

NORTH KOREA CRISIS

Fear grows for another missile test

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea braced for a possible further missile test by North Korea as it marked its founding anniversary yesterday, just days after its sixth and largest nuclear test rattled global financial markets and further escalated tensions in the region.

Throughout the week, South Korean officials have warned the North could launch another intercontinental ballistic missile, in defiance of UN sanctions and amid an escalating standoff with the United States.

Pyongyang marks its founding anniversary each year with a big display of pageantry and military hardware. Last year, North Korea conducted its fifth nuclear test on the Sept 9 anniversary.

Tension on the Korean peninsula has escalated as North Korea's young leader, Kim Jong Un, has stepped up the development of weapons, testing a string of missiles this year, including one flying over Japan, and conducting its sixth nuclear test on Sunday.

Experts believe the isolated regime is close to its goal of developing a powerful nuclear weapon capable of reaching the United States, something U.S. President Donald Trump has vowed to prevent.

While Trump talked tough on North Korea, China agreed on Thursday that the United Nations should take more action against it, but it also pushed for dialogue.

The UN Security Council is expected to vote on a new set of sanctions soon.

US on Friday told the UNSC that it intends to call a meeting on Monday to vote on a draft resolution establishing additional sanctions on North Korea for its missile and nuclear program, the US Mission to the United Nations said in a statement.



(From left, clockwise) Mexican soldiers walk on a collapsed building in Juchitan de Zaragoza, state of Oaxaca on Friday; rescue officials search for victims; and relatives of victims react following an 8.1 magnitude earthquake that struck Mexico on late Thursday.



PHOTO: AFP

Mexico in double trouble

Search on for survivors as quake toll hits 61; storm Katia strikes

AFP, Juchitán De Zaragoza

Police, soldiers and emergency workers raced to rescue survivors from the ruins of Mexico's most powerful earthquake in a century, which killed at least 61 people, as storm Katia menaced the country's eastern coast yesterday with heavy rains.

In the southern region hit hardest by the quake, emergency workers looked for survivors -- or bodies -- in the rubble of houses, churches and schools that were torn apart in the 8.1-magnitude quake.

President Enrique Peña Nieto said 45 people were killed in Oaxaca state, 12 in Chiapas and four in Tabasco. But the actual death toll could be over 80, according to figures reported by state officials.

Meanwhile storm Katia made landfall in the east as a Category One hurricane and hours later was downgraded to a tropical storm with maximum sustained winds of 45 miles (70 kilo-

meters) per hour. The storm was bringing rains likely to cause "life-threatening flash floods and mudslides, especially in areas of mountainous terrain" the US National Hurricane Center said.

The government warned that Katia could threaten about one million people and unleash dangerous floods. Adding to the concerns, authorities warned another massive aftershock could follow within 24 hours of the first quake.

Pena Nieto toured the hardest-hit city, Juchitan in Oaxaca, where at least 36 bodies were pulled from the ruins.

The city's eerily quiet streets were a maze of rubble, with roofs, cables, insulation and concrete chunks scattered everywhere.

The president described the quake as "the largest registered in our country in at least the past 100 years" -- stronger even than a devastating 1985 earthquake that killed more than 10,000 people in Mexico City.

More than 200 people were injured across Mexico, officials said.

The epicenter of the quake, which hit late Thursday, was in the Pacific Ocean, about 100 kilometers off the town of Tonalá in Chiapas.

Mexico's seismology service estimated it at 8.2 magnitude while the US Geological Survey put it at 8.1 -- the same as in 1985, the quake-prone country's most destructive ever.

The quake was felt as far north as Mexico City -- some 800 kilometers from the epicenter -- where people fled their homes, many in their pajamas, after hearing sirens go off.

Officials initially issued a tsunami alert, but later lifted it. However, the quake triggered waves that reached as far as New Zealand, more than 11,000 kilometers away.

Mexico sits atop five tectonic plates, making it prone to earthquakes, and has two long coastlines that are frequently battered by hurricanes.

Trump foreign policy weakens US standing in the world

Senate panel rejects president's 'doctrine of retreat'

AFP, Washington

A powerful Senate committee blasted the Trump administration on Friday in a report accompanying its spending plan for the State Department, saying its approach to foreign policy weakens US standing in the world.

On Thursday, the Senate Appropriations Committee voted 31-0 for legislation allocating more than \$51 billion for the State Department and foreign operations, nearly \$11 billion more than requested by President Donald Trump's administration.

