

## North Korea threatens war with South

REUTERS, Seoul

North Korea threatened to attack rival South Korea if Seoul joined a new round of tightened UN sanctions, as Washington unveiled more of its own economic restrictions following Pyongyang's rocket launch last month.

In a third straight day of fiery rhetoric, the North directed its verbal onslaught at its neighbor on Friday, saying: "Sanctions mean a war and a declaration of war against us."

The reclusive North has this week declared a boycott of all dialogue aimed at ending its nuclear program and vowed to conduct more rocket and nuclear tests after the UN Security Council censured it for a December long-range missile launch.

North Korea yesterday renewed its threat to carry out a third nuclear test, saying it was the "demand of the people."

"A nuclear test is the demand of the people," said the Rodong Sinmun, the official daily newspaper of the ruling communist party in a signed commentary titled "We have no other option".

"The people's demand is that we must do something even greater than a nuclear test. The United Nations Security Council has left us with no other options. We have no other ways but to push forward to the final showdown", it said.

The UN Security Council unanimously condemned North Korea's December rocket launch on Tuesday and expanded existing UN sanctions.



An Egyptian fan of Al-Ahly football club fires celebratory shots in the air and lights a flare as club supporters celebrate outside its headquarters in Cairo yesterday. Top right, Al-Ahly football club fans celebrate outside the club's headquarters in Cairo as relatives of the convicted man react to the court order, bottom right. (Story on Page 20)



PHOTO: AFP

## Venezuela prison riot kills dozens

AFP, Caracas

A jail riot in south-western Venezuela killed at least 50 people and wounded 90 others on Friday, local media reported, the latest incident in the ongoing crisis in the South American nation's crowded prisons.

Violence broke out after news of an inspection to confiscate weapons at the Centro Occidental jail. Prisons Minister Iris Varela said in a statement, without providing a death toll.

The violence involved both a struggle between rival gangs for control of the jail and a confrontation between inmates and troops called in to calm the situation, Varela said.

Most of those injured had suffered gunshot wounds, said hospital official Ruy Medina.

Iris Varela said earlier yesterday that there were an "undetermined number" of casualties from the clashes. Attempts by

AFP to get an update from the ministry later in the day were unsuccessful.

Vice President Nicolas Maduro, freshly back in the country after visiting recovering President Hugo Chavez in Cuba, called the riot "regrettable" and "tragic".

He announced a full-scale investigation into the clashes by the prosecutor's office.

Venezuelan prisons are controlled by armed gangs that have rioted repeatedly over the last several years due to disputes with jail authorities or prison leaders.

The South American nation's 34 prisons were designed to hold around a third of the 50,000 inmates now in them, according to local prison advocacy groups. Many of the prisoners are armed and hundreds are killed each year in riots and gang fights.

A month-long siege occurred in 2011 at El Rodeo prison, just outside the capital of Caracas, when 22 died before some 5,000 soldiers restored order.

## Mali Crisis: 'War will be over in days'

Coalition troops take airport at key Islamist bastion

AFP, Bamako

The Malian government has predicted that the war against rebels in the north will be over in a matter of days after its troops recaptured another town and advanced on the rebel stronghold of Gao capturing its airport.

"We are winning very rapidly," Manga Dembélé, Mali's communications minister, told the Guardian on Friday. "We are making quick progress ... The rebels have been



A Chadian army convoy heading to join Mali force.

dispersed. We expect this to be finished in days."

For nearly two weeks, French aircraft have bombarded rebel positions, vehicles and stores in the centre and north of Mali as a ground force of African troops assembles to launch a UN-backed military intervention.

The reaction came as French-led troops yesterday seized the airport and a key bridge serving the Islamist stronghold of Gao in a major boost to a 16-day-old offensive to rout al-Qaeda-linked rebels from Mali's sprawling desert north.

The stunning advance came as the extremist Muslim group controlling Gao since June said it was ready for talks to free a 61-year-old French hostage kidnapped in November.

