

# 'Thank you to Kim'

## Trump expresses gratitude to North Korean leader for keeping word on war remains, hopes to see him 'soon'

REUTERS, Seoul

US President Donald Trump said yesterday he looked forward to meeting Kim Jong Un soon and thanked the North Korean leader for sending the suspected remains of US soldiers killed in the 1950-1953 Korean War back to the United States.

"Thank you to Chairman Kim Jong Un for keeping your word & starting the process of sending home the remains of our great and beloved missing fallen! I am not at all surprised that you took this kind action," Trump wrote in a Twitter message.

"Also, thank you for your nice letter - I look forward to seeing you soon!", Trump said, without elaborating.

The pledge to return the remains of US soldiers was made during a landmark summit between Trump and Kim in June in Singapore, where North Korea committed to work towards the complete denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

Kim sent a letter to Trump in mid-July in which the North Korean leader said he hoped there would be a second meeting between the two but it was unclear if that was the "nice letter" to which Trump referred yesterday.

Trump also took to Twitter earlier to praise an "incredibly beautiful ceremony" in Hawaii, where Vice President Mike Pence helped welcome the remains to the United States.

The United States said during a solemn ceremony on Wednesday the human remains presumably included Americans killed in the Korean War and thanked North Korea for making good on its pledge to hand them over.

The pledge to transfer war remains was seen as a goodwill

Kim made pledge to return remains at Singapore summit

VP Pence welcomed remains in solemn Hawaii ceremony



Caskets containing the remains of American service-men from the Korean War arrive at Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, US.

PHOTO: REUTERS

gesture by Kim at the Singapore summit and was the most concrete agreement reached by the two sides so far.

"I know that President Trump is grateful that Chairman Kim has kept his word, and we see today this tangible progress in our efforts to achieve peace on the Korean peninsula," said Pence, whose father fought in the Korean War.

More than 7,700 US troops remain unaccounted for from the Korea War. About 5,300 were lost in what is now North Korea.

Other countries under the command of the United Nations also lost troops that are still unaccounted for, including the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada.

Experts say positively identifying the decades-old remains could take anywhere from days to decades.

Still, an initial field forensic review indicated the "remains are what North Korea said they were", John Byrd, director of analysis for the US Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, told reporters at an air base in South Korea before the remains were flown to Hawaii.



Singapore's Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Asean foreign ministers pose for a group photo during the opening ceremony of the 51st Asean Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Singapore yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

## Myanmar scales back China-backed project

REUTERS, Naypyitaw

Myanmar has scaled back plans for a Chinese-backed port on its western coast, sharply reducing the cost of the project after concerns it could leave the Southeast Asian nation heavily indebted, a top government official and an advisor told Reuters.

The initial \$7.3 billion price tag on the

developer of the project, said negotiations were ongoing and that the \$1.3 billion was to be spent on the "initial phase" of the port, adding the project was divided into four phases. It did not elaborate on plans for subsequent stages.

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman, Geng Shuang, said Monday that "according to what I understand, at present both sides are having commercial negotiations" on the

Kyauk Pyu project.

"The talks are progressing," Geng said at a foreign ministry briefing in Beijing. He referred further questions to the companies involved.

The original plan was to develop around 10 berths at the 25-metre deep sea port to accommodate bigger oil tankers, but the size will now be revised to only two berths, Set Aung said in an interview.

He declined to elaborate on other specifications, citing ongoing technical discussions.

The Kyauk Pyu port is a key part of China's ambitious Belt and Road initiative, aimed at expanding trade links across the world.

### SEAPORT CONSTRUCTION

Debt fears grow after reports of troubled China-backed projects in Sri Lanka, Pakistan

Deputy Finance Minister Set Aung, who was appointed to lead project negotiations in May, told Reuters the "project size has been tremendously scaled down".

The revised cost would be "around \$1.3 billion, something that's much more plausible for Myanmar's use", said Sean Turnell, economic advisor to Myanmar's civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi.

China's state-run CITIC Group, the main

### SOUTH CHINA SEA ROW

## China wants drills with Asean nations

AFP, Singapore

China wants military exercises and energy exploration with Southeast Asian nations in disputed waters, according to a draft document, but insists on outside countries being excluded in what analysts say is a bid to diminish US influence.

Beijing's suggestions are part of efforts to expand its influence in the South China Sea, which it claims almost entirely, and push back at Washington which has backed countries with overlapping claims to the waters.

A code of conduct between Beijing and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) to govern behaviour in the strategic sea has been years in the making.