In the report released on Friday accompanying the legislation, the committee criticized the administration's request to cut spending on such operations by 30 percent from the year ending on Sept. 30, 2017.

"The lessons learned since September 11, 2001, include the reality that defense alone

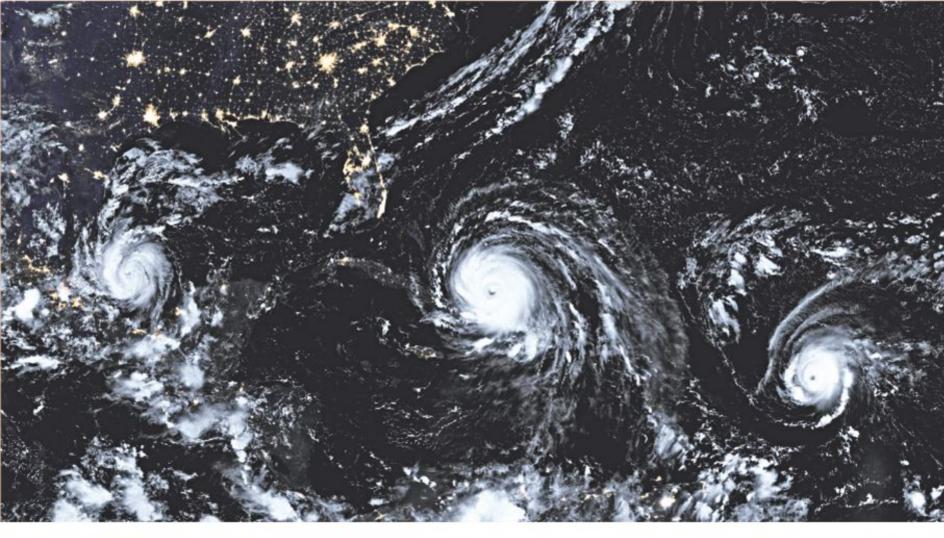
does not provide for American strength and resolve abroad. Battlefield technology and firepower cannot replace diplomacy and development," it read.

"The administration's apparent doctrine of retreat, which also includes distancing the United States from collective and multilateral dispute resolution frameworks, serves only to weaken America's standing in the world," it said.

Senator Lindsey Graham, the Republican chairman of the State and Foreign Operations subcommittee, which wrote the bill, said on Thursday that he had asked for more details from the White House about its spending plans.

"We've got nothing back," he said.

Senator Patrick Leahy, the top subcommittee Democrat, called the "soft power" work of the State Department "absolutely essential."



(From top, anti-clockwise) This satellite image obtained from Nasa's Earth Observatory on Friday shows Hurricane Irma (C), Hurricane Jose (R), and Hurricane Katia; Floridians flee the approaching hurricane; and people in shelter homes in Florida.

Mass exodus as Irma closes in on Florida

'significant damage', mass evacuation in Cuba

AFP, Miami

Hurricane Irma pummeled the north coast of Cuba yesterday, inflicting "significant damage" as millions of people in the US state of Florida hunkered down for a direct hit from the monster storm.

Irma's blast through the Cuban coastline weakened the storm to a Category Three, but it is still packing 125 mile-an-hour winds (205 kilometer per hour) and was expected to regain power before hitting the Florida Keys early yesterday, US forecasters said.

At least 19 people have been killed since Irma began its devastating march through the Caribbean as a Category Five storm of nearly unmatched power, making landfall late Friday in Cuba on the Camaguey archipelago.

Terrified Cubans who rode out Irma in coastal towns reported "deafening" winds, uprooted trees and power lines, and blown rooftops. There were no immediate reports of casualties. Cuban officials reported "significant damage." More than a million people evacuated from vulnerable areas in Cuba.

In Florida, cities on both the east and west coasts of the peninsular state took on the appearance of ghost towns, as nervous residents heeded insistent evacuation orders affecting 5.6 million people.

Warning that Irma would be worse than

Hurricane Andrew -- which killed 65 people in 1992 -- Florida's governor said all 20.6 million Floridians should prepare to flee.

Bumper-to-bumper traffic snaked north out of the state, with mattresses, gas cans and kayaks strapped to car roofs.

The storm smashed through a string of



Caribbean islands, beginning with tiny Barbuda on Wednesday, followed by the holiday islands of St Barts and St Martin.

