

S Korea to hold live-fire drill near disputed islets

AFP, Seoul

South Korean military said yesterday it would hold a rare live-fire drill near islets also claimed by Japan in a move likely to further raise diplomatic tensions with Tokyo.

The navy plans to hold the exercise near the Seoul-controlled chain of islets, called Dokdo by the South and Takeshima by Japan, today, the defence ministry said.

"The navy plans to hold live-fire exercises near Dokdo tomorrow as part of its regular training," the ministry said in a statement.

Seoul's navy and coastguard have for years staged joint exercises near Dokdo but those do not involve live-fire drills.

Today's naval drill is not part of the biannual exercises.

In Tokyo, the top government spokesman said that Japan had lodged an immediate protest.

"It is extremely regrettable," Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshihide Suga told reporters. "Our country is strongly urging the South Korean government to cancel the exercise."

The rocky outcrops have been the subject of a bitter and decades-old territorial dispute between the two neighbours.

The row escalated in 2012 following a surprise visit by then South Korean President Lee Myung-Bak.

Tension escalated earlier this year after Japan moved to revise school textbooks to strengthen its historical claim to the islets.

Relations between the South and Japan are currently at their lowest ebb for years, mired in emotive disputes linked to Japan's 1910-45 colonial rule, including the islet dispute.

Many South Koreans believe Japan failed to properly atone for abuses carried out during the Japanese occupation.

The latest move by Seoul also came as Japan began a controversial review of its landmark 1993 apology over the use of many South Korean and Chinese women as wartime sex slaves for Tokyo troops.

Unicycle

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way of travelling short distances. Sceptics may scratch their head and wonder what is wrong with the humble bicycle but retired physicist Alvarez-Icaza insists his design is better.

On Wednesday, he said: "It's a bit like a unicycle but it is more efficient. It's simplicity itself and you build up momentum very quickly.

"You just lean to change direction and to stop you lean back on the seat and the brakes come on.

"It uses the natural movements of the body to propel it. Its top speed is about a jogging pace, although I'm sure with practice you may be able to go faster.

"So, it's a jogging speed with the effort of walking. I can see it being ideal for use in cities and towns.

"We'll have a sports version as well and you could use it for games like basketball or even football. It's more efficient than a unicycle or a bicycle and easier to use."

He also said: "The Velofeet is a very exciting project and I will develop it further. It's a real step forward."

The 61-year-old was born in Mexico but has spent the past 18 years living in the Highlands.

Alvarez's original aim was to develop something more practical than a bike for travelling in city centres.

Assam govt

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our neighbours, including Bangladesh. But we have to look into the security aspects also," Gogoi said.

Indian External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj is scheduled to fly to Dhaka on June 25 on a three-day visit when she is likely to meet Bangladesh's top leaders and discuss vital issues, including relaxation of visa norms.

Her Dhaka visit is considered part of Modi government's outreach to the neighbouring countries as was evident in the invitations to top Saarc (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) leaders to the swearing-in ceremony of the prime minister on May 26.

Modi, however, during his campaigns ahead of the general polls this year, said that if Bharatiya Janata Party came to power, all illegal Bangladeshi immigrants living in India would be deported.

Superb Suarez sinks

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stronger but they suffered a scare when Phil Jagielka lost the ball in defence and Cristian Rodriguez couldn't keep his rising shot on target.

After a scrappy period, Uruguay again went close when Suarez's low corner from the right was struck first time by Cavani but whistled over the bar.

On the half-hour, Rooney came within inches of scoring when, from about a yard away, he headed a Steven Gerrard free-kick against the angle between the post and crossbar.

England were in the ascendancy but six minutes from the break, it was Uruguay who scored on the counter via the hitherto quiet Suarez, after England lost the ball on the halfway line.

Nicolas Lodeiro passed left to Cavani, who wrong-footed the entire defence with a sumptuous diagonal chip to the Liverpool forward, who got away from Jagielka and looped his header over Hart.

Almost straight away, Sturridge drew a sharp stop from Fernando Muslera as England sought in vain for a response before half-time.

