

# S Korea boosts defences

North warns of more strikes; South's defence minister quits

AFP, Yeonpyeong Island

South Korea said yesterday it would send more troops and guns to frontline islands, as North Korea warned it could follow up this week's deadly shelling with more attacks.

Pyeongyang's fresh warning came as a US aircraft carrier headed for the tense peninsula to join war games to be staged as a show of force to the nuclear-armed communist state.

The North's unprecedented artillery bombardment of Yeonpyeong island on Tuesday killed two marines and two civilians, injured 18 more people and turned homes into charred ruins.

It claimed its first political victim when the South's Defence Minister Kim Tae-Young resigned, following growing criticism that Seoul's military and government reacted too softly to the assault.

The government said yesterday it would revise its rules of engagement, allowing troops

to hit back harder if necessary.

Tuesday's attack was the first time the North had shelled a civilian area since the 1950-53 war.

It provoked the worst crisis on the peninsula in years, with the international community agonising over how to respond. South Korea and the United States, among others, pressed China to rein in its neighbour.

The North accused the United States and its "warmongering South Korean puppets" of provoking the attack. It said South Korea's military in an exercise fired shells within what the North claims as its own waters.

The regime said that if the South commits "another reckless military provocation, our army will carry out second and third rounds of powerful physical retaliatory strikes without hesitation".

On the island hit by the North's fiery hail of rockets and missiles, grim-faced soldiers trudged through broken glass, debris and the blackened wreckage of homes.



People place offerings and incense sticks for the victims of the stampede near the Diamond Gate bridge, site of the occurrence late on November 22 which left nearly 350 people dead, in Phnom Penh yesterday.

## Cambodia holds day of mourning

AFP, Phnom Penh

Crowds of mourners offered flowers and incense yesterday at the site of a stampede that killed almost 350 people after panic spread over rumours an overcrowded bridge was about to collapse.

Prime Minister Hun Sen, dressed in black, wiped away a tear and burnt incense at the foot of the narrow bridge, as he led the country in a national day of mourning at a short service.

Flowers and food offerings for the souls of the deceased replaced the shoes, clothing and plastic bottles that were discarded by victims and had remained as grim reminders of Monday's disaster.

Officials said throngs of revellers celebrating the nation's annual water festival apparently panicked as rumours rippled through the crowds that the crossing to an island in Phnom Penh was about to give way.

## New Andhra CM takes oath

PTI, Hyderabad

Nallari Kiran Kumar Reddy, an YSR loyalist and former Andhra Pradesh assembly Speaker, was yesterday sworn in as the 16th chief minister of the state.

Governor ESL Narasimhan administered the oath of office and secrecy to 50-year-old Kiran Kumar Reddy, who was chosen late on Wednesday night as the leader of Congress Legislature Party in place of Konijeti Rosaiah who resigned from the chief minister's post on Wednesday.

Union ministers and party observers M Veerappa Moily, Ghulam Nabi Azad, outgoing chief minister Rosaiah and a host of Congress leaders, MLAs and MLCs attended the brief swearing-in ceremony in the Darbar Hall of Raj Bhavan.

# Obama: I don't think about Sarah Palin

BBC ONLINE

President Barack Obama has said he does not think about Republican former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, a possible contender for his job in 2012.

In an interview, Mr Obama acknowledged her popularity among Republicans and said he "respected those skills".

But he told ABC television: "I spend most of my time right now on how I can be the best possible president."

Mrs Palin, in the midst of a national book tour, said recently she could beat Mr Obama in the 2012 election.

But a recent poll showed Mr Obama comfortably leading Mrs Palin in a hypothetical 2012 match-up.

"My attitude has always



been, from the day I started this job, that if I do a good job and if I'm delivering for the American people the politics will take care of itself," he said.

"If I falter and the American people are dissatisfied, then I'll have problems."

Diminished strength

Mr Obama's remarks came three weeks after his acknowledged "shellacking" in the mid-term elections.

Mr Obama's Democratic party lost control of the House of Representatives and

saw its strength in the Senate diminished, threatening the president's ability to enact his legislative agenda.

Asked to comment on Tuesday's military clash between North and South Korea, Mr Obama told ABC: "South Korea is our ally, it has been since the Korean War, and we strongly affirm our commitment to defend South Korea as part of that alliance."

He said he would not speculate about a military response but said he would consult with South Korean President Lee Myung-bak on the matter.

On Wednesday morning, the US deployed an aircraft carrier fleet to Korean waters to join South Korean forces in military exercises.

## Maliki named Iraq PM for second term

AFP, Baghdad

Nuri al-Maliki called for unity among Iraq's factions yesterday after he was named for a second term as prime minister, signalling an end may be in sight to an eight-month political impasse.

President Jalal Talabani's nomination of Maliki, delayed to give him as much time as possible to negotiate ministerial posts, comes after a power-sharing deal between Iraq's divided factions was sealed two weeks ago.

It gives Maliki 30 days to complete the difficult task of forming a cabinet.

The months-long tussle has seen Iraq shatter the world record for the longest period without a new government after polls.

"I charge you ... Nuri al-Maliki to form the new government, which we hope will be a real national partnership government which will not exclude any faction," Talabani said at a ceremony at Al-Salam presidential palace in Baghdad.

"You have 30 days to form the cabinet."

Following his nomination, Maliki called for political blocs to present "qualified and honest" candidates for ministerial posts and urged Iraqis to support the security forces as they fight a still present insurgent threat.

