

Obama, Xi end 'constructive' summit

AFP, Rancho Mirage

Barack Obama and Xi Jinping ended their first US-China summit Saturday, forging a rapport and policy understandings, if not breakthroughs, on North Korea, climate and cyber issues.

The presidents spent eight hours together over two days, in intimate groups with staff, over a dinner of lobster and steak, and strolling

appeared to succeed: at one point Obama and Xi, finding common ground as politicians, sketched respective visions for where they hoped to take their nations.

By the time Xi left on Saturday, US officials said, the two men had talked bluntly about a new flashpoint, cybersecurity, chided North Korea's nuclear grandstanding and agreed a new

Beijing's territorial claims in the South China Sea.

In a more tangible outcome from the talks at the Sunnylands retreat once patronized by Frank Sinatra and Richard Nixon, the White House said Obama and Xi agreed a joint effort to combat climate change, specifically the production of "super greenhouse gases" or HFCs.

The gases are used in air condi-

Agree to cut "super greenhouse gases"



Agree to keep pressure on North Korea over nuclear issue



Found common ground on cyber security



Agree to hold next summit in China



Obama's gift to Xi

President Barack Obama sent off

China's President Xi Jinping with something not every world leader has: the huge wooden park bench on which they sat to chat. The bench is inscribed on the front with the dates of this visit.

Out on a stroll of the grounds of Sunnylands, where the leaders held their talks, Xi and Obama sat for a moment together on the bench.

tions and refrigerators and China -- by far the largest producer of HFCs -- had until recently resisted efforts by the United States and other nations to scale back emissions of the gases.

But it agreed in April to end HFC production by 2030 as part of a \$385 million assistance package by wealthy countries under the Montreal Protocol, which was set up to fight the depletion of the ozone layer.

Obama and Xi agreed to work

together for the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, following nuclear and missile tests and wild warnings of atomic warfare from North Korea, Beijing's troublesome nominal ally.

Obama meanwhile made clear that a rash of suspected Chinese cyber attacks on US commercial property and military technology would be an "inhibitor" to relations.

Donilon said that Xi "acknowledged" how important the issue was to Washington, and left California in no doubt where Obama stood.

Xi said he wanted "good-faith cooperation" on the issue, but stood his ground, saying China was also "a victim of cyberattacks."

Xi is expected to lead China during a decade in which it will overtake the United States as the world's largest economy.

Hovering over the summit was a vexing question for both sides -- whether China's rise means an inevitable clash with the United States, which Obama sees as a Pacific power.

Xi invited Obama to pay a return informal visit to China. Donilon said the two sides would work together to set a date, and also to work out a schedule for an exchange of state visits.

Mirroring his host's theme of a new approach, Xi said on Friday that "the vast Pacific Ocean has enough space for two large countries like the United States and China."

Get well soon Madiba



Nelson Mandela with his family

AGENCIES

South Africans prayed for Nelson

Mandela's recovery yesterday as the 94-year-old former president spent a second day in hospital with a recurring lung infection.

Mandela, who became a global symbol of triumph over adversity and South Africa's first black leader in 1994 after the defeat of apartheid, was hospitalised early on Saturday after his already frail health worsened.

It is his fourth hospital stay since December and the government said on Saturday his condition was "serious".

During previous hospital visits it had highlighted his "good spirits".

His health is a cause for concern to the millions of South Africans who revere Mandela for his decades of struggle

against white-minority rule and steering the continent's biggest economy to all- race elections.

Hundreds gathered to pray for him at Sunday Mass at the Regina Mundi Catholic church in the sprawling Johannesburg township of Soweto.

"We wish him speedy recovery, he must get well," Soweto resident Mlugisi Sekhosana said. "We know what he did for us in South Africa. All the nation, black and white, we wish him well."

"It's time to let him go," was the front-page headline in the Sunday Times with a picture of the former statesman smiling and waving.

"We wish Madiba a speedy recovery, but I think what is important is that his family must release him," long-time friend Andrew Mlangeni, 87, told the newspaper, using Mandela's clan name.

NEWS IN brief

China tries ex-minister for graft

AFP, Beijing

China's former railways minister Liu Zhijun went on trial yesterday charged with accepting millions of dollars in bribes, state media reported, in the first high-profile corruption case under President Xi Jinping.

According to the indictment, Liu took advantage of his position to help 11 people win promotions or contracts, and accepted 64.6 million yuan (\$10.5 million) in bribes between 1986 and 2011, Xinhua reported.

