

NORTH'S WARPLANE MOBILISATION

S Korea scrambles
80 stealth jets

AFP, Seoul

South Korea's military yesterday scrambled stealth jets after detecting the mobilisation of 180 North Korean warplanes, Seoul said, following a record-breaking blitz of missile tests by Pyongyang this week.

It comes a day after North Korea conducted a failed intercontinental ballistic missile test and follows a decision by Seoul and Washington to extend through today their largest-ever joint air drills, a military exercise that has infuriated Pyongyang.

"Our military detected around 180 North Korean warplanes" mobilised in Pyongyang's airspace, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said, adding that Seoul "scrambled 80 fighter jets including F-35As" while jets involved in the joint drills were also "maintaining readiness".

Shortly after South Korea announced the decision to extend the joint drills on Thursday, Pyongyang launched three more short-range ballistic missiles, calling the decision "a very dangerous and wrong choice".

Hours later, the North fired 80 artillery rounds that landed in a maritime "buffer zone", Seoul's military said.

The barrage was a "clear violation" of the 2018 agreement that established the buffer zone in a bid to reduce tensions between the two sides, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said.



Commuters ride past an anti-smog gun spraying water to curb air pollution amid heavy smog conditions in New Delhi yesterday. Primary schools in the India's capital will shut to protect children from the toxic smog choking the megacity of 20 million people, authorities said yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Raisi dismisses
Biden 'free Iran'
pledge

AFP, Paris

Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi yesterday dismissed a pledge from US leader Joe Biden to "free Iran" as the clerical regime faced a new surge in protests seven weeks into the anti-regime movement. Campaigning for mid-term elections in the US, Biden had said: "Don't worry we're gonna free Iran. They're gonna free themselves pretty soon." But Raisi responded by saying: "The great people of Iran will not bow their heads to you." "Our men and women — our young men and young women are determined and we will never allow you to carry out your satanic desires," he told a gathering commemorating the November 1979 takeover of the US embassy in Tehran by students. "The enemy is today targeting our solidarity and national unity, our security, our peace and our determination," Raisi said. The problems for Iran's system under supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 83, are compounded by the tradition of holding mourning ceremonies 40 days after a death — known as "chehelom" — meaning each death can spark new protests six weeks on.

Myanmar
takes delivery
of Russian
fighter jets

AFP, Bangkok

Myanmar's military has begun taking delivery of a batch of Russian-made combat jets, a monitoring group said yesterday, the latest hardware shipped from Moscow as rights campaigners accuse the junta of hitting civilians with air strikes.

In 2018 under the civilian government of Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar's military purchased six Sukhoi Su-30s from Russia, according to Russian state media reports.

Satellite data, reports from flight spotters and a closed source have "now confidently confirmed" the presence of at least one of the jets in the military-built capital Naypyidaw, said Myanmar Witness.

It did not say whether the jet was in training or flown on active missions. Local media have previously reported between four and six of the multi-role twin-seat fighters had arrived in the country, accompanied by Russian trainers and technicians.

RUSSIA'S WAR IN UKRAINE

Xi, Scholz warn against
'irresponsible' nuke threats

REUTERS, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping and German Chancellor Olaf Scholz yesterday condemned threats to use atomic weapons in Ukraine, with Scholz warning that Russia risked "crossing a line" in the international community by resorting to nuclear force.

In the first visit by a G7 leader to China since the pandemic, Scholz pressed Xi to prevail on Russia to end the war in Ukraine, saying Beijing had a responsibility as a major power to do so.

Xi agreed that both leaders "jointly oppose the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons", according to a readout by the state-run Xinhua news agency, though he refrained from criticising Russia or calling on Moscow to withdraw its troops.

Scholz arrived in Beijing on a one-day visit that is testing the waters between China and the West after years of mounting tensions, with talks touching on reciprocal market access, climate change and Covid-19 vaccines.

Scholz made the visit while facing criticism from within his own coalition about relations with Beijing and has tried to

balance securing a level playing field for European companies with shedding Germany's heavy reliance on the Chinese market.