Also affected were the US Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, the Dominican Republic, Haiti and the Turks and Caicos. The Bahamas were spared Irma's worst.



Clinton plays blame game in new book

Accuses Obama, others for polls defeat

AFP, Washington

Hillary Clinton takes responsibility for her devastating loss to Donald Trump in her tell-all book about the 2016 presidential race, but she also blames Barack Obama, Bernie Sanders, Vladimir Putin and others, published excerpts show.

In her campaign chronicle "What Happened," set for release on September 12, the veteran Democrat acknowledges her own role in her defeat, writing: "It was my campaign. Those were my decisions."

But she also points the finger at a long list of political rivals, apparent allies, and morning television hosts, and signals that much of what happened in 2016 was outside her control.

Sanders, a socialist-leaning senator who challenged her during the Democratic primaries, resorted to "innuendo and impugning on my character" in attacks that caused "lasting damage" and disunity, the 69-year-old Clinton wrote.

Clinton also trained her frustrations on Obama, who backed her as his successor, saying a stronger, televised response by the then-president to Russian meddling in the election might have helped her.

Clinton also criticized former vice president Joe Biden, who campaigned with her, and former FBI director James Comey.

Putin -- and Russia's apparent meddling in the 2016 election -- also took hits, with Clinton accusing the Russian president of holding a "personal vendetta" against her, according to Vanity Fair.

MIGRANT CRISIS IN LIBYA

EU 'turning blind eye' to abuses, says UN

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations on Friday accused the European Union of "turning a blind eye" to the brutality faced by migrants held in Libya.

"Some migrants die of thirst, hunger or easily-cured illnesses, some are tortured or beaten to death while working as slave labour, others are just casually murdered," UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein said.

Zeid detailed these and other abuses -- including the rape of women "in some cases, every night" -- that hundreds of thousands of migrants are suffering at the hands of authorities in Libyan detention centres in the country.

He said their situation had been "appalling" during dictator Muammar Gaddafi's rule but had turned "diabolical" since his ouster.

Italy and EU have been financing, training and providing aid to Libya's coastguard to stop smugglers from taking migrants and refugees in flimsy boats across the Mediterranean to Europe. But Zeid said such efforts -- including the plan by European and African leaders last month to prevent people from crossing the Mediterranean -- are a "failure" because they do not deal with the "human calamity".

Presence of Rohingyas may lead to another partition

Former RSS ideologue Govindacharya moves SC to deport Rohingya refugees from India

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Former BJP leader and RSS ideologue K N Govindacharya on Friday approached the Supreme Court with a petition seeking deportation of Rohingya refugees from India, saying their continued presence "may lead to another partition of the country".

"It has also become known that al-Qaeda is trying to use the Rohingya community for terror and jihad and if Rohingyas' plea is entertained then it may lead to another partition of the country," the petition said and wanted the apex court's permission to allow him to implead in a petition filed by two Rohingya refugees challenging the Indian government's move to deport them.

A petition filed by two Rohingya refugees challenging the deportation move by Indian government is already pending before the apex court and it is expected to come up for

hearing on September 11.

An estimated 40,000 Rohingya refugees are staying in different parts of India after escaping persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine province bordering Bangladesh.

"Rohingyas have no constitutional right to stay in India and their deportation would be in consonance with the exercise of the sovereign power vested with the central government and their deportation does not violate the international law," according to Govindacharya's petition.

Govindacharya has said that "the decision by the government (to deport Rohingyas) has not been made in a haste".

The government's decision to consult the National Security Advisor and Intelligence Bureau Director, besides other top officers of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs) and other intelligence agencies showed that "the threat is credible", he contended.

Riders on the storm

6 Indian women get ready to sail the world

AFP, New Delhi

A team of six naval officers are starting a historic and gruelling around-the-world mission today -- the first circumnavigation of the globe by an Indian all-female crew.

Lieutenant Commander Vartika Joshi, who is leading the voyage which will begin in the western state of Goa, told AFP the project was "revolutionary" in bringing women to the helm and would inspire others in the country.

In recent years, the Indian navy has sought to open its doors to women to take on more challenging roles, with the latest project winning the backing of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who urged the crew to "project India's capabilities and strengths across the world".

The team sailed twice to Mauritius and once to Cape Town in preparation. Their journey will feature stops in Australia, New Zealand, the Falkland islands and South Africa. They are expected to return to Goa in March next year.