After the break, Suarez very nearly doubled Uruguay's lead first when his corner was parried by Hart off the line, and then when he shot well wide with the goal at his mercy.

Pak Muslim minority seek refuge in China

AFP, Sanhe

Fleeing discrimination and violence, members of a Muslim sect have abandoned their homes in Pakistan to find an unlikely refuge in China.

"Every day I heard the sound of guns," said a 37-year-old surnamed Saeed of his former home Lahore, Pakistan's second city.

"We prayed every day, because we felt something could happen to us at any time."

He is one of hundreds of people who have sought asylum in China in recent years, often from conflict and violence-stricken countries including Iraq and Somalia.

The government tolerates their presence but provides almost no support, while human rights groups have for years condemned Beijing for deporting tens of thousands of asylum seekers who enter it to escape oppression in North Korea and Myanmar.

Around 35 of the almost 500 UN-registered asylum seekers and refugees currently in China are Ahmadi Muslims -- a sect which believes their 19th century founder Ghulam Ahmad to be a prophet, and that Jesus Christ died aged 120 in Srinagar, in Indian-ruled Kashmir.

They are among the most persecuted minorities in Pakistan -- a constitutional Islamic republic which bans them from calling themselves Muslims or going on the Hajj pilgrimage to Mecca.

In 2010 militants stormed two Ahmadi prayer halls, killing 82 worshippers in gun and grenade attacks, before targeting a hospital where victims were being treated. Ahmadi mosques and graveyards are regularly desecrated.

Even high-achieving Ahmadis have been shunned, including physics professor Abdus Salam, Pakistan's only Nobel laureate.

China is regularly condemned by the US State Department for its restrictions on religious freedom, which analysts say are key elements of the tensions it faces in Buddhist-majority Tibet and mainly Muslim Xinjiang.

But Saeed, who arrived four years ago, said: "From a security point of

England, now defending in front of the Uruguay support, were looking ragged and Cavani also should have put his team 2-0 up when he burst into the penalty area but fired wide.

However, Rooney almost got the equaliser when he latched on to a cross from the left and hammered a shot at the diving Muslera.

An accidental Raheem Sterling knee to the head knocked out Alvaro Pereira but he refused to be substituted.

Sturridge burst into the box and should have done better with a weak shot which rolled to the goalkeeper.

England boss Roy Hodgson threw on Ross Barkley and Adam Lallana for Sterling and Danny Welbeck but it was Glen Johnson who created England's breakthrough when he beat his man on the right of the box.

The right-back's rolled ball fell perfectly for Rooney and the grateful Manchester United striker had the simplest of tap-ins as he finally scored his debut goal at a World Cup finals.

Sturridge then worked Muslera as England, buoyed by Rooney's goal, came alive and looked an increasing threat.

But again it was Uruguay who struck through Suarez, who gambled to latch onto a long ball from defence and lashed his shot past Hart, before celebrating wildly in front of his adoring fans.

view, China is good.

"There is almost no terrorism compared to Pakistan, where there is killing and persecution of minorities every day," he told AFP in a rented apartment in Sanhe, a city outside Beijing where clumps of high-rise apartment blocks overshadow restaurants offering donkey meat burgers.

Two of his cousins were killed in the 2010 attack, he added.

The Ahmadi refugees in Sanhe said they paid middle-men up to \$3,000 each for Chinese visas -- more than twice the average yearly income in Pakistan.

Once in China, Saeed said, "You have to do everything for yourself."

He lives off overseas family donations and added: "I don't expect anything from the Chinese."

New arrivals receive no benefits unless the UN grants them refugee status after a gruelling 18-month series of tests and even then China refuses to integrate them, denying them the right to work while they wait for acceptance from a third country, often for years.

"In this kind of a situation, you can't enjoy life much," said Saeed.

But teenager Laiba Ahmad, who arrived around two years ago with her mother and several siblings, had no doubts, even though she does not have enough Chinese to attend school.

"I am happy here compared with Pakistan," she said. "Pakistan was dangerous. We could not go outside without our brothers and fathers, if you are a woman especially."

