

'You can trust me to do what it takes'

Britain's Truss appeals for party support on economic plans

REUTERS, Birmingham

Prime Minister Liz Truss yesterday asked her Conservative Party to trust her, pledging to steer Britain through "stormy days" and transform a stagnant economy in a pitch to restore her authority over a party in revolt.

Addressing Conservative lawmakers and members at an annual conference beset by internal bickering and policy confusion, Truss sought to reassure her party, the public and investors that her plan was the right way to reignite growth.

An early interruption from protesters holding a banner asking "who voted for this?" seemed to fire up the audience and the prime minister, whose criticism of what she called "the anti-growth coalition" received loud cheers and applause.

For many in the audience, Truss, who has admitted that she is not the slickest communicator, had done a decent job at a time when she is under pressure from what one Conservative member called "some snakes in the party" undermining her plans. She might have bought herself a little more time to reassert herself over a party

that is increasingly divided and fearful about opinion polls showing it could be all but wiped out in a national election. Some Conservative lawmakers are openly questioning whether she should be in charge. "I am ready to make hard choices. You can trust me to do what it takes. The status quo is not an option," she told the party faithful in the central English city of Birmingham.

"We gather at a vital time for the United Kingdom. These are stormy days We need to step up. I'm determined to get Britain moving, to get us through the tempest and to put us on a stronger footing."

The conference, once expected to be Truss's crowning glory after she became prime minister on September 6, had turned into a personal nightmare after she announced a new economic policy that sparked a crisis of confidence among investors. Her attempt to cut 45 billion pounds (\$51 billion) of taxes and hike government borrowing sent markets into a tailspin and left her party facing potential electoral collapse.



People wait in line to buy sacks of rice from a wholesaler in Monrovia, Liberia yesterday. Liberians around the city have been queuing for weeks outside wholesalers hoping to buy the nation's staple food after rumours of a coming rice shortage began about six months ago. Prices for a twenty-five kilogram bag have risen from thirteen US dollars to twenty-five US dollars in the meantime. PHOTO: AFP

Goal of ending extreme poverty by 2030 out of reach

Warns World Bank

AFP, Washington

Covid-19 has dealt the "biggest setback" to global poverty reduction efforts in decades, and the World Bank warned yesterday that the goal to eradicate extreme poverty by 2030 likely remains out-of-reach.

Poverty rose sharply during the pandemic, and the development lender estimates about 70 million people were pushed into extreme poverty in 2020 – the biggest one-year spike since monitoring began in 1990.

The report offers the first tally of those struggling to live on less than \$2.15 a day, the new global definition of extreme poverty, but follows many warnings from the global development lender that poorer nations are being left behind.

Earlier this year it warned that as many 95 million people would fall back into extreme poverty by the end of this year. Ukraine war, rising inflation and slowing global growth have put further pressure on the bank's mission to lift people out of poverty.

"Inflation, currency depreciations, and broader overlapping crises" point to a grim outlook, World Bank President David Malpass said. "Progress in reducing extreme poverty has essentially halted in tandem with subdued global economic growth," he said.

Extreme poverty had fallen to 8.4 percent by 2019 from 38 percent in 1990, but pandemic triggered first rise in more than two decades.

RESPONSE TO N KOREA MISSILE TEST

South Korea, US fire missiles into the Yellow Sea

Failed missile launch triggers panic in South Korean city; UNSC set to discuss N Korea

REUTERS, Seoul

South Korea and the US military conducted rare missile drills and an American supercarrier repositioned east of North Korea after Pyongyang flew a missile over Japan, one of the allies' sharpest responses since 2017 to a North Korean weapon test.

Nuclear-armed North Korea test-fired an intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM) farther than ever before on Tuesday, sending it soaring over Japan for the first time in five years and prompting a warning for residents there to take cover.

The White House National Security Council called North Korea's latest test "dangerous and reckless" and the US military and its allies have stepped up displays of force.

South Korean and American troops fired a volley of missiles into the sea in response, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said yesterday, and the allies earlier staged a bombing drill with fighter jets in the Yellow Sea.

The USS Ronald Reagan, an American aircraft carrier that made its first stop in South Korea last month for the first time in years, will also return to the sea between Korea and Japan with its strike group of other warships.

The South Korean military called it a "highly unusual" move designed to show the allies' resolve to respond to any threats from North Korea.

The South Korean military separately confirmed that one of its Hyunmoo-2C missiles failed shortly after launch and crashed during the drill, but that no one

was hurt.

Footage shared on social media by a nearby resident and verified by Reuters showed smoke and flames rising from the military base.

The fire was caused by burning rocket propellant, and although the missile carried a warhead, it did not explode, South Korea's military said.

It apologised for causing residents to worry.

It's not rare for military hardware to fail, and North Korea has suffered several failed missile launches this year as well.



