

N Korea moves missiles from launching site

AFP, Seoul

North Korea has taken a major step back from a planned missile test, US officials said, even as Pyongyang and Seoul exchanged fresh threats yesterday of swift military retaliation to any provocation.

A US defence official said two North Korean missiles -- primed for imminent test firing -- had been moved from their launch site, signalling a possible easing of North Asia tensions ahead of a US-South Korea summit in Washington.

US and South Korean officials had been worried that any test of the medium-range Musudan missiles would trigger a fresh surge in military tensions that have included threats of nuclear war from Pyongyang.

But the US defence official told AFP on condition of anonymity: "They moved them," and added that there was no longer an imminent threat of a test.

Militants attack Pak poll campaign, kill 17

Imran Khan hospitalised after rally accident

AFP, Peshawar

Bombs killed 17 people and wounded dozens more including an election candidate in Pakistan yesterday, raising to more than 100 the death toll from attacks on the campaign for Saturday's polls. Meanwhile, Pakistani politician and former cricketer Imran Khan was rushed to hospital with head injuries yesterday after falling off a lift taking him onto the stage for an election rally.

Television footage showed Khan, leader of the Pakistan Movement for Justice party (PTI), bleeding from the head as he was carried by aides through the crowd at the event in Pakistan's second largest city Lahore.

The 60-year-old tumbled from a riser along with several of his staff, seemingly after one of them lost their balance.

"Imran Khan has one head injury. We are conducting his CT scan and other tests. He is stable, he is conscious and he is recognising people. He is alright," Faisal Sultan, the director of Shaukat Khanam hospital, told reporters.

Khan's main rival, former prime minister Nawaz Sharif tipped to win the election, conveyed his sympathies over



Khan's fall. The poll will mark a democratic milestone in a country ruled for half its history by the military as the first time a civilian government has served a full term and handed over to another through the ballotbox.

Yesterday's attacks took place in the northwestern town of Hangu, a flashpoint for sectarian violence, and in the northwestern district of Dir, where Pakistani troops crushed a Taliban-led insurgency in 2009.

The Pakistani Taliban has condemned the polls as un-Islamic and directly threatened the main parties in the outgoing ruling coalition led by the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) and other secular allies.

Twelve people were killed and more than 40 injured at Hangu when a suicide bomber targeted election candidate Syed Janan, said Musarrat Qadeem, information minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province.

Later on Tuesday a roadside bombing killed five people, including the brother of a provincial assembly candidate for the PPP in Dir, police said. Seven other people were wounded.

Egypt cabinet reshuffled

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's President Mohamed Morsi swore in nine new ministers in a cabinet reshuffle on Tuesday including key economic portfolios, in a move that falls short of opposition demands.

A spokesman from Morsi's Muslim Brotherhood movement told AFP that two new ministers in the shake-up, which included the finance, oil and justice portfolios, were members of the Islamist movement.

The reshuffle affected both the finance ministry and the international cooperation and planning ministry. Amr Darrag, a senior member of the Muslim Brotherhood's Freedom and Justice Party, was handed the international cooperation ministry, and finance went to Fayyad Abdel Moneim, an Islamic finance expert.

The investment ministry went to Yehya Hamed, another member of the FJP, according to the state-owned Al-Ahram newspaper.

Pak minorities have no faith in democracy

AP, Lahore

In majority Muslim Pakistan, religious minorities say democracy is killing them.

Intolerance has been on the rise for the past five years under Pakistan's democratically elected government because of the growing violence of Islamic radicals, who are then courted by political parties, say many in the country's communities of Shia Muslims, Christians, Hindus and other minorities.

On Saturday, the country will elect a new parliament, marking the first time one elected government is replaced by another in the history of Pakistan, which over its 66-year existence has repeatedly seen military rule. But minorities are not celebrating. Some of the fiercest Islamic extremists are candidates in the vote, and minorities say even the mainstream political parties pander to radicals to get votes, often campaigning side-by-side with well-known militants.

More than a dozen representatives of Pakistan's minorities interviewed by The Associated Press expressed fears the vote will only hand more influence to extremists. Since the 2008 elections, under the outgoing government led by the left-leaning Pakistan People's Party, sectarian attacks have been relentless and minorities have found themselves increasingly targeted by radical Islamic militants. Minorities have little faith the new election will change that.

"We are always opposed to martial law (but) during all the military regimes, the law and order was better and there was good security for minorities," said Amar Lal, a lawyer and human rights activist for



Pakistan's Hindu community. The US Commission on International Religious Freedom in a report last month berated the Pakistan

government for its poor record of protecting both its minorities and its majority Sunni Muslims and recommended that Pakistan be put on a list of worst offenders, which could jeopardize billions of dollars in US assistance.

Pakistan's Hindu minority complains that scores of Hindu girls have been kidnapped, forced to marry their abductor and convert to Islam. They say some 11,000 Hindus living in Baluchistan province have migrated to India because they were worried about security.

Pakistan's Christian communities have complaints as well. They are often charged with blasphemy with trifles with majority Muslims.