France yesterday confirmed the capture of the airport and the Wanbary bridge at Gao but said fighting was continuing in Gao itself.

## US congress team in city

FROM PAGE 1  
garment leaders.

The foreign ministry sources say the delegation came for a USAID programme and it is more like a private visit. But Dhaka is availing of the opportunity to hold meetings with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and Foreign Minister Dipu Moni when they will have talks in particular on the GSP issue, they add.

"The delegation has no political purpose," said a senior official of the ministry.

The US Embassy in Dhaka did not provide any information of the Congressional delegation that arrived at 9:30 last night.

The other delegates are Representative Ed Whitfield (Republican-Kentucky), Representative Scott Tipton (Republican-CO) and Representative Adam Schiff (Republican-California).

The delegation is due to call on Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at 10:30am today. Foreign Minister Dipu Moni will host a lunch in honour of them at State guesthouse Padma when entire range of bilateral issues will come up for discussion.

Sources say the government high-ups during the discussion will be able to place the justification why Bangladesh should get duty-free access and GSP facilities.

Dhaka is considering the visit by the Congressional delegation highly crucial as they came amid recommendations by some Congressmen to withdraw, suspend or limit the duty-free access to Bangladesh's readymade garment products to the US market under the

Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) facility.

Prior to depart Dhaka this afternoon, the Congressmen are expected to visit a few garment factories in the capital.

"We will again demand duty-free garment export to the US market to the visiting Congressmen because as an LDC [least developed country] Bangladesh has the right to enjoy zero-duty benefit to the American market," said Shafiul Islam Mohiuddin, president of Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) over phone.

Meanwhile, ahead of the visit of the US Congressmen, Bangladeshi Ambassador in Washington DC Akramul Quader met them separately over the last few days. He handed them over documents on the importance of US GSP in Bangladesh's flourishing trade with the USA and the harsh impact of any restrictions to be imposed on Bangladesh in availing the GSP benefit.

On January 8, the US Trade Representative (USTR) office sought public comments from the stakeholders by January 31 on the possible withdrawal, suspension or limitation of Bangladesh's duty-free benefits under the GSP.

"The GSP Subcommittee is seeking public comments on the effect of a withdrawal, suspension, or limitation of GSP benefits on products imported into the United States from Bangladesh," said a notice of the Washington-based US Trade Representative.

Some of the members of the US Congress had assured that they would take

up Bangladesh's GSP facility issue at the appropriate level of the US authorities so that it could be resolved taking Bangladesh's best interest into account.

Meanwhile, Director Thomas Frieden of the US Centres for Disease Control and Prevention arrived yesterday on a two-day visit to discuss US-Bangladesh cooperation on public health issues with health officials in Bangladesh.

The Centres for Disease Control, a US federal agency under the Department of Health and Human Services, has been supporting Bangladesh for the last six years in fields ranging from upgrading laboratories to disease outbreak investigation.

## 1 killed

FROM PAGE 1  
But what could I do. I was also under the debris."

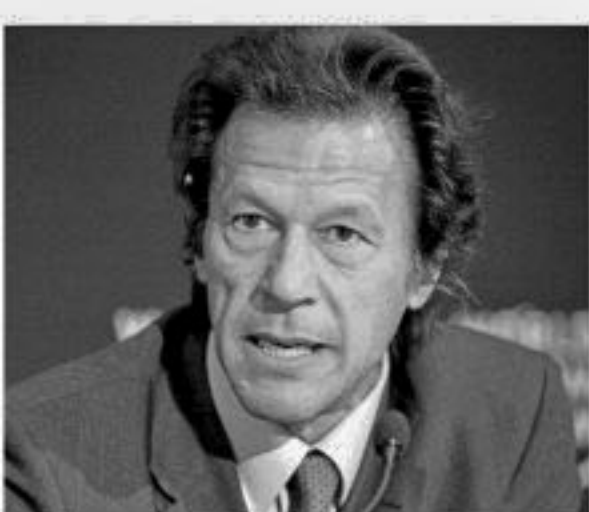
The officer-in-charge of Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Police Station told The Daily Star that Ronny along with Mohammad Shaheen, one of the injured employees, was rushed to Shaheed Suhrawardy Hospital where the doctors declared the youth dead around 3:30pm.