"I call for all the Iraqi people, the sects, my political brothers, to work hard to move past all our disputes, to put them behind us, and open a new page based on cooperation," he said.

"Let our goal be serving Iraq, not serving enemies, blocs, nationalities or sects -- let this be our main goal."

## US worried over WikiLeaks release of diplomatic cables

AFP, Washington

The United States is concerned about a big dumping of classified documents by WikiLeaks which is expected to include diplomatic cables, State Department spokesman Philip Crowley said Wednesday.

"We are gearing up for the worst-case scenario, that leaked cables will touch on a wide range of issues and countries," Crowley told AFP.

The spokesman added that "we've known all along that WikiLeaks has in its possession State Department cables."

"We are prepared if this upcoming tranche of documents includes State Department cables. We are in touch with our posts around the world. They have begun the process of informing governments that a release of documents is possible in the near future," Crowley said.

He said that diplomatic cables, messages between US posts around the world, "involve discussions that we had with government officials, with private citizens."

"Inherent in this day-to-day action is trust that we can convey our perspectives to other governments in confidence," he said. Breaking that confidence "has an impact."

"These revelations... are going to create tensions on our relationships between our diplomats and our friends around the world," he said.

Pentagon spokesman Colonel Dave Lapan said that US officials were expecting a possible release of documents "late this week or early next week."

"I'm not going to talk specifics but I would say that even though they are believed to be State Department documents, classified cables, there are some that contain DoD (Department of Defense) related issues."

WikiLeaks has not said what will be contained in its coming release, indicating only that it will be "seven times" the Iraq War logs in which it posted 400,000 secret documents.

A new posting would mark WikiLeaks' third mass release of classified documents after it published 77,000 secret US files on the Afghan conflict in July.

WikiLeaks argues the release of the documents, US-soldier authored incident reports from 2004 to 2009, has shed light on the wars, including allegations of torture by Iraqi forces and reports that suggested 15,000 additional civilian deaths in Iraq.

## King Khan

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mangrove forest on stage. Local private television channel Boishakhi TV will telecast the megastar's voting and stage performance.

A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed in this regard between event organiser Ontor Showbiz and Boishakhi TV at a city hotel yesterday.

Swapan Chowdhury, chairman of Ontor Showbiz, at a press conference after signing the MoU said they have also launched a promotional campaign for the show.

Indian silver screen stars Rani Mukherjee, Arjun Rampal, Isha Kopikar, singer Niraj Sreedhar and choreographer Ganesh Hedge will also perform with Shahrukh Khan, said Swapan Chowdhury, adding that Bangladeshi movie star Shakib Khan, singer Kumar Biswajit and dancer Prantor will also perform in the six-hour show with the guest stars.

Shahrukh Khan and his co-performers will arrive Dhaka on December 9 and leave for home the day after the programme.

"This event will be a milestone in the realm of entertainment in Bangladesh and we are very excited as well as delighted to be a part of this," said Manjurul Ahsan Bulbul, CEO and editor-in-chief of Boishakhi TV.

Tickets for the show will be available at different selected points in the capital. The price of tickets have been categorised in four kinds -- Bronze at Tk 3,000, Silver at Tk 5,000, Gold at Tk 10,000 and Platinum at Tk 25,000.



A handout picture released by news agency WAM shows Emirate Minister of State Reem al-Hashemi, Right, and cultural guide Fatima al-Melhi, Left, standing with Britain's Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to the Sheikh Zayed Grand Mosque in the Emirati capital of Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

## EU assures Dhaka of ample fund

FROM PAGE 16

Dipu Moni said the two EU leaders lauded Bangladesh's role in helping to establish world peace. "Prime minister's initiative to establish peace on the basis of regional and international cooperation was highly appreciated."

"Our prime minister has also been assured that the EU will extend cooperation to attain universal food security in Bangladesh," the foreign minister said.

Congratulating the PM for receiving the MDG Award-4 during the last UNGA summit, the EU leaders said the EU member countries would continue their support to Bangladesh for attaining the other targets of the Millennium Development Goals including

health and education.

As the premier thanked the EU countries for their contributions and role in holding the December 29, 2008 election in free, fair and acceptable manner, Van Rompuy and Manuel Barroso said the EU will always stand by Bangladesh in its endeavour towards democracy and development.

On climate change, the two European leaders lauded Bangladesh's performances in implementing various adaptation projects to protect its people from the adverse impact of the global warming.

In this regard, the prime minister also sought cooperation of the EU countries to save the Tigers and all flora and fauna of the Sundarbans mangrove

forest.

The PM told the EU leaders that the existence of the Sundarbans is closely related to the survival of the Royal Bengal Tigers, and Bangladesh depends on the Sundarbans to protect its coastal people from natural calamities.

"The two EU leaders also appreciated the present government's capacity to implement the development projects and utilise the foreign assistances," Dipu Moni said.

As the biggest trading partner of Bangladesh, the EU has also said they are interested to boost bilateral trade and business.

The PM also urged the EU countries to make investment in Bangladesh in various sec-

tors, especially in the field of renewable energy, foreign ministers said.

Hasina said EU is the largest market of Bangladeshi products as the two sides are trading on the basis of EBA (Everything but Arms).

The prime minister and the EU leaders have expressed hope that the existing relations between Bangladesh and the European Union will be strengthened further in the coming days, Dipu Moni added.

State Minister for Forests and Environment Hasan Mahmud, ambassador at-large M Ziauddin, PM's Principal Secretary MA Karim, Bangladesh Ambassador in EU Ismat Jahan were also present at the meetings.

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