During lunch with Scholz, Xi stressed that it is easy to destroy political trust but difficult to rebuild it, and both sides need to take care of it, according to Xinhua.



Earlier, while greeting Scholz at the Great Hall of the People in the heart of Beijing, Xi urged the two countries to work more closely on international issues.

"President Xi and I agree: nuclear threats are irresponsible and incendiary," Scholz said after the meeting. "By using nuclear weapons, Russia would be crossing a line that the community of states has drawn together."

Ukraine's Western allies have accused Russia of threatening to use nuclear weapons in Ukraine.

Moscow and has repeatedly accused Kyiv of planning to use a radioactive "dirty bomb" without offering evidence.

Before their lunch of beef strips, prawn and sweet and sour fish, Scholz told Xi that Russia's invasion of Ukraine was creating problems for the rules-based global order, according to a recording of the remarks provided by the German delegation.

Scholz then met outgoing premier Li Keqiang. He told Li that it was clear China and Germany were no friends of "decoupling".

During a news conference after his discussion with Li, Scholz said he raised the issue of Taiwan. China claims the island as its own territory and has never renounced the use of force to bring it under its control.

"Like the US and other countries, we are pursuing a one-China policy. But I have made equally clear that any change in Taiwan's status quo must be peaceful or by mutual consent," he said.

Scholz bluntly complained about access to the Chinese market while also touting a breakthrough deal to become the first non-Chinese drug manufacturer to sell its Covid-19 vaccine to expatriates in China.

Netanyahu
starts talks on
forming govt

AFP, Jerusalem

Veteran hawk Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday launched negotiations with his ultra-Orthodox and far-right allies on forming what could be the most right-wing government in Israel's history, raising concerns at home and abroad.

Netanyahu's Likud party won 32 seats in Israel's 120-seat parliament, the Knesset, according to the latest official results of the election released on Thursday night.

That combined with 18 for two ultra-Orthodox Jewish parties and 14 for the rising extreme-right alliance called Religious Zionism gave the right-wing bloc supporting Netanyahu 64 seats.

The centrist bloc of outgoing prime minister Yair Lapid won 51 seats, marking a definitive win for Netanyahu and an end to Israel's unprecedented era of political deadlock, which forced five elections in less than four years. That will likely mean prominent roles for the co-leaders of far-right Religious Zionism.

Kenya drought kills
over 200 elephants

AFP, Nairobi

More than 200 elephants and hundreds of zebras and gnus have died in Kenya's worst drought in four decades, the country's tourism minister said yesterday. The crisis has affected nearly half of Kenya's regions and at least four million out of its 50 million people. "The drought has caused mortality of wildlife, mostly herbivore species," Tourism Minister Peninah Malonza told a press conference in Nairobi yesterday, adding that 14 species had been identified as badly hit.

Twitter begins
layoffs

REUTERS

Twitter Inc temporarily closed its offices yesterday after telling employees they would be informed by email later in the day about whether they are being laid off. The move follows a week of uncertainty about the company's future under new owner Elon Musk. The social media company said in an email to staff it would tell them by 9:00 am Pacific time yesterday about staff cuts. "In an effort to place Twitter on a healthy path, we will go through the difficult process of reducing our global workforce on Friday," said the email sent on Thursday, seen by Reuters. Musk, the world's richest person, is looking to cut around 3,700 Twitter staff, or about half the workforce, as he seeks to slash costs and impose a demanding new work ethic, according to internal plans reviewed by Reuters this week.

It wasn't achieved

FROM PAGE 12

50th anniversary of the adoption of the country's constitution.

Presiding over the discussion, Chief Justice Hasan Foez Siddique said the countrymen had been rendered powerless at various times by misrepresenting the constitution through various undemocratic interventions, but the people did not support those controversial changes.

The Supreme Court has stood on the top of the faith of the people for its role in ensuring fundamental and human rights, economic and social equity through establishing the role of law and upholding constitutional provisions, he added.