They also accuse political parties of aligning with radical Islamic groups to get votes. Minority religious groups fear extremists will piggyback on the backs of mainstream political parties to a position of political power. They most often point to Nawaz Sharif, the head of the Pakistan Muslim League.

Sharif's spokesman Siddiq-ul-Farooqi flatly rejected any links to extremist groups.

The non-believer epitaph is also widely used in reference to Ahmedis, who consider themselves Muslims but have been explicitly declared non-Muslims in Pakistan's constitution.

So virulent is the abhorrence of Ahmedis by Pakistan's religious right-wing parties that many candidates in Saturday's elections have found it necessary to openly declare their view that Ahmedis are non-Muslims.

NEWS IN brief

Israel freezes settlement tenders

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered a freeze on publishing tenders for new West Bank settler homes to avoid hampering US efforts to renew peace talks, army radio reported yesterday.

Israel's Peace Now settlement watchdog also said there had not been any tenders for new West Bank construction published since the start of the year.

Libya defence minister resigns

AFP, Tripoli

Libya's Defence Minister Mohammed al-Barghathi resigned yesterday due to a crisis caused by gunmen who have besieged two ministries for more than a week, a ministry official said.

The militiamen have surrounded the ministries of justice and foreign affairs to demand the removal from public posts of former officials of the regime of slain dictator Muammar Gaddafi. He served as an air force commander in the Gaddafi regime.

Queen to miss C'wealth meet in S Lanka

AFP, London

Queen Elizabeth II will miss the Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Sri Lanka in November, sending her son Prince Charles in her place, the palace announced yesterday.

A palace source said the decision was unrelated to the controversy over the human rights record of the host of this year's meeting, Sri Lanka.

Philippine volcano erupts, kills 5

AFP, Manila

Four foreign tourists and their Filipino tour guide were crushed to death when one of the Philippines' most active volcanoes spewed a giant ash cloud and a hail of rocks yesterday, authorities said.

Twenty-seven people, including at least nine foreigners, were climbing picturesque Mount Mayon when it erupted without warning, officials said.



US Secretary of State John Kerry, left, with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov in Moscow yesterday. Kerry is in Moscow for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin, seeking to restore frayed US-Russia ties and win Moscow's support on the war in Syria.

No more tears left

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The situation of Buli Begum is no less painful. Holding one of her grandchildren on her bosom, she came rushing to The Daily Star correspondent and requested to note down her daughter's name.

"Her name is Mallika. She used to work on the third floor," said Buli Begum, "Her daughters cannot sleep without their mother. Nowadays they always cry. I have brought them here saying that their mother will be back soon." Mallika has two daughters -- Aklima, 6, and Ani, 2.

"What will I tell them, if I can't even find her [Mallika's] body," said the heartbroken mother.

Before her words reached a pause, a few

more people came rushing, requesting the same thing as if putting the names on news would help them find the bodies.

"Do you need our phone numbers?" asked one from the crowd.

Jyotsna Begum was one of them. He son Jashim, who worked on the fifth floor as a machine operator, was the only breadwinner of the four-member family since his father had become physically unable.

"I haven't seen my son for so many days. Will I ever get to see his face," she was crying.

Everyone gathered at the Adhar Chandra High School playground has their own painful story. Near the school gate, Lovely Akhter was found

beating the ground and wailing. She found her brother Al-Amin's body and identified it by the clothes and some marks on the legs.

"Oh my brother, where have you gone ... who will call me sister now," is only what the correspondent could understand.

The body was being sent to her village home in Joypurhat. But Lovely did not go, as she has another brother Shaheen missing.

The screaming of Arjina brought tears to everyone's eyes. She lost her sister Rashida's. She identified her sister by the dress and tabiz (amulet). "Had I not let you go that day, I would not have seen you in this way," she mourned.

The worst

place to be a mother

AFP, London

The Democratic Republic of Congo yesterday displaced fellow African nation Niger to gain the unenviable distinction of being the worst place in the world to be a mother, according to the annual report of Save the Children.

Countries in sub-Saharan Africa took up each of the bottom 10 places for the first time in the 14 years that the report has been produced.

In contrast, Finland took the top spot, with its Nordic neighbours filling the other leading positions.

The London-based charity's "State of the World's Mothers" compared 176 countries in terms of maternal health, child mortality, education and levels of women's income and political status.

The group called for investment to close the "startling disparities" in maternal health between the developed and developing world and for a push to fight inequality and malnutrition.



CNN ONLINE

Africa's western black rhino is now officially extinct according the latest review of animals and plants by the world's largest conservation network.

The subspecies of the black rhino -- which is classified as "critically endangered" by the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List of Threatened Species -- was last seen in western Africa in 2006.

The IUCN warns that other rhinos could follow saying Africa's northern white rhino is "teetering on the brink of extinction" while Asia's Javan rhino is "making its last stand" due to continued poaching and lack of conservation.