US seeks criminal probe into NSA leaks

AFP, Washington

A US intelligence agency formally requested a criminal probe on Saturday into the leak of highly classified information about secret surveillance programs run by the National Security Agency, a spokesman for the intelligence czar's office said.

A "crimes report has been filed," said Shawn Turner, a spokesman for the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. The report, which goes to the US Justice Department, was filed by the super-secret NSA, he said.

Sudan to shut South Sudan oil flow

AFP, Khartoum

Sudan yesterday prepared to stop the oil flow from South Sudan on the orders of President Omar al-Bashir but an expert said the process could take weeks.

Bashir on Saturday said petroleum companies working in South Sudan will be informed about "shutting down the pipeline" from Sunday, the official SUNA news agency reported. The order came after Bashir warned the South over backing rebels, who analysts say humiliated the authorities with recent attacks.

Iran clerics back Velayati for president

AFP, Tehran

A leading Iranian conservative clerical group has endorsed former diplomat Ali Akbar Velayati to succeed Mahmoud Ahmadinejad in the June 14 presidential election, a media report said yesterday.

The Mehr news agency said a majority of members of the Qom Seminary Scholars Association at a meeting on Saturday gave their support to Velayati.

Netanyahu, Putin discuss Syria crisis

AFP, Jerusalem

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has spoken to Russia's Vladimir Putin after Moscow offered to bolster the beleaguered UN peacekeeping force monitoring the Israeli-Syrian ceasefire line on the Golan Heights, Netanyahu's office said yesterday.

"We discussed issues linked to Syria where the situation is becoming more complex by the day," Netanyahu said in remarks communicated by his office.

Quneitra is the only crossing point between Syria and the Israeli side of the Golan Heights, which was seized by the Jewish state during the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed in a move never recognised by the international community.

Thursday's clashes, in which two UN peacekeepers were lightly wounded, prompted Austria to announce it would withdraw its 377 troops from UNDOF, the UN Disengagement Observer Force headquartered at Quneitra.

The move caused great concern in Israel as it will reduce by more than a third the UNDOF force which has monitored the ceasefire line for nearly four decades.

Rival Koreas hold first talks in two years

AFP, Seoul

North and South Korea held their first official talks for more than two years yesterday, seeking to set up a high-level meeting in Seoul after months of tensions and threats of nuclear war.

The working-level discussions -- weighed down, as always, by decades of mutual distrust -- were held in the border truce village of Panmunjom where the armistice ending the 1950-53 Korean War was signed.

"The overall atmosphere was... calm and the discussion proceeded with no major debate," the South's Unification Ministry spokesman Kim Hyung-Seok said after the morning session between the two delegations, each comprising three representatives.

The talks moved into a fourth session in the evening as the two sides sought to agree

a framework for what would be their first ministerial-level meeting since 2007 -- tentatively scheduled in Seoul on Wednesday.

The agenda will focus on restoring suspended commercial links, including the Kaesong joint industrial complex that the North effectively shut down in April as tensions between the historic rivals peaked.

Sunday's talks came about after an unexpected reversal on Thursday from North Korea, which suddenly dropped its default tone of high-decibel belligerence and proposed opening a dialogue.

South Korea responded swiftly with its offer of a ministerial meeting in Seoul, the North countered with a request for lower-level talks first and -- after some relatively benign to-and-fro about the best venue -- yesterday's meet in Panmunjom was agreed.

Attack on ex-Libya rebel HQ kills 28

AFP, Benghazi

At least 28 people were killed and 60 were wounded on Saturday when demonstrators attacked the headquarters in Benghazi of former rebels who had fought to oust Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi, a hospital official said.

Fighting erupted after dozens of demonstrators, some of them armed, tried to dislodge the powerful "Shield of Libya" brigade from its barracks in Benghazi, said an AFP correspondent at the scene.

They encircled the headquarters and called on regular security forces to step in.

Libya's post-Gaddafi authorities, who have still not managed to form a professional new army and police corps, often call on the "Shield of Libya" to intervene in the various tribal conflicts that trouble the country.

Adel Tarhuni, spokesman for the Shield of Libya group, said one member of the brigade had died and another seven were wounded.

Tarhuni also defended the "legitimacy" of the brigade, saying it officially came under the umbrella of the defence ministry.



Cambodian people hold portrait photos of victims of Khmer Rouge during a protest in Phnom Penh yesterday. About 10,000 Cambodians took to the street in the capital to show their anger against an opposition leader for allegedly saying a Khmer Rouge's notorious prison was a Vietnamese invention. The protesters vowed not to allow anyone to distort history and demanded the leader's apology.