He also said the SC never refrained from exercising its powers granted by the constitution, and thus the military rules were declared illegal, and justice was served for the murder of Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

Some particularly important parts of the constitution should be included in the textbooks of all classes, he opined.

Law Minister Anisul Huq, who spoke as a special guest at the programme, said the evil force, who had been defeated in 1971, had distorted the constitution and changed its basic structures.

Therefore, the principle of nationalism had been removed, the principle of secularism had been abolished, the Pakistani spirit had been established in the country, and Bangladesh had been turned into a communal state, he added.

Fireworks

FROM PAGE 12

It took around five hours for the geese to display normal body temperatures, with average readings only returning by 5:00 am on January 1.

The wild geese in the study were part of a resident population at Almsee and the researchers found no evidence that age influenced their physiological response, indicating that geese do not become densitised to fireworks over time, according to the researchers.

Jahangir 'spent on'

FROM PAGE 12

seen by The Daily Star.

As per rules, any expenditure exceeding Tk 5,000 must be paid through account payee cheques, said acting GCC mayor Asadur Rahman Kiron.

Rezaul, now posted as a settlement officer in Barishal, told this newspaper recently that he was not aware that the cheque was issued against his name until he received a phone call from GCC following Jahangir's suspension in November last year.

GCC staffer Solaiman, who encashed the cheque, declined to comment.

GCC sources alleged Solaiman handed over the money to Jahangir's close aide.

Jahangir refuted all the allegations. He insisted all programmes to mark Bangabandhu's birth centenary were organised. He blamed "a vested group" for trying to frame him.

He was suspended on November 25 last year on charges of corruption and irregularities. Six days earlier, he was expelled from the Awami League for his controversial comments on Bangabandhu and Liberation War

JCD leader dies in crash

FROM PAGE 12

some Jubo League men attacked us with sticks and sharp weapons. We all were running to escape the attack," said Nahid.

"While running, Amit was suddenly hit by a microbus. Critically injured Amit was rushed to Dhaka Medical College Hospital where he died around 3:00am today [yesterday]," he said.

Nahid also alleged that Bhulta union unit Jubo League President Rashed Bhuiyan and General Secretary Iqbal Sikder led the attack.

However, Rashed said neither he nor any Jubo League activists

martyrs.

Acting Mayor Kiron said that former CEO Aminul and acting chief accounts officer Golam Kibria could not shrug off their responsibilities.

Contacted, Aminul Islam said his duty was to issue cheques. The accounts people were responsible for ensuring financial transparency.

Asked why he signed the cheques without budget approval, he said, "I cannot recall right now. There might have been an emergency that prompted us to issue the cheques hurriedly."

Golam Kibria, the acting chief accounts officer, declined to comment.

Additional Secretary of the LGRD ministry Mustakim Billah Faruqi, who is leading the three-member committee investigating the irregularities and corruption against Jahangir, said they would soon submit the probe report. He declined to comment on their findings.

Separately, the Anti-Corruption Commission is investigating allegations of irregularities involving Tk 7,800 crore against Jahangir.

was involved in any such attacks. "I have heard about the incident from media," he told The Daily Star.

Contacted, Inspector Bacchu Miah, in-charge of the DMCH Police outpost, said, "The victim was hit by a microbus. He sustained severe injuries in his face and chest. The body has been sent to the hospital morgue for an autopsy."

AFM Sayeed, officer-in-charge of Rupganj Police Station, said, "We are not aware of the attack. We just got information from the Dhaka Medical College Hospital about the death of a youth, who was hit by a microbus."

Jama'atul Ansar

FROM PAGE 12

Law enforcers started a crackdown in remote hilly areas of Bandarban and Rangamati on October 10 following information that Jama'atul Ansar members are now undergoing training on explosives and operating firearms in the hilly areas with support from "separatist" group KNE, Rab said earlier.

Rab official Moin said Muntashir used to collect funds from different sources, donors and sympathisers and distribute the money among various sectors through banking and mobile banking channels on the instructions of the outfit's Majlish-e-Shura member (finance) Mosharruf Hossain Rakib.