The Hyunmoo-2C is one of the South's latest missiles, however, and analysts say its capability as a precision "bunker buster" make it a key part of Seoul's plans for striking the North in the event of a conflict.

The fiery failure threatened to overshadow Seoul's efforts to demonstrate military prowess in the face of North Korea's increasing capabilities.

In its initial announcement of the drill, the South Korean military made

no mention of the Hyunmoo-2C launch or its failure, but later media briefings were dominated by questions about the incident.

President Yoon Suk-yeol, who has made such displays of military force a cornerstone of his strategy for countering the North, had vowed that the overflight of Japan would bring a decisive response from his country, its allies and the international community.

The UN Security Council was set to meet yesterday to discuss North Korea at the request of the United States, despite China and Russia telling council counterparts they were opposed to an open meeting of 15-member body.

They argued that the council's reaction should be conducive to easing the situation on the Korean Peninsula, diplomats said.

US President Joe Biden and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida condemned North Korea's test in the "strongest terms," the European Union called it a "reckless and deliberately provocative action", and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres condemned the launch and said it was a violation of Security Council resolutions.

It was the first North Korean missile to follow a trajectory over Japan since 2017, and its estimated 4,600 km (2,850 mile) flight was the longest for a North Korean test, which are usually "lofted" into space to avoid flying over neighbouring countries.

Analysts and security officials said it may have been a variant of the Hwasong-12 IRBM, which North Korea unveiled in 2017 as part of what it said was a plan to strike US military bases in Guam.

Amit Shah rules out talks with Pakistan

Says won't tolerate terror

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Home Minister Amit Shah yesterday ruled out talks with Pakistan and said the Modi government will wipe out terrorism from Jammu and Kashmir to make it the "most peaceful place in the country" and assured the holding of fresh assembly polls in the area with "full transparency".

Addressing a public rally in Baramulla district of north Kashmir, Shah also said that assembly elections in Jammu and Kashmir will be conducted once the Election Commission completes the exercise of publishing the revised electoral rolls.

On if India would talk to Pakistan on Kashmir, he said "why should we? We will talk to the people of Jammu and Kashmir. Prime Minister Narendra Modi government will stamp out terror from the state."

Urging the youths to shun the path of violence, Shah said terrorism has claimed 42,000 lives in Jammu and Kashmir since 1990s and asked whether it has ever benefited anyone.

"We have started a political process. I want to assure you that once the work of publishing electoral rolls by the Election Commission is completed, elections will be conducted with full transparency and your own elected representatives will govern here," he said.

The Modi government had scrapped the special constitutional status of Jammu and Kashmir as also its status as a state in August, 2019 and turned it into a federally-administered territory.

Shah briefly stopped his speech during a rally in Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir as 'Azaan' was going on from a nearby mosque. After a brief moment, he said the call for prayer has now stopped and asked if he would continue his speech.



A member of the Lebanese Red Cross assists a woman during a protest organized by Depositors' Outcry, a group campaigning for angry depositors, near Lebanon's Central Bank building in Beirut, Lebanon yesterday. Cases of bank hold-ups and protests have snowballed across Lebanon recently as depositors have grown exasperated over informal capital controls that banks have imposed since an economic downturn began in 2019. PHOTO: REUTERS

Locked doors, steep stairs key factors

Says Indonesia leader on deadly stampede

REUTERS, Jakarta

Locked stadium doors were a key reason why an Indonesian football riot turned so deadly, President Joko Widodo said yesterday, ordering an urgent review of safety in stadiums and suggesting that the sport's governing body FIFA could help fix some issues.

"The problem is with locked doors and stairs that were too steep," the president, commonly known as Jokowi, said during a visit to Malang, on which he met victims' families and inspected the stadium.

Comments from spectators, police and experts, who spoke to Reuters as well as video footage, show the incident was caused by a confluence of factors – a crowd exceeding stadium capacity, angry fans, the police firing of tear gas and locked exits.

The rules of football's world body FIFA state prohibit use of "crowd-control gas" at matches.

ASEAN SUMMIT

Myanmar junta leader not invited

AFP, Phnom Penh

Myanmar's junta leader has not been invited to a regional summit next month, host Cambodia said yesterday, in a fresh diplomatic snub for the isolated military regime. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has led diplomatic efforts to resolve the turmoil that has gripped Myanmar since the military seized power last year. But there has been little progress on a "five-point consensus" agreed with the junta.

Blast hits Kabul mosque, 4 killed

REUTERS, Kabul

A blast hit a mosque in Afghanistan's capital in the vicinity of the heavily fortified interior ministry compound yesterday, officials said, killing at least four people and wounding 18, according to medics. The government did not immediately say what caused the explosion in Kabul, where militants have carried out a number of attacks in recent months. "The mosque was used by visitors and sometimes by interior ministry employees," interior ministry spokesman Abdul Nafi Takor said.