

ROW OVER PROPAGANDA BROADCAST



Park Geun-hye

Kim Jong Un

DEVELOPMENTS

North Korea on 'quasi-state of war', launches ultimatum to stop broadcasts

South says broadcasts to continue

China urges calm from both sides



Koreas on 'war footing'

into the North.

Both sides said there were no casualties or damage in their territory, an indication that the rounds were just warning shots.

"The fact that both sides' shells didn't damage anything means they did not want to spread an armed clash. There is always a chance for war, but that chance is very, very low," said Yang Moo-jin, professor at the University of North Korean Studies in Seoul.

But China, which remains North Korea's main economic backer despite diminished political clout to influence Pyongyang, yesterday said it was deeply concerned about the escalation of tension and called for calm from both sides.

Since the 1950-53 Korean War ended in a truce, not a peace treaty, Pyongyang and Seoul have often exchanged threats, and dozens of soldiers have been killed, yet the two sides have always pulled back from all-out war.

South Korean President Park Geun-hye cancelled an event yesterday and made a visit to a military command post, dressed in army camouflage.

Both sides traded harsh rhetoric late on Friday.

The North's official KCNA news agency said its military was not bluffing.

KCNA said North Korean leader Kim Jong Un had declared a "quasi-state of war" in frontline areas.

The North's shelling came after it had demanded last weekend that South Korea end the broadcasts or face military action - a relatively rare case of following up on its frequent threats against the South.

Its 48-hour ultimatum, delivered in a letter to the South Korean Defence Ministry, was also uncharacteristically specific, said John Delury, a North Korea expert at Yonsei University in Seoul. The deadline is around 5 pm (0800 GMT) on Saturday in Seoul.

Israel strikes inside Syria after rocket fire

Five militants killed

Israel said it killed at least five Palestinian militants in an air strike on the Syrian Golan Heights yesterday, after cross-border rocket fire from there prompted the heaviest Israeli bombardment since the start of Syria's four-year-old civil war.

An Israeli defense official said the people killed were Palestinian militants from the Iran-backed Islamic Jihad. "We now know of five or six Palestinian Islamic Jihad terrorists killed," the official said.

A Syrian army source said the strike, at 10.30am, hit a car in a village in the Syrian Golan, killing five civilians. State television quoted the source as saying it took place near Quneitra, close to the Israeli-occupied side of the Golan.

It followed heavy overnight strikes by Israel against Syrian army posts in the border area in retaliation for what Israel said were rockets fired from Syria by Islamic Jihad.



MIGRANT EXODUS IN EUROPE

Pictures show migrants react after Macedonian police cracked down on them at the Greek-Macedonian border, yesterday. At least five people were hurt as police in riot gear fired the grenades after hundreds of migrants, included women and children, tried to cross newly-laid rolls of barbed wire along the frontier, an AFP photographer at the scene said., Macedonia on Thursday declared a state of emergency in two border regions to cope with an influx of migrants, many from the Middle East*.

PAKISTAN'S SHADY STANCE ON TERRORISM

US to 'curtail aid to Pakistan'

Indo-Pak NSA-level talks in doubts over J&K separatists meet

AGENCIES

Pakistan's bottomfeeding on American aid is about to end unless it terminates its policy of covertly using terrorism to further its frontiers, the Obama administration has conveyed to Islamabad, amid indications that the US is also making Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif's proposed visit to Washington conditional to meeting this objective.

The rethink — or at least holding back the announcement — of the visit comes after the administration conveyed to Islamabad that it will not certify the effectiveness of Pakistan counterterrorism operation to Congress to enable passage of the Coalition Support Fund (CSF), the military reimbursement aid that goes towards keeping Pakistan solvent.

As part of its rentier-state ethos, Pakistan provides logistical support to US and coalition forces in Afghanistan and in turn bills Washington for reimbursement. Pakistan has extracted more than \$13 billion from the US since the coalition forces swooped into Afghanistan.

US renewed The CFS last year on condition that Pakistan would intensify its anti-terror fight. But true to form, Pakistan's military-intelligence establishment has again suckered Washington fooling the US by keeping the death from illnesses of Taliban supremo Mullah Omar and Jalalludin Haqqani while trying to manage their succession.

Meanwhile, India yesterday said it has urged Pakistan against meeting Kashmiri separatist leaders ahead of rare talks between the two countries' top security advisers in New Delhi, hiking tensions between the arch rivals.

The foreign ministry said it would be inappropriate for Pakistan's National Security Adviser Sartaj Aziz to hold the meeting tomorrow in Delhi just before scheduled talks with his Indian counterpart Ajit Doval.

However, Pakistan said it will push ahead with the meeting despite India's "advice", calling the pro-independence leaders "genuine stakeholders" in efforts to find a solution to the dispute over the Kashmir region.

India cancelled talks with Pakistan last year between their foreign secretaries, outraged over a similar meeting that took place.



These two shocking pictures show the haunting legacy of decades of war in Afghanistan that have left millions of landmines in schools and fields which kill and maim dozens of children every day. It's believed there are currently 10million mines spread around the impoverished country.

PHOTO: MAIL ONLINE

THAI BLAST PROBE 'Progress', but still no arrests

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's police chief yesterday insisted his officers were making "a lot of progress" in the hunt for the Bangkok shrine bomber despite the lack of arrests and mystery over the attackers' motives.

Speaking after a memorial for the dead at the scene of the unprecedented attack on Thailand, national police chief Somyot Poompanmoung said the bomb was an attempt to stoke fear and uncertainty in the capital.

"The aim is to discredit the government and create a climate of fear to deter tourists," he told reporters.

But he defended the handling of the case despite days of confusing and sometimes contradictory statements from senior police and junta officials.