Muntashir sent an amount to family members and close relatives of the outfit's members.

"We have even found that an individual provided the organisation his hard-earned money," said Moin.

He said they came to know that the outfit's Ameer Anisur Rahman alias Mahmud alias Tamal was a manager of a well-known CNG filling station in Cumilla around two years ago.

He was an active member of banned militant outfit Ansar Al Islam.

He sold his house in Cumilla for Tk 17 lakh and bought 3.5 bighas of land in Naikkhangchhari of Bandarban. He was living with family, farming and also carrying out organisational activities on the land, Moin added.

Arrestees — Ismail and Quader — admitted to Rab that the two sent 29 youths to Bandarban.

They also said Jama'atul Ansar has a female wing.

FIFA urges WC

FROM PAGE 12

and Samoura as saying in the letter to the 32 nations contesting the World Cup.

"We know football does not live in a vacuum and we are equally aware that there are many challenges and difficulties of a political nature all around the world.

"But please do not allow football to be dragged into every ideological or political battle that exists."

'Make childhood playful'

FROM PAGE 12

The teachers would never guess this young boy would later go on to become the minister for Basic and Senior Secondary Education and chief innovation officer for the Directorate of Science, Technology and Innovation in Sierra Leone.

Dr David Moinina Sengeh, studied biomedical engineering at Harvard University, joined MIT for postgraduate studies, and was named a TED Fellow in 2014.

The same year he was named one of Forbes 30 under 30 and won MIT Prize for innovations in healthcare.

He is also an Afrobeat rapper, a fashion designer, an advocate of making childhoods playful as it fosters creativity, cooperation, and empathy.

"People don't understand the link between playfulness, creativity, collaboration, emotional safety, resilience and the ability to share. These values, you cannot develop merely through textbooks," he told The Daily Star during his visit to Bangladesh in October 21 to 26.

Between 1991 and 2002, Bangladeshi military troops fought the rebels in Sierra Leone during the civil war and restored peace.

As a gesture of gratitude, the West African nation declared Bangla as one of its official languages.

Possibly, this bond brings David to Bangladesh where he says he feels at home. When he went to the Liberation War Museum in Dhaka, it gave him a sense of understanding of Bangladesh's desire to contribute to the global economy and peacekeeping, and share values of inclusion and diversity.

He thought Bangladesh and his home country were more similar than different. Even the differences he thought brought these two nations together, instead of keeping them apart.

During his visit here, he learned about BRAC education programmes, especially its Play Lab Model in Manikganj.

The model incorporates play-

based learning in all aspects of its curriculum, considering that play is integral to children meeting their key developmental milestones in their early years.

Researchers found early stimulation and learning through positive experiences significantly contribute to a child's cognitive, emotional, social, and physical potential.

BRAC is already working in Sierra Leone to integrate play-based learning into policy, curriculum and pedagogy.

David said he was fascinated by the way BRAC and the Bangladesh government collaborated to improve the lives of people.

Recalling his experience of visiting the Play Lab Model being implemented in Manikganj, he said it was extraordinary to see how kids were learning through play and the parents supporting them.

"What I enjoy most about being a minister of education is school visits. Nothing can replace the experience of playing and learning with children and engaging with teachers," he said.

"Education is the greatest investment to show you are ready to face global challenges like climate change and energy shortage."

The young and ardent minister said Sierra Leone is collaborating with researchers from Bangladesh to determine how teachers can implement the play-lab model framework in the classroom and scale it up to replicate Bangladesh's practice.

The civil war in Sierra Leone left thousands as amputees. David, a biomechanics engineer, pioneered a new system for creating prosthetic sockets, which fit a prosthetic leg onto a patient's residual limb.

He created a more comfortable socket for prostheses than traditional ones that can be produced cheaply and quickly.

In April 2020, BBC ran a feature about the education minister's viral tweet of the image of his 10-month-old daughter tied to his back during an online meeting, setting an example for other men to follow.