

Intensify drills for a 'real war'

North Korea's Kim orders military

AFP, Seoul

Kim Jong Un ordered North Korea's military to intensify drills for a "real war", state media reported yesterday, as the leader oversaw a fire assault drill with his daughter in tow.

Photographs showed Kim and his daughter, both wearing matching black jackets, accompanied by uniformed officers as they watched an artillery unit fire a volley of missiles on Thursday.

The South Korean military said on Thursday it had detected the launch of one ballistic missile and was analysing the possibility of multiple launches from the same location.

Photographs released yesterday by the official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) showed at least six missiles being fired at the same time by the Hwasong unit, which it said is trained for "strike missions".

The unit "fired a powerful volley at the targeted waters in the West Sea of Korea", KCNA said.

While inspecting the drills, Kim told soldiers to be prepared for "two strategic missions, that is, first to deter war and second to take the initiative in war", according to KCNA.

Such units should be "steadily intensifying various simulated drills for real war in a diverse way in different situations", he added.

The drill came as South Korea and the United States prepared to kick off on Monday their largest joint exercises in five years.

Relations between the two Koreas are at one of their worst points in decades, with the nuclear-armed North conducting ever more provocative banned weapons tests while the South ramps up security cooperation with Washington in response.



Georgian anti-government protesters rally outside the parliament as lawmakers vote to call off controversial "foreign agent" bill that sparked an international outcry and mass protests in the Caucasus country earlier this week, in Tbilisi yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Iran, KSA agree to restore ties

Reopen respective diplomatic missions after talks in China

AFP, Tehran

Iran and Saudi Arabia agreed to restore ties and to reopen respective diplomatic missions after talks in China, state media in both countries reported yesterday, seven years after relations were severed.

Riyadh cut ties with Tehran after Iranian protesters attacked Saudi diplomatic missions in the Islamic republic in 2016 following the Saudi execution of Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr.

"Following talks, the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have agreed to resume diplomatic relations and reopen embassies and missions within two months," the official Iranian news agency IRNA said, citing a joint statement.

The official Saudi Press Agency also

published the statement.

Ali Shamkhani, the secretary of Iran's Supreme National Security Council, had travelled to Beijing on Monday for "intensive negotiations with his Saudi counterpart in China in order to finally resolve the problems between Tehran and Riyadh", IRNA said.

Shia-majority Iran and Sunni Muslim Saudi Arabia support rival sides in several conflict zones across the Middle East, including in Yemen where the Huthi rebels are backed by Tehran, and Riyadh leads a military coalition supporting the government.

Iraq, a neighbour to both countries, had hosted several rounds of talks between Iran and Saudi Arabia since April 2021.

Those encounters were held at a

relatively low level, involving security and intelligence officials.

In yesterday's statement, Iran and Saudi Arabia said they "thank the Republic of Iraq and the Sultanate of Oman for hosting the talks held between the two sides in 2021 and 2022 as well as the leaders and government of the People's Republic of China for hosting and supporting the talks held in that country."

Ties between Riyadh and Ankara have also undergone a rapprochement since the 2018 killing of Saudi journalist and government critic Jamal Khashoggi in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has pushed hard to revive bilateral ties, a move analysts describe as largely driven by economic considerations.

CHURCH ATTACK

German gunman kills 7 people

REUTERS, Hamburg

A gunman in Germany shot dead seven people including an unborn child before killing himself at a Jehovah's Witness worship hall in the city of Hamburg, police and prosecutors said yesterday.

The 35-year-old, a German citizen and former Jehovah's Witness, used a semi-automatic pistol he had legally owned since December in the shooting on Thursday evening, a Hamburg state prosecutor said at a joint news conference with police.

The victims included four men and two women, and an unborn female child, the prosecutor said. Hamburg police said the mother survived. Officials said the motive remained unknown,

but a political reason had been ruled out. Police who raided his flat after the shooting found 15 loaded magazines of ammunition. The officials said about 50 people were at an event held in the Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall in the Alsterdorf district of the city when the shooting started. When police arrived, the shooter ran to the floor above and shot himself, the officials said, praising police for a quick response they said possibly avoided more deaths. The building, a nondescript block in a residential area, has been used by the group as a place of worship for several years, resident Annelore Peemueller told Reuters.