Four staff including Bappa suffered minor wounds.

Workers and police say extra load on the first floor might have caused the collapse. Bappa said they had alerted the authorities when materials were stored on the first floor.

Mamun Hossain, an official of Fire Service and Civil Defence, said they were investigating whether it collapsed due to overload or poor structure.

The Daily Star could not contact any executive of the company.



Imran Khan

## 'Pakistan used as a tissue paper by US'

PTI, Davos

Replying to a query on US's role in the subcontinent, Pakistan's cricketer-turned-politician Imran Khan on Friday said Pakistan has been used as a "tissue paper" by Washington.

"I think Pakistan and India should sort out the issues on their own. At the most, US could be a facilitator and nothing more than that."

He said the war on terror has had adverse impact and the way it has been fought has led to results that are counterproductive.

"There has been negativity and anti-US feelings in Pakistan because of this. The feeling is that Pakistan has been used as a tissue paper by the US ... So people in Pakistan suspect the intentions of US."

"On the other hand people in US suspect Pakistani army of playing double role. So, it is a relationship based on distrust. So how can you have a common agenda of fighting terror when two countries don't trust each other," he asked.

Asserting that recent ceasefire violations at the line of control (LoC) have "pushed back" the peace process, Imran said armies are not equipped to find solutions to bilateral problems.

## NEWS IN brief

### Obama picks chief of staff

BBC ONLINE

US President Barack Obama has named Denis McDonough, his deputy national security adviser, as his new chief of staff.

McDonough, 43, is taking over the position from Jack Lew, Obama's nominee for treasury secretary. He has worked for the



Denis McDonough

### Russia bans public place smoking

AGENCIES

Russia will ban smoking in public places, hike tobacco taxes and restrict the sale of cigarettes from mid-2014 in an effort to cut the alarmingly high rate of deaths from smoking-related diseases.

A law approved by the State Duma, the lower house of the Russian Parliament, on Friday in the second of three readings calls for an immediate ban on all tobacco advertising and kiosk sales and the phasing out of smoking in all bars and restaurants, in medical, sports, educational and cultural institutions by January 1, 2015. Violators will be

### US introduce legislation after Malala

PTI, Washington

Two top American Senators have introduced a legislation in the name of Malala Yousafzai, a 15-year-old Pakistani peace activist who was shot by the Taliban, to provide scholarship to girls from Pakistan.

Introduced by Senators Barbara Boxer and Mary Landrieu, the Malala Yousafzai Scholarship Act is designed to expand scholarship opportunities for disadvantaged young women in Pakistan.

### Iraq MPs vote to bar PM from polls

AFP, Baghdad

Iraq's parliament adopted a measure yesterday that would bar Prime Minister Nuri al-Maliki from a third term, a move his allies quickly dismissed as unconstitutional.

A total of 170 MPs of 242 present backed the move to limit the president, premier and parliament speaker to two terms, an official said, meaning Maliki could not retain his post after national elections next year. But Maliki's supporters insisted the motion was not legally-binding and would be struck down by Iraq's highest courts.

### Hong Kong takes Internet speed title

CNN ONLINE

Hong Kong was found to have the highest average peak connection speed of just over 54 megabits per second during the third quarter of 2012, according to analysis by Akamai Technologies.

It's the first time speeds have shot past 50 Mbps and, if the global trend continues, it's just going to get faster. While there was a slight drop in pace over the quarter, over the year average peak speeds surged 36%.

South Korea (48.8), Japan (42.2), Latvia (37.5) and Romania (37.4) were behind Hong Kong in the top 5 list.

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