRI in the region to accelerate post-pandemic economic recovery.

"We will actively promote the building of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Trans-Himalayan Connectivity network (THCN), support the extension of the corridor to Afghanistan, and further unleash the dividends of regional connectivity," Wang said.

His remarks assume significance as it came amid the border tensions between India and China.

The ministers of Pakistan, Nepal and Afghanistan "actively supported" the four-point cooperation initiative proposed by Wang, a statement released after the virtual meet said.

US PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION 2020

Trump banks on 'silent majority'

AFP, Washington

President Donald Trump mounted a strident defense of his wavering reelection bid with less than 100 days to go in a campaign that has seen him underwater in the polls -- and banking on the "silent majority" he vowed will bring him victory.

The 74-year-old Republican has struggled with setbacks on numerous fronts, facing mounting criticism over his handling of the coronavirus outbreak and the resulting economic pain, and failing to land punches on his opponent, Joe Biden.

In the latest blow to his hopes to be returned to the White House on November 3, polls released Sunday showed his support cratering in three critical battleground states.

"The Trump Campaign has more ENTHUSIASM, according to many, than any campaign in the history of our great Country - Even more than 2016," Trump thundered on Twitter on Sunday.

"Biden has NONE! The Silent Majority will speak on NOVEMBER THIRD!!! Fake Suppression Polls & Fake News will not save the Radical Left."

Trump's 77-year-old Democratic rival Biden, who says he is fighting for "the soul of America," implored voters to make Trump a one-term president.

"In 100 days, we have the chance to set our nation on a new path. One where we finally live up to our highest ideals and everyone has a fair shot at success," he tweeted.



With the coronavirus killing more than 1,000 Americans a day, the president, who is at his best soaking up the adulation of supporters at live events, has been forced to cancel his rallies and ditch the Republican convention in Florida next month.

The pandemic, which has infected 4.2 million Americans and killed almost 150,000, is ravaging the US economy and -- with the outbreak largely under control in Europe

and Asia -- has highlighted the shortcomings of the US response.

The president has also lost support over his handling of historic uprisings against racism and police brutality, angering local communities with incendiary rhetoric and a pledge to "surge" federal agents into numerous major US cities.

With overall approval ratings permanently stuck in the low 40 percent range, he is the first president to seek reelection after impeachment.

Trump is offering a vision of chaos under his opponent, in which Biden's desire to "abolish the American Way of Life" would turn US cities into crime-infested wastelands.

But he has largely failed to expand his fervently loyal base with a pitch that boils down to claiming Biden will have Americans "cowering to radical left-wing mobs."

New polling of registered voters from three swing states released Sunday showed Trump trailing badly.

But the president is keen to remind those who discount him that, with grim polling in 2016, he comfortably beat all comers for the nomination before defeating Democratic rival Hillary Clinton.



This photo taken and released by Langsa City's Islamic sharia agency yesterday shows a sharia law enforcement official caning two women in Langsa, Aceh province. Two Indonesian women have been publicly whipped nearly 100 times each for selling sex workers' services online, an official in the country's conservative Aceh province said yesterday. Aceh is the only region in Muslim-majority Indonesia to impose Islamic sharia law, which allows flogging for a range of offences including prostitution, gambling, adultery, drinking alcohol, and gay sex.

PHOTO: AFP

Pandemic to bring surge in child wasting cases: UN

The unprecedented social and economic crisis caused by the coronavirus pandemic will see nearly seven million more children experience stunting as a result of malnutrition, the United Nations said yesterday. Even before COVID-19 there were an estimated 47 million children under five who were moderately or severely wasted, most living in sub-Saharan Africa and southeast Asia. Now as lockdowns and international trade routes disrupt vital aid supplies, the UN warned that the coronavirus pandemic could have an "intergenerational effect" on the health of millions in 118 countries. Wasting occurs when the body is so acutely malnourished that its muscles and fat begin to diminish.

China halts HK extradition treaties with 3 countries

China yesterday announced the suspension of Hong Kong's extradition treaties with Canada, Australia and Britain in a tit-for-tat move following similar decisions by those countries over a controversial new security law. Western nations have angered Beijing over their responses to the law imposed on Hong Kong which they see as an erosion of the civil liberties and human rights the city has enjoyed since its handover from Britain in 1997. The United States has decided to rescind Hong Kong's special trading privileges while Washington's "Five Eyes" intelligence partners have suspended their extradition treaties with the city, with New Zealand yesterday joining Canada, Britain and Australia.