The draft document, seen by AFP, outlines different countries' bargaining positions as they work towards an agreement, and analysts said it represented some initial progress.

In the text, Vietnam offers the strongest opposition to Beijing's activities -- calling for countries to stop building artificial islands and establishing military installations.

At a meeting of foreign ministers in Singapore yesterday, Beijing and Asean announced they had agreed on the negotiating text for the code.

Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan, who is chairing the meeting, called the draft a "major achievement".

"The code of conduct is meant to... ensure that peace, stability, confidence is built up so that we can continue to make collective progress between Asean and China while we take time to resolve the territorial disputes," he said

## NEWSIN brief

### Pompeo kicks off four-day Asia tour

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo began a four-day visit to Asia to promote a US vision of transparent, private sector-led investment with a stop in Malaysia, which has ordered a review of the sort of massive Chinese projects Washington questions. Pompeo arrived in Kuala Lumpur yesterday evening en route to Asean regional meetings in Singapore.

### France adopts law on asylum, immigration

AFP, Paris

France's parliament Wednesday signed into law a controversial asylum and immigration bill -- despite opposition on the left which decried an effort to limit arrivals while the far right saw the measure as not going far enough. The bill is designed to accelerate asylum procedures by cutting the maximum processing time to 90 days after entering France from 120 currently.

### US Senate passes huge defense spending bill

AFP, Washington

The US Senate easily passed a \$716.3 billion defense authorization bill Wednesday that ramps up military spending and bolsters America's posture against Russia, while avoiding policy changes that would have antagonized President Donald Trump. The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) passed 87 to 10 in the Senate a week after clearing the House of Representatives, and now heads to the White House for Trump's signature.



Senior Kashmiri separatist leader Yasin Malik (L) takes part in a protest against attempts to revoke article 35A and 370 in Srinagar yesterday. The articles empower the Jammu and Kashmir state legislature to define permanent residents of the state and provide special rights and privileges to those permanent residents in J&K.

PHOTO: AFP

## Myanmar endures worst of Mekong monsoon floods

### Rains threaten dam collapse; 150,000 displaced

AFP, Bago

Monsoon rains have pummelled the Mekong region in recent days with Myanmar bearing the brunt of flooding that has forced 150,000 to flee and threatens to destroy levees shielding thousands of homes.

The swirling inundations have started to recede in some areas in the low-lying southeast but the country is only just entering peak monsoon season and more downpours are expected in the coming weeks.

Thousands were either unable or have refused to leave their half-submerged homes, peering out from upper floor windows as they waited for relief boats bringing food and supplies.

Some waded out through the waist-deep water to collect the donations while others

balanced precariously on rafts made from bamboo poles or jerry cans as they paddled through the waters.

Evacuation orders are still in place across Bago, Karen, Mon and Tanintharyi provinces with dozens of dams and reservoirs overflowing.

In Madauk town in Bago region, warnings that key levees are at breaking point sparked fear among residents.

"We are worried about the embankment. We are really afraid," 43-year-old Ma Wai told AFP yesterday.

"When the authorities warned us over the microphone, we didn't know where to run. Children and elderly people were crying."

State media reported that nearly 150,000 people have been forced to seek refuge in 327 camps while nearly 28,000 are clinging on in their flooded homes.



## Arctic heat melts away Sweden's highest peak

AFP, Stockholm

Sweden's highest peak, a glacier on the southern tip of the Kebnekaise mountain, is melting due to record hot Arctic temperatures and is no longer the nation's tallest point, scientists said Wednesday.

"I've never seen this much melted snow on the southern peak as I did this summer," Gunhild Ninis Rosqvist, a Stockholm University geography professor, said in a statement.

Rosqvist, who is also head of the Tarfala research station near the mountain, has been measuring the southern peak for many years as part of climate change research.

Kebnekaise, a popular tourist destination located in Sweden's far north, has two main peaks -- a southern one covered by a glacier and a northern one free of ice.

Rosqvist said the southern peak has lost four metres (13 feet) of snow between July 2 and July 31. This means an average of 14 centimetres of snow melted every day on the glacier in July, as Sweden has seen record hot temperatures, triggering dozens of wildfires across the country, even in the Arctic Circle.

"This is happening very fast. The result of this hot summer will be a record loss in snow and ice in the mountains," Rosqvist said.