"There's a lot of progress (in the case), but I can't disclose everything," he said, adding that a reward for information leading to the arrest of those behind the bomb had been tripled to \$84,000.

Monday's blast killed 20 people, mostly Asian visitors.

Thailand has asked Interpol for help in finding a man, who was captured on CCTV calmly placing a backpack under a bench at the Hindu Erawan shrine minutes before the blast.



GREECE DEBT CRISIS

New blow to PM as party splits

AFP, Athens

Rebels from Greece's Syriza party yesterday formed a break-away parliamentary group after Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras resigned, paving the way for the crisis-hit country's fourth election in three years.

Tsipras announced his resignation late Thursday, going on the offensive to defend the tough terms he accepted in the 86-billion-euro (\$96 billion) rescue package which had triggered a rebellion in his hard-left Syriza party.

The European Union said Tsipras's decision was "not a surprise" and that it remained confident the reforms promised by Athens as part of the deal agreed last month after weeks of difficult negotiations would be carried out.

According to the constitution, following the resignation of the premier, the president must give a three-day exploratory mandate to each of the three largest parties in parliament to see if they are able to form a coalition government.

If they fail, the president then names a caretaker administration, usually under a senior judge, to hold early elections.

The Syriza rebels, now calling themselves the Popular Unity group after the alliance that brought Chile's Salvador Allende to power in 1970, were also to receive an essentially empty mandate.

At least 25 rebels out of a total of 149 Syriza MPs will join the new party, making it the third largest grouping in the outgoing parliament.

NEWSIN brief

New fires at China port blast site

BBC ONLINE

Four new fires are burning at the site in the Chinese city of Tianjin where blasts killed at least 116 people, the state-run Xinhua news agency said yesterday. Sixty people are still missing after the 12 August blasts, which also injured at least 700. The blasts happened at a warehouse storing hazardous chemicals in Tianjin's port. What caused them is still unclear and a massive clean up is continuing, with thousands of police and soldiers deployed.

ISIS destroys ancient monastery in Syria

AFP, Beirut

Islamic State militants have destroyed an ancient monastery in the central Syrian province of Homs, according to a monitor and pictures published by the jihadist group. "The Islamic State group yesterday used bulldozers to destroy the Mar Elian monastery in Al-Qaryatayn, in Homs province," said Syrian Observatory for Human Rights director Rami Abdel Rahman.

EU agrees to observe Myanmar election

AFP, Yangon

The European Union yesterday said that it has agreed to send observers to historic upcoming Myanmar elections in an effort to "strengthen democracy" in the former military-run nation. Myanmar's November 8 parliamentary vote will be the first nationwide election to include Aung San Suu Kyi's opposition in a quarter of a century and is seen as a key benchmark of political transition in a country still burdened by the legacy of decades of army rule.

Nobel author Lessing was under spy watch

AFP, London

Britain's intelligence services kept tabs on Nobel winning author Doris Lessing during the 1950s, fearing that her communist sympathies had been "fanned almost to the point of fanaticism", according to archived documents released Friday. The country's domestic and foreign intelligence agencies amassed files on the author, detailing her visits to East Germany and Cold War Moscow at the invitation of the Union of Soviet Writers.

Turkey snap polls called on Nov 1

AFP, Ankara

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday announced he would call snap elections likely to be held on November 1, after coalition talks failed in an unprecedented political impasse.

Erdogan, who suffered a rare political setback in inconclusive June polls, said he would meet the parliament speaker on Monday to make the arrangements and then formally call the new elections.

"We will take our country to early elections," Erdogan told reporters after Friday prayers in Istanbul. "God willing, Turkey will have the elections again on November 1."

A deadline for political parties to agree a coalition following the June 7 election runs out on Sunday, with the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) failing to form a coalition.

The AKP remained the largest party but lost its overall majority for the first time since it came to power in 2002.

Erdogan's comments indicated that he would use his right to call elections as president, rather than using the alternative route of agreeing the new polls through a motion in parliament.

Lanka opposition to join unity govt

AFP, Colombo

Sri Lanka's two biggest parties yesterday agreed to form a national unity government committed to "ethnic reconciliation" after a surge in voter support for Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe's reform agenda.

The Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) of Mahinda Rajapakse agreed to enter a broad-based coalition government with Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP), which more than doubled its seats in Monday's parliamentary election.

The deal, sealed as Wickremesinghe was sworn in as prime minister yesterday, is a remarkable turnaround for a country that appeared firmly in Rajapakse's grip until his



surprise defeat in January's presidential polls.

The former strongman, who oversaw the crushing of a long-running Tamil separatist insurgency, will sit on the opposition benches along with a dissident group of loyalists.

But the SLFP, which had opposed any concessions to the Tamils, now says it will back constitutional reforms aimed at addressing minority rights and ensuring reconciliation.

In a memorandum of understanding, the two parties pledged to ensure "ethnic and religious reconciliation" in a country that still bears the scars of a separatist war that killed at least 100,000 people between 1972 and 2009.

The agreement pledges constitutional reforms to ensure ethnic unity and uphold the rights of minorities.



Top results for Malala in school exams

AFP, London

Malala Yousafzai, the teenage education rights campaigner who came to Britain after the Pakistani Taliban tried to kill her, has scored high marks in national school exams, her father said yesterday.

Malala, shot in the head three years ago for championing girls' rights to education, gained six A* grades, the highest possible, and four As, the second highest, in her GCSEs.

Her top grades were in biology, chemistry, physics, religious studies and two maths exams.

She now lives permanently in Birmingham, central England, with her family and attends an all-girls school.

Malala, who hopes one day to be prime minister of Pakistan, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2014 jointly with India's Kailash Satyarthi for promoting education rights for children.