On a recent afternoon around 10 refugees gathered in Saeed's flat for an English lesson. Practising the present tense, they called out descriptions of their jobless lives.

"We play football daily," offered Ahsan Ahmad, 22, who fled Pakistan after mullahs attacked two of his uncles.

"We offer prayer daily," said another student.

China signed up to the UN's refugee protocol in 1982, but does not have any mechanism to assess their claims, leaving it to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Bilal Philips sent back

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official who works with immigration.

On Tuesday evening, government officials told him at a Dhaka hotel, where he had checked in, that he had to leave the country.

It was not clear on what grounds the 68-year-old Jamaica-born preacher, who had been in the country twice earlier to deliver lectures, was deported. However, online media reports suggest that he was suspected to be a terrorist and co-conspirator in many western countries.

Bilal Philips, who studied in Saudi Arabia and is currently living in Qatar, was invited to Bangladesh by Sean Academy, a sister concern of Islamic Online University, a global institution founded by him.

Sharif Abu Hayat, manager at Sean Academy, said he had arrived in the country to deliver five lectures on education-related matters in Dhaka and Chittagong. "He came to the country using on-arrival visa ...," said Hayat.

Philips is banned in the US, the UK, Germany and Australia for his alleged link with terrorism and seeming to condone suicide bombers, according to media reports.

A regular preacher on Peace TV, Bilal

Philips was deported from Kenya on security concerns in 2012.

Philips was supposed to give two lectures on "The Purification of the Wealth" and "The Nation United" at the capital's Institute of Diploma Engineers on June 21.

Another lecture was supposed to be delivered at Kisholoy Community Centre in Chittagong on "Roots of Civilisation" on June 23.

The next day, a lecture on "The One" at the United International University (UIU) and the fifth lecture were to be held at Emmanuel's Banquet Hall in Jigatola on June 25.

He was supposed to leave for Malaysia to join a conference there, said Hayat.

Bilal Philips' official website suggests he was born in Kingston, Jamaica, and grew up in Toronto, Canada, where he converted to Islam in 1972.

He is imam and khateeb at Abu Hurairah Centre, where he teaches five free university-level classes and counsels Muslim families.

Asked about the deportation, State Minister for Home Affairs Asaduzzaman Khan said some foreigners were deported but he was not aware whether Philips was among them.

Liberia's Taylor applies to serve jail term in Rwanda

AFP, London

Former Liberian president Charles Taylor says his imprisonment in Britain breaches his human rights and has applied to serve the rest of his jail term for war crimes in Rwanda, his lawyer said yesterday.

Taylor was jailed for 50 years in 2012 on 11 counts of war crimes and crimes against humanity over acts committed by Sierra Leonean rebels he aided and abetted during the brutal 1991-2001 civil war.

He was the first former head of state to be jailed by an international court -- the UN-backed Special Court for Sierra Leone in The Hague -- since the Nazi trials at Nuremberg in Germany after World War II.

Taylor's lawyer John Jones told the BBC: "What he has applied for is for the revocation of the sentence to be served in the UK so that he can serve his sentence in Rwanda where all the other prisoners convicted by the special court for Sierra Leone are."

Jones added: "The UK has a duty to ensure family life, not just for him but for his family. It's a clear duty under international law and English domestic law.

"If the UK is unable to make these family visits possible, no matter what he has been convicted of, he is going to serve a 50-year sentence, he has got a right to see his wife and children."

Ctg trader

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rushed him to Chittagong Medical College Hospital where on-duty doctors declared Rokon dead around 1:40am, the police official said.

However, Rokon's wife Shimu Akhter claimed police beat her husband to death.

Denying the allegations, Harun-ur-Rashid Hazari, deputy commissioner (south division) of Chittagong Metropolitan Police, said Rokon might have died from "health complications."

The reasons behind the death could be known after the post mortem examination, he added.

On June 5, a woman filed the case against Rokon with Panchlaish Police Station.

BSF again

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Falakata opened fire on the group leaving Shimul dead on the spot. The rest of the traders managed to return unhurt with the body.

Bulbul Islam Prodhana, Shimul's elder brother, said his brother's body was taken to Patgram Upazila Health Complex.