"In the case of the western black rhino and the northern white rhino the situation could have had very different results if the suggested conservation measures had been implemented," Simon Stuart, chair of the IUCN species survival commission said in a statement.

The IUCN points to conservation efforts which have paid off for the southern white rhino subspecies which have seen populations rise from less than 100 at the end of the 19th century to an estimated wild population of 20,000 today.

Another success can be seen with the Przewalski's Horse which was listed as "extinct in the wild" in 1996 but now, thanks to a captive breeding program, has an estimated population of 300.

The latest update to the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species reviews more than 60,000 species, concluding that 25% of mammals on the list are at risk of extinction.

Remembering the Bard

FROM PAGE 20

And as Bangla-speaking people in Bangladesh, in West Bengal, indeed all across the Bangalee diaspora observe today the 152nd birth anniversary of the poet, it is fair to suggest that the pre-eminent niche he holds in our collective life is not likely to be moved or shaken ever. In considerably more ways than one, Rabindranath embodies the psyche of his people. In a larger sense, from the perspective of history, he speaks of India as it used to be ... or perhaps as it always has been in time.

For Bangladesh, the struggle for Rabindranath, in defence of the ethos he represents, has always meant a battle against the forces of untruth and anti-

culture. It was the Pakistani establishment that sought to de-emphasise his place in Bangla literature in the hundredth year of his birth. And that was in 1961, when a brave band of Bangalees came together in defiance of the regime. Later in that turbulent decade, when the rulers of Pakistan decided that one surefire way of keeping the faith was through clamping a ban on Tagore songs in East Bengal, resistance once more became the weapon of the Bangalees.

The years have moved on. Rabindranath stirred our political sensibilities in 1971 when Amar Sonar Bangla took pride of place in the pantheon of music adding substance to the struggle for freedom. And since then, despite every

odd and every quibble placed in our way by quarters uncomfortable with him, we have held on to him. Our minds have been without fear, our heads have been held high, our knowledge has flowed in the happiness of freedom.

Rabindranath's songs have underpinned our collective societal being, encompassing as they do the purely romantic, the essentially religious, the patently political and the cheerfully humanistic. His invocations to the Creator have served as potent reminders of the cultural heritage this nation is heir to; and in the songs of love have come that old message of the bonding between man and woman. Rabindranath speaks of the land, of the fecundity of life

and ideas its rivers and fields and skies have consistently put forth as metaphors of purposeful existence.

There is a charming combination of the patriotic and the divine in O amar desher maati tomar pore thekaai matha. The soul is all in the poet. Feel, in the silence of the nocturnal hours, the yearning for God in aaji nahi nahi nidra anki paate, in amaro praane gobhiro gopon moha apon shey ki. Experience too the heartbreak which comes with parting in amar praaner pore chole gelo ke boshonter batash tukur moto.

In Rabindranath we hear the myriad voices of the generations. He was a good deal more than a poet. There was the mystic in him; and in him there was

the internationalist who took the Bangalees to the centre of global interaction. He visited countries, lectured on issues stretching beyond the time-constrained and he conversed on poetic principles with the likes of Victoria Ocampo and W B Yeats and Romain Rolland. His fascination with science came alive in his interaction with Albert Einstein. He sought to delineate the frontiers of nationalistic politics through his conversations with Gandhi.

A hundred and fifty two years after his birth, Rabindranath Tagore goes on lighting our path through the dense woods.

He sang for us once. We sing in homage to him this morning.

Govt to ask

FROM PAGE 20

public assets," Muhith told reporters during his visit to Bangladesh House Building Finance Corporation (BHBFC) and Janata Bank buildings at Paltan.

The BHBFC and Janata Bank authorities filed general diaries on Monday demanding compensations worth Tk 18.17 crore and Tk 5.40 crore respectively.

Muhith said they [terrorists] targeted the hawkers and it was a conspiracy against the country. "They had set a target to destroy the country."

"I have seen a lot of political demonstrations in the country, but nothing like the one on Sunday," the minister said, adding that the government would prepare a list of affected hawkers in Baitul Mukarram Mosque and

Paltan areas.

Some 350 makeshift shops adjacent to the mosque were set on fire while around 175 makeshift shops in Paltan area were destroyed.

"The terrorist groups should be punished as they tried to loot assets. They should compensate the victims," Muhith told the reporters.

The cabinet on Sunday decided that no political programme and rally would be allowed at Motijheel in future, he added.

Businessmen including hawkers incurred a loss of at least Tk 15 crore due to Sunday's fire and vandalism, Atiur Rahman, vice-president of Baitul Mukarram Traders Group, told The Daily Star on Monday.

BORDER SKIRMISHES Afghan diplomat summoned in Pakistan

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan summoned the most senior Afghan diplomat in the country yesterday to protest over border skirmishes.

Cross-border clashes flared on Monday between Afghan and Pakistani security forces for the second time in five days with Kabul summoning the Pakistani charge d'affaires to protest the "unprovoked attack by Pakistani forces".

The exchanges of fire and ensuing protests are threatening to worsen already fractious ties between Kabul and Islamabad.