### OATH-TAKING CEREMONY

## Imran Khan not to invite foreign leaders: report

DAWN ONLINE

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf chairman and prime minister-designate Imran Khan has decided against inviting foreign dignitaries and celebrities to his planned oath-taking ceremony, instead opting for a simple event, Dawn NewsTV reported yesterday.

To celebrate the fulfillment of Khan's long-held wish to become the premier, the party had initially planned to invite several foreign personalities, with the names of Indian PM Narendra Modi, Bollywood superstar Amir Khan and cricket legends Kapil Dev, Sunil Gavaskar and Navjot Singh Sidhu all in the mix.

However, in an apparent change of heart, Khan has opted against a fancy ceremony. "The PTI chairman has directed to stage the oath-taking event with austerity," PTI spokesperson Fawad Chaudhry said. "He will take his oath in a simple ceremony at

Aiwan-e-Sadr (President House)."

"It has been decided that no foreign personalities will be invited to the ceremony -- it will be a completely national event. Only a few close friends of Imran Khan will be invited."

"There will be no show of extravagance at the event," added Chaudhry.

A day earlier on Wednesday, Chaudhry had told reporters that the party had asked the Foreign Office to apprise its leadership regarding extending invitation to the heads of states and foreign leaders of different countries especially in view of the paucity of time.

Soon after realising that the PTI had achieved a comfortable position to form a government at the Centre, in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Punjab, Khan in his victory speech on July 26 had expressed the hope of building better relations with India, stating that better relations between Pakistan and India would be "good for all of us".



## PTI has the numbers now in Punjab

DAWN ONLINE

The Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf has entered the 'final phase' of forming its government in Punjab with assertions that the party has already got the support of required number of MPAs-elect. However, there is no discussion on the selection of a candidate for Punjab chief minister for now.

Besides eight elected members of Pakistan Muslim League-Quaid (PML-Q), including an independent, the PTI claims 22 independents have formally joined the party, taking its tally to 153 in the directly-elected house of 297 members.

The 22 independents, who have joined the party, are: Raja Sagheer Ahmad (PP-7), Syed Saeedul Hassan (PP-46), Muhammad Ajmal Cheema (PP-97), Ghulam Rasool Sangha (PP-83), Ameer M Khan (PP-89), Saeed Akbar Khan (PP-90), Khawar Shah (PP-203), Muhammad Umer Farooq (PP-106), Faisal Hayat (PP-125), Hussain Jahani Gardezi (PP-204), Sheikh Salman Naem (PP-2017), Fida Hussain (PP-237), Shaikat Lalika (PP-238), Sardar Abdul Haye Dasti (PP-270), Basit Bukhari (PP-272), Khurram Leghari (PP-275), Tahir Mehmood Randhawa (PP-282), Syed Razaq Ali Gillani (PP-284), Muhammad Hanif Pitafi (PP-289), Taimoor Laali (PP-93), Rai Taimoor Bhatti (PP-124) and Mehr Aslam Bharwana (PP-127).

Sources say the PTI will bag 34 women seats and five minority seats against its 153 members and show up with 192 members in the complete house of 371 members.

### AFGHANISTAN UNREST

## 3 foreigners abducted and killed in Kabul

AFP, Kabul

Afghan police in Kabul yesterday recovered the bodies of three foreign nationals who they said had been abducted and killed, in the latest incident targeting foreigners in the war-torn capital.

The killings come as the capital has been rocked by an increasing number of attacks in recent months as Islamic State and Taliban insurgents target security forces and government installations.

The victims, all working for a logistics company in Kabul, were from India, Macedonia and Malaysia, a spokesman for the interior ministry said.

"At this stage we think it is a terrorist incident," police spokesman Hashmat Stanikzai told AFP.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the killings.

The incident happened after the group left their office with a car and driver yesterday.

Just over an hour later their bodies were found in what appeared to be a different car by authorities in the rural outskirts of Kabul.

"They had been shot inside the car," said Bahar Mehr with the interior ministry.

Another spokesman with the ministry said the car's driver was being questioned by police and treated as a possible suspect.

He added that all three had been handcuffed and shot, with two of the bodies later placed in the trunk of the car.

Kabul is plagued by criminal gangs who stage abductions for ransom, often targeting foreigners and wealthy locals, and sometimes hand them over to insurgent groups.

Kidnapping of Afghans and foreigners is also common across Afghanistan where swathes of the country are infested with militant groups or criminal gangs.

Earlier this year six Indian engineers working in northern Afghanistan were abducted along with their driver.

In August 2016, gunmen wearing military uniforms kidnapped two professors of the American University of Afghanistan in the heart of Kabul.