He sustained bullets in chest and belly, his brother added.

Protesting the killing, BGB sent a letter to BSF of Choyangarkhata camp for holding a flag meeting, said Lieutenant Colonel Shafiul Alam Khan, commanding officer of BGB Battalion-15.

The body was handed over to Shimul's family after an autopsy.

All the ruling

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She alleged that it was the ruling party men who carried out the recent killings in Narayanganj, Feni, Laxmipur, Satkhira and Mirpur.

"As the ruling party men were involved in all the incidents, they were not arrested and punished. If the offenders are not punished, such killings will continue."

HC clears

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come up with the order as the copy of the order was not released yesterday.

The attorney general told The Daily Star that there was no legal bar for the trial court to running proceedings against Khaleda Zia and others in two cases following the HC order.

Advocate M Asaduzzaman, a lawyer for Khaleda, said they were yet to decide whether they would move for an appeal to the Supreme Court against the HC order.

The BNP chief on May 12 filed the writ petitions with the HC challenging the appointment of the judge of Special Judge's Court-3 of Dhaka, Bashudev Roy.

On March 19, Roy framed charges against Khaleda and eight others in the corruption cases. The court of Roy was set yesterday for recording statements from the witnesses of the cases.

But it deferred the date for recording the deposition of prosecution witnesses to July 9 after Khaleda's lawyers prayed to the court for adjournment of the proceedings.

The lawyers in their prayer argued that the two writ petitions filed by Khaleda were pending with the HC.

Unopposed MPs

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Two judges of the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court earlier had unequivocally defended the people's voting rights in the constitution's 13th amendment verdict that declared the caretaker government system illegal.

"It will be a mockery to say that all powers of the Republic belong to the people as enshrined in Article 7 of the constitution unless the people get a chance to practise democracy, that is, they can exercise their right of adult franchise in choosing their own representatives in free, fair and impartial general elections of members of parliament," said Justice Abdul Wahhab Mia.

In the absence of free and fair elections, parliament cannot have real legitimacy and cannot be said to be sovereign as well and in such a parliament, people will have no representation, he added.

For his part, Justice SK Sinha said, "The constitution abhors any system of governance other than a government which is elected by the people."

The Awami League-led alliance that won a more than two-thirds majority in the January 5 polls and formed the government is still facing criticism for the mode of the voter-less election amid a boycott by the BNP-led opposition alliance.

On the issue, many AL top leaders have been blaming the BNP-led opposition for boycotting the polls which contributed to the unopposed election of the large number of MPs.

Prime Minister Shiekh Hasina on December 14 last year said her party, the Awami League, had reached an understanding with some other parties joining the polls. As part of the understanding, some candidates had withdrawn their candidacies, leading to unopposed elections in many constituencies.

Of the 153 lawmakers, 127 were from the Awami League alone.

Jatiya Party leader Khandker Abdus Salam, who was declared disqualified from contesting the polls from a Gazipur constituency for defaulting on loan repayment, filed the petition challenging the RPO provision in last December.

After yesterday's court judgement, his counsel barrister Hassan MS Azim told The Daily Star that his client would decide about moving an appeal before the Appellate Division of the Supreme Court to challenge the HC order after getting the copy of the full judgment.

However, Attorney General Mahbubey Alam welcomed the court decision and said the debate over the unopposed elections of 153 MPs has been settled though the verdict.

On behalf of the government, he earlier said holding the January 5 election was necessary for the continuity of constitutional and democratic processes.

But jurist Shahdeen Malik in his instant reaction said the HC judge-

Caught in Iraq turmoil

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away from the capital Baghdad.

Another expatriate Kawsar Molla said there is no sign of improvement in law and order in the city. "We're very much worried about our safety and don't know when we'll be able to shift to a safer place," he added.

Talking to our Moulvibazar correspondent yesterday, Belal's father Mukhlesur Rahman sought the government's assistance in rescuing his son.

"I don't know if my son would return home alive or not. I urge the government to save my son with all other Bangladeshis there," he mentioned.

