

## China faces pressure to act over N Korea

AFP, Seogwipo, South Korea

China came under intensified pressure from South Korea and Japan yesterday to join global efforts to punish North Korea over the sinking of a South Korean warship in March.

President Lee Myung-Bak turned the heat up on Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao at a three-way summit with Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama in South Korea, as the leaders discussed the sinking, which claimed 46 lives.

Regional tensions have risen sharply since international investigators said a North Korean torpedo sunk the warship, with South Korea announcing reprisals that have sparked threats of war from the North.

"South Korea will focus all diplomatic efforts on holding North Korea responsible in the summit this weekend," Lee's spokesman Park Sun-Kyoo said.

"Japan will sincerely support South Korea," Hatoyama told Lee before they went into three-way talks with Wen, Lee's office said.

The Japanese leader also promised Japan's "leading role" in mustering international support for South Korea at the UN Security Council, Lee's senior spokesman Lee Dong-Kwan told journalists.

The talks on the southern resort island of Jeju came after a rare press conference by North Korean military officials on Friday, in which they accused the South of fabricating evidence over the sinking of the 1,200-tonne Cheonan.

Unlike many countries, China has not publicly blamed Pyongyang for the sinking, one of the worst military attacks on the South since the 1950-53 war.

"China is persistent in supporting peace and stability on the Korean peninsula," Wen was quoted telling South Korean Prime Minister Chung Un-Chan hours before joining the summit, according to Chung's spokesman.

"We reject any act that would harm peace and stability."

Wen was also quoted as saying that China attached importance to the outcome of a multinational investigation led by South Korea into the sinking.

The Chinese premier was quoted as telling President Lee on Friday that Beijing would review the probe results in an "objective and fair" manner before determining its position, adding it would not protect whoever was responsible.



South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak (L) leads Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama (C) and Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao (R) in the greenhouse to attend the banquet at the Yeomiji botanical garden in Seogwipo yesterday. China came under intensified pressure from South Korea and Japan to join global efforts to punish North Korea over the sinking of a South Korean warship in March.

## JAPAN GOVT IN CRISIS Coalition partner threatens to quit

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's Social Democratic Party (SDP) yesterday maintained its threat to leave Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's coalition government, in a row over a US military base on Okinawa.

The coalition appeared to face a break-up after Hatoyama sacked his consumer affairs minister, Mizuho Fukushima, who was dismissed for opposing his decision to keep the base on the southern Japanese island.

Seiji Mataichi, the SDP's deputy chief, told a TV programme Saturday: "It is natural for us to leave the coalition," echoing a warning made by Fukushima after her dismissal Friday.

Asked by reporters if she now planned to withdraw from the government, Fukushima, who is also the head of the pacifist SDP, had said: "Dismissing me means discarding the SDP."

Hatoyama said he would like to keep the SDP in the coalition, but Fukushima, who has long sided with the anti-base movement, said her party would make "a grave determination" at a meeting Sunday.

If it does decide to leave the SDP's departure will weaken Hatoyama's coalition, which dominates the lower house but has barely maintained its majority in the upper house.

Tokyo and Washington said in a joint statement this week that the US Marine Corps Air Station Futenma would be moved, as first agreed in 2006, from a crowded city area to the coastal Henoko region of the island.

The base has long angered locals because of aircraft noise, pollution, the risk of crashes and tension with American service personnel, especially after the 1995 rape of a 12-year-old girl by three US servicemen.

The row over the Futenma base has dealt a blow to Hatoyama, who had promised voters ahead of the general elections last August that he would set aside the 2006 relocation agreement.

His support has plunged to around 20 percent amid the crisis and ahead of upper house elections slated for July.

Hatoyama's Democratic Party of Japan formed its coalition in September with the SDP and the smaller People's New Party after they ousted conservatives in August.

On Friday, Hatoyama apologised to people for his failure to keep his promise over the Okinawa base, but Japanese dailies railed against his lack of leadership over the issue.

"Prime Minister Hatoyama's qualification has been seriously questioned," the mass-circulation Yomiuri Shimbun said in an editorial.



## Different Strokes star dies at 42

REUTERS, Los Angeles

Former child star Gary Coleman, who shot to fame on TV sitcom "Different Strokes" but suffered personal troubles as an adult, died in a Utah hospital on Friday, after suffering a brain haemorrhage. He was 42. Coleman gained stardom as the sharp-talking Arnold Jackson, adopted son of a wealthy New Yorker, in the hit sitcom that aired on US television from 1978 to 1986 and in syndication around the world. His line "What you talkin' 'bout Willis?," addressed to his brother on the series, became a pop culture catchphrase.