Trump moves again to block release of his tax records

President Donald Trump on Monday filed a new challenge to the Manhattan District Attorney's subpoena for his tax returns, weeks after the US Supreme Court said the president was not immune from state criminal probes. In a second amended complaint filed in Manhattan federal court, Trump's lawyers argued that the subpoena was "wildly overbroad" and was issued in "bad faith" and amounts to "harassment." Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance subpoenaed Trump's accounting firm for eight years of his business and personal returns and other documents as part of a criminal investigation involving Trump and the Trump Organization, his family's real estate business.

Ethics probe: Trudeau to testify

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will give much-anticipated testimony this week over his role in awarding a government contract to a charity that paid members of his family large sums of money, the House of Commons said Monday. Trudeau will testify for an hour on Thursday at 3:00 pm before the House of Commons Finance Committee. Ethics commissioner Mario Dion, an independent officer of parliament, opened an investigation into Trudeau and finance minister Bill Morneau after the former's Liberal government awarded a major contract to WE Charity to manage a student scholarship program worth CAN\$900 million, despite ties between the organization and the two officials' families.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

3b animals affected by Australia bushfires: study

AFP, Sydney

Nearly three billion animals were killed or displaced by Australia's unprecedented 2019-20 wildfires in "one of the worst wildlife disasters in modern history", according to a report released yesterday.

The study by scientists from several Australian universities said the wildlife hit included 143 million mammals, 2.46 billion reptiles, 180 million birds and 51 million frogs.

While the report did not say how many animals died because of the fires, the prospects for those that escaped the flames "were probably not great" due to a lack of food, shelter and protection from predators, said Chris Dickman, one of its authors.

The fires ravaged more than 115,000 square kilometres (44,000 square miles)

of drought-stricken bushland and forest across Australia in late 2019 and early 2020, killing more than 30 people and destroying thousands of homes.

It was the broadest and most prolonged bushfire season in modern Australian history, with scientists attributing the severity of the crisis to the impacts of climate change.

An earlier study in January estimated the fires had killed a billion animals in the hardest-hit eastern states of New South Wales and Victoria.

But the survey released yesterday was the first to cover fire zones across the continent.

Results from the survey were still being processed, with a final report due to be released late next month, but the authors said the number of three billion animals affected was unlikely to change.



Egypt jails TikTok women influencers

AGENCIES

An Egyptian court has sentenced five female social media influencers to two years in jail each on charges of violating public morals.

The verdict against Haneen Hossam, Mowada al-Adham and three others came after they had posted footage on video-sharing app TikTok.

The ruling, which can be appealed, included a fine of 300,000 Egyptian pounds (\$18,750) for each defendant, the source noted.

Haneen Hossam, 20, a Cairo University student, was charged for encouraging young women to meet men through a video app and build friendships with them, receiving a fee according to the number of followers watching these chats.

Mawada al-Adham, a TikTok and Instagram influencer with at least two million followers, was accused of publishing indecent photos and videos on social media. The three other women were charged with helping Hossam and Al-Adham manage their social media accounts, according to the public prosecution.

Several rights activists took to social media to condemn the arrests.

Egypt has cracked down in recent years on female singers and dancers for online content deemed too racy or suggestive.

US man took coronavirus aid to buy Lamborghini

THE STRAITS TIMES/ANN

A man in Florida who received nearly US\$4 million (\$\$5.5 million) in federal loans intended to help struggling businesses - and spent the money on a new Lamborghini Huracán sports car and other fraudulent purchases - was arrested and charged with three felonies, officials said on Monday.

David T Hines, 29, of Miami, was charged with bank fraud, making a false statement to a lending institution and engaging in transactions in unlawful proceeds, according to prosecutors in the US District Court for the Southern District of Florida. If convicted on all charges, he could face up to 70 years in prison, an official in the prosecutor's office said.

In April, Hines joined scores of other business owners who are seeking financial

help from the federal Paycheck Protection Programme, a loan programme created to help businesses keep their employees during the coronavirus pandemic.

On his applications, Hines said he operated four businesses with 70 employees and had US\$4 million in monthly expenses.

He got US\$1,354,741 in installments, officials said.

What came next, based on a review of Hines' financial records, was a spending spree that included luxury jewellery, expensive clothes, visits to resorts and expenses on dating websites, officials said. He spent tens of thousands on those. The biggest purchase appears to have been made May 18, when Hines bought a blue

Lamborghini for US\$318,497 in North Miami Beach, officials said.