On Wednesday, Belal narrated his ordeals to his family members over the phone and asked them to do something to save his life.

Meanwhile, Expatriates Welfare and Overseas Employment Minister Khandker Mosharraf Hossain yesterday said the government, if required, would arrange repatriation of all Bangladeshis from Iraq.

He was talking to reporters at the ministry after holding a meeting with the new executive committee of Bangladesh Association of International Recruiting Agencies.

The foreign ministry in a press release

Injured German caver rescued after 11-day ordeal

AFP, Berlin

German rescuers yesterday brought to safety an injured caver, ending his 11-day ordeal and a massive recovery operation deep below the Bavarian Alps.

"The victim has been brought to the surface and is receiving emergency medical care," said a mountain rescue official after the team reached the mouth of the cave, where a helicopter

ment seems to have priorities' literal meaning over the real meaning of elections in terms of participation of people in choosing their representatives and government.

"Such an interpretation, similar to the 13th amendment judgement [scrapping the caretaker government system], is not in my view is correct interpretation of the spirit of democracy, elections and the Constitution. Such narrow and literal interpretations may further destabilise the political system," he added.

Following such interpretation, if there is only one candidate in each of all 300 constituencies, then there will be no need for election, but the election will be valid, he said.

To dispose the petition, the HC bench had sought opinions from legal experts as amici curie.

Of them, Dr Kamal Hossain, barrister Rafique-UI Huq and Shujan Secretary Prof Badiul Alam Majumder opposed the RPO provision on uncontested elections and the January 5 polls as well.

"Declaring 153 people elected unopposed in the January 5 parliamentary election is alarming, as representatives of the people must be elected through voting, according to the constitution," Kamal Hossain, one of the framers of the constitution, told the court.

Rafique-UI Huq observed that the January 5 election was not an election in the eye of law.

"It was a mockery of an election. It was more a selection than an election. It was a football game without any goalkeeper. Our constitution does not contemplate such an election for members of parliament," he said.

Advocate Mahmudul Islam, barrister Rokonuddin Mahmud and barrister Ajmalul Hossain supported the RPO provision, saying it was necessary and not contrary to the constitution.

Talking to The Daily Star, Prof Shah Alam, a member of Bangladesh Law Commission, and Prof Sarkar Ali Akkas, dean of law faculty of Jagannath University, too supported the HC verdict.

They claimed there was no legal merit in the petition against the RPO provision.

NO VOTE
The HC yesterday also rejected another petition seeking introduction of a "no vote" provision in the parliamentary polls.

It opined that the HC cannot dictate to parliament to make any law incorporating a "no vote" provision.

Had there any constitutional provision on inclusion of the provision of "no vote", the court would have directed parliament to do so, it said.

The HC said in India, there is provision of a "no vote" in the election law as the parliament of the country decided to incorporate such rule.

yesterday said it is in regular communication with the Bangladesh embassy in Baghdad as well as with the neighbouring Bangladeshi missions in Iran, Kuwait, Jordan and Turkey to ensure safety and security of Bangladesh nationals in Iraq.

The government, added the release, will take all necessary measures for the well-being of Bangladesh nationals there.

AFP adds: Militants who have overrun a swathe of territory north of Baghdad in a lightning offensive released on Thursday 48 foreigners, including four Turks, held for several days, Iraqi police said.

The construction workers, who were helping build a hospital in the now insurgent-held city of Tikrit, are from Turkey, Nepal, Bangladesh, Turkmenistan and Azerbaijan.

"The workers... were kidnapped near the Hamreen mountains four days ago, and were handed over near a checkpoint between Tikrit and Kirkuk," said Maj Gen Torhan Abdulrahman, the deputy police chief for Kirkuk province.

"We brought them to Kirkuk, and they will return to their countries soon."

was waiting, at 0944 GMT.

Explorer Johann Westhauser, 52, suffered serious head injuries in the accident about 1,000 metres (3,300 feet) below ground in the Riesending cave complex, Germany's longest and deepest.

Since then a multi-national team of hundreds of emergency personnel battled around the clock in a complex and costly operation to bring him to the surface.