'Illegal' boat sinks off Australia coast

13 killed; massive search launched for missing dozens

AFP, Sydney

Planes, merchant and navy ships were scouring seas off Australia yesterday in a major search operation after a people-smuggling boat carrying 55 men, women and children sank, with 13 confirmed dead.

The boat was last seen 28 nautical miles northwest of Australia's remote Christmas Island on Wednesday but then vanished.

Home Affairs Minister Jason Clare said a full-scale search involving 15 ships and 10 aircraft was under way.

The navy vessel HMAS Warramunga had been sent to intercept the boat on Thursday but it had disappeared. Aerial searches turned up no sign until Friday, when Clare said a "submerged hull" was seen from the air.

When the drifting boat was first spotted by a border protection aircraft on Wednesday, Clare said officials "identified approximately 55 people on the deck of the vessel".

There was no immediate information about the passengers' nationality, but Myanmar, Iraq, Afghanistan and Sri Lanka are the most common source countries for asylum-seekers arriving in Australia.

ODDLY enough

Buffett lunch goes for \$1m

CNN ONLINE

How much would you pay to have lunch with Warren Buffett? The winning bidder at the investment guru's annual anti-poverty fundraiser plunked down \$1,000,100 for the honor on Friday.

Proceeds from the auction go to the San Francisco charity GLIDE. It serves nearly 1 million meals each year to the poor and operates on a budget of about \$17 million.

Isn't it cute for a pet?



AFP, Batuco

As pets go, they are low maintenance. No muss, no fuss, nice and quiet, and even a bit furry. So, how about snuggling up with a giant, non-biting tarantula?

A farm in Chile exports the palm-sized critters to Asia, Europe and the United States for sale as exotic house-hold companions.

They go for \$25 each plus shipping, and need to be fed just once a week, preferably live cockroaches or worms. And they live a long time -- up to 25 years in the case of females.

TURKEY TURMOIL Erdogan shows strength after fresh clashes

AFP, Istanbul

Turkey's defiant Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday rallied supporters after riot police clashed with thousands of angry anti-government protesters in a second week of civil unrest.

The flare-up of violence overnight raised pressure on Erdogan's Islamic-rooted conservative government, with demonstrators ignoring his call to end the protests that have thrown up the fiercest challenge to his decade of rule.

As chanting crowds again gathered in Istanbul and the capital Ankara, Erdogan went on a whistlestop tour of several Turkish cities to fire up supporters, urging them to respond to the demonstrations by voting for his Justice and Development Party (AKP) in next year's local polls.

"I want you to teach them a first lesson through democratic means at the ballot box," he said in the southern city of Adana, where he was greeted by a sea of loyalists waving red Turkish flags.

Adana was among the cities that saw clashes overnight, with police dousing demonstrators with tear gas. There were also reports of stone-throwing, pro-government rioters joining the fray.

The unrest first erupted on May 31 with a police crackdown on a campaign to save Istanbul's Gezi Park from demolition. The trouble spiralled into nationwide protests against Erdogan and his party, seen as increasingly authoritarian.

19 killed as monsoon lashes Lanka

AFP, Colombo

Monsoon rains and strong winds in Sri Lanka have killed 19 people with dozens more missing, most of them fishermen caught in rough seas, officials said yesterday.

The navy and airforce are searching for 36 fishermen who have been missing at sea since the monsoon hit early on Saturday, Sarath Kumara Gunaratne, deputy minister of disaster management, told reporters.

The bodies of 18 fishermen have so far been found, while the body of another person was discovered on land, the minister said.

On Saturday, officials confirmed five people died as a result of the monsoon which hits annually, bringing much-needed rain, but also frequently causing loss of life.

Israel PM answers critic over two-state solution

AFP, Jerusalem

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday reiterated his commitment to a Palestinian state, after his deputy defence minister said the government would not support a two-state solution.

Speaking at the opening of the weekly cabinet meeting, Netanyahu -- who in 2009 declared his support of a two-state solution -- said he and US Secretary of State John Kerry will "try to make progress to find the opening for negotiations with the Palestinians, with the goal of reaching an agreement".

"This agreement will be based on a demilitarised Palestinian state that recognises the Jewish state, and on firm security arrangements based on the IDF (Israeli military)," he said.

His remarks came just days after Deputy Defence Minister Danny Danon, a member of Netanyahu's ruling Likud party, rejected the notion that the government was serious about reaching a peace agreement that would lead