### DIFFERENT BITES

#### Brush teeth to 'prevent' heart disease

BBC ONLINE

People who fail to brush their teeth twice a day are putting themselves at risk of heart disease, research suggests.

The Scottish study of more than 11,000 adults backs previous research linking gum disease with heart problems.

The researchers said more work is needed to confirm if poor oral health directly causes heart disease or is a marker of risk.

A charity added that oral hygiene was just one factor in good heart health.

It is known that inflammation in the mouth and gums, has an important role in the build up of clogged arteries, which can lead to a heart attack.

#### Hello? Hello? Greek PM's phone cut off by mistake

REUTERS, Athens

Greek telecom engineers cut off the telephone line to the prime minister's house while attempting to disconnect a customer who was behind in payments, the telephone company said on Wednesday.

The Athens phone number of the customer in arrears was the same as that of Prime Minister George Papandreou's home number save for one digit, telecoms company OTE said in a statement.

Greece is suffering its worst financial crisis in decades and many are struggling to pay their bills as the government cuts wages and raises taxes to try to pay off its huge debt.

#### Air NZ to let passengers text, e-mail and fly

REUTERS, Auckland

Air New Zealand is planning to let some passengers send text messages and emails mid-flight by the end of the year but fellow travellers need not worry -- phone calls will not be allowed.

New Zealand's national carrier said it expects to let people send and receive text messages and emails on their iPhones, Blackberries and GSM mobiles on its new 777-300 aircrafts by November.

The new service will also enable customers to use their Notebooks or laptops in conjunction with their mobile broadband connection to access the Internet.

## Musa

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"It was hard for me to breathe as the oxygen level was only 33 percent in that height. I was panting," Musa said. At this moment of risk, Brendan came up with the help, he added.

"I saw Musa was lying on the rock and the Sherpas were slapping in his face as he was panting. I thought that his oxygen pipe must get leaked and then I checked it," Brendan said.

"Then I repaired the pipe with a tape I had with me," told Brendan who was coming down just behind Musa.

Then Brendan took some water and two power gels from his friend Stephen Green and gave those to Musa to give him strength to come down to the advance base camp.

Captain Enam Talukder, another mountaineer from Bangladesh, came here from Dhaka to meet Musa and hosted a lunch for him and the Bangladesh folks at the Rum Doodle Restaurant yesterday afternoon.

Brendan and Stephan suddenly appeared at the restaurant.

"If they were not there, I am not sure what would have happened to me. They were God sent to save me," said Musa.

Following the lunch, Musa cut a cake to observe the International Everest Day.

## Overnight curfew ends in Bangkok

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's premier said yesterday it would be hard to hold elections this year as he lifted a curfew imposed across about one-third of the country in the wake of deadly anti-government protests.

Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva said however that there was no plan yet to revoke emergency rule following two months of mass rallies by the "Red Shirts" that left almost 90 people dead in a series of clashes with troops.



The protesters were campaigning for snap elections to oust the government and Abhisit had proposed November polls in a bid to end rally, but he shelved the plan because demonstrators refused to disperse.

"Obviously it's a lot more difficult now to have elections before the end of the year because the November date was set with the (idea of) protesters joining the plan right from the start," Abhisit told a press conference.

But he added that he was not ruling out early elections, hours after he lifted the curfew imposed 10 days earlier across parts of the country, including Bangkok, to quell violent civil unrest.

The British-born, Oxford-educated head of the establishment Democrat Party does not have to go to the polls until the end of next year.

He said Saturday that if all parties involved, including the Reds, joined the peace process and over the next few months the government and parliament functioned smoothly "then that would be the right time" to hold polls.

The Reds' street rallies, which were broken up by the army after two months on May 19, paralysed central Bangkok and sparked several outbreaks of violence that left 88 people dead, mostly civilians, and nearly 1,900 injured.

Protest leaders surrendered after armoured vehicles backed by troops firing live rounds smashed through towering barricades around their sprawling base, angering militant demonstrators who set dozens of buildings ablaze.

Abhisit defended the security operation. "It has always been our policy to seek a peaceful resolution to the problems, to exercise utmost restraint," he said. "Our decisions at every single point had in mind a way that would restore order with minimum losses."

## UK minister apologises over expenses

BBC ONLINE

Chief Treasury Secretary David Laws has apologised after it emerged he had been claiming MPs' expenses to rent rooms in homes owned by his partner.

Laws said he would immediately pay back the money, which the Daily Telegraph said totalled £40,000.

He said his motivation was to keep the relationship with the man private and not to reveal his own sexuality.

David Cameron said he agreed with Laws' decision to refer himself to the Parliamentary Standards Commissioner.

Since 2006 parliamentary rules have banned MPs from "leasing accommodation from a partner".

The Daily Telegraph said the Liberal Democrat cabinet minister claimed up to £950 a month for eight years to rent a room in two properties owned by his partner, James Lundie.

The newspaper said Laws claimed to sub-let a room in a flat owned by Lundie in Kennington, south London, between 2004 and 2007.

The Telegraph said Laws' partner sold the flat in 2007 and bought another house nearby.

## West Bank road partially opened to Palestinian traffic

BBC ONLINE

The Israeli military has partially opened a motorway that runs through the occupied West Bank to Palestinian drivers, to comply with a ruling by Israel's Supreme Court.

For Israelis, Highway 443 is a major link between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

The Israeli military banned Palestinian cars in 2002 after shooting attacks on the road killed six Israeli motorists.

In 2009, Israel's Supreme Court ruled that the general closure of the road to Palestinians was illegal.

The road was built in the 1980s, according to the Israeli human rights group B'tselem, some of the land was expropriated privately-owned Palestinian land.

At the time it was argued that the road would benefit Palestinians.

The 25km (15 mile) four-lane road links Israel's coastal plain with the area north of Jerusalem. About 14km of it run through the West Bank. An estimated 40,000 Israeli drivers use the route daily.

As it opened the road, the Israeli military set up new road blocks and checkpoints along the route.

Palestinians will now be able to use part of Highway 443 to reach some of the villages alongside it.

Access to Ramallah - the West Bank's economic and administrative centre - will not be allowed, nor will the road provide access to Jerusalem for Palestinian drivers.

The Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), which petitioned the Supreme Court to allow Palestinians onto Highway 443, said the army was "acting in utter disregard of the spirit of the ruling".

"This creates the false impression of new regulations, genuine freedom of movement and adherence to the rule of law, though in fact no real change will occur," Acri said in a statement.

Israel has built an extensive road network in the West Bank to serve the settlements.

## Resentment over Jamaat

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He however changed his mind at the chief election commissioner's behest.

Shafique said he would not have attended the meeting had he learnt about it earlier.

"When I learnt about their presence, I expressed unwillingness to attend the programme," the minister told The Daily Star.

Manjurul Ahsan Khan, president of Communist Party of Bangladesh, said he would have stayed away from the meeting if he had any knowledge about the matter earlier.

Workers' Party of Bangladesh President Rashed Khan Menon said he sat keeping a distance from Jamaat leaders.

The EC organised the meeting on Cooperation Between Election Commissions of South Asia Region in a city hotel.

The law minister said he reached the hotel's entrance when a ministry official told him about the presence of Jamaat leaders at the meeting.

He then asked his chauffeur to turn the car around and called Chief Election Commissioner ATM Shamsul Huda. The minister asked him why he had not been informed about the Jamaat leaders' presence.

The CEC requested him to attend the meeting saying foreign delegates were waiting for him.

The CEC, commissioners Sohul Hossain and M Shakhawat Hossain, and UNDP Resident Representative Stefan Priesner were on the podium along with the law minister.

Jamaat Chief Matiur Rahman Nizami and Secretary General Ali Ahsan Mohammad Mojaheed with other Jamaat leaders sat on right side of the first row of the audience.

Rashed Khan Menon, Manjurul Ahsan Khan, Prof Muzaffer Ahmad and columnist Syed Abul Maksud sat on the left side while election commissioners and secretaries from different countries sat in the middle.

Menon said it was quite embarrassing although the election commission can invite leaders of all registered political parties to such meetings.

Manjurul told reporters that the EC should not have invited them to the meeting.

He would not have attended it had he known about their presence earlier, Manjurul said.

Syed Abul Maksud however said the EC did not make any mistake as it can invite leaders from any registered political party to attend such a meeting.

"You know my stance. I do not interact with them. But since it is a regional conference, the commission can invite them," he said.



Palestinians inspect damages following Israeli air strikes in the southern Gaza Strip town of Rafah yesterday. Israeli warplanes launched six overnight raids, Palestinian security officials and witnesses said, adding that nobody was wounded.