H3N2 INFLUENZA VIRUS

India reports first deaths

NDTV ONLINE

Two persons have died of influenza caused by the H3N2 virus, the Indian government said yesterday. One person has died in Haryana and the other in Karnataka. An 82-year-old man in Karnataka's Hassan is believed to be the first to die of H3N2 in the country. Hire Gowda was admitted to hospital on February 24 and died on March 1, according to officials.

He was reportedly a diabetic and suffered from hypertension. The Haryana patient was a 56-year-old lung cancer patient who had tested positive for H3N2 in January. He died on Wednesday at his home in Jind, according to reports. Around 90 cases of the H3N2 virus have been reported in the country. Eight cases of the virus have also been detected. The health ministry said cases are expected to decline by March end.

PM to open

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The PM is scheduled to attend a grand rally, to be organised by the AL's district and metropolitan units, at the Circuit House.

State Minister for Housing and Public Works Sharif Ahmed and local AL leaders have put up over 300 billboards across the city.

Md Ekramul Haque Titu, mayor of Mymensingh City Corporation and also the president of city AL, said they have completed all preparations for the rally.

It's up to court

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minister, said the prime minister has been working for the betterment of the people.

Responding to a comment of BNP Secretary General Mirza Fakhrul Islam Alamgir, Quader said the AL does not do politics of the affluent. "Instead, it is the BNP who does pocket politics."

People have rejected the BNP as the party looted public money, he said, adding that the BNP's leaders and activists are now going crazy and talking nonsense because of it.

Chaired by Mohsin Hall Alumni Association President Prof Md Nizamul Haque Bhuiyan, the function was inaugurated by DU Vice-chancellor Prof Md Akhtaruzzaman.

Seoul is building

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The Seoul Ring is one of several initiatives happening in the Sangam-dong neighbourhood, a former landfill now being used for eco-friendly projects. According to the government, the Ferris wheel will use green technology, such as solar power.

Once it's completed, the Seoul Ring will have 36 carriages, each of which can hold a maximum of 25 people. If it reaches full capacity, the Ferris wheel could accommodate as many as 11,792 people per day.

The Ferris wheel is named for its creator, George Washington Gale Ferris Jr., an engineer who designed the attraction for Chicago's World's Columbian Exposition - a precursor to the World's Fair - in 1893.

Currently, the largest spokeless Ferris wheel in the world is in Shandong, China. It measures 145 metres (475 feet) high.

Meanwhile, Ain Dubai - which opened in the United Arab Emirates last fall - is the record holder for the world's tallest observation wheel.

Xi handed 3rd term

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red, leather-bound copy of China's constitution.

In an oath beamed live on state television, he vowed to "build a prosperous, strong, democratic, civilised, harmonious and great modern socialist country".

China's close ally Russia swiftly offered Xi its "sincere congratulations" on his re-election.

"Russia highly values your personal contribution toward the strengthening of ties... and strategic cooperation between our nations," President Vladimir Putin said in a letter to his "dear friend" Xi.

Also yesterday Wang Huning, a close Xi ally known for his prowess in ideological theory, was elected chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

The non-legislative advisory body elected 23 vice chairpersons, including former Vice Premier Hu Chunhua.

Hu, a 59-year-old protégé of Xi's predecessor Hu Jintao, lost his spot on the CCP Politburo last October.

Xi's re-election is the culmination of a remarkable rise in which he has gone from being a little-known party apparatchik to the leader of a rising global power.

His coronation sets him up to become communist China's longest-serving president, and means Xi could rule well into his seventies if no challenger emerges.

Xi's bold ambitions for the country

have translated into a domineering leadership style, with decisions reinforced by loyalists that have risen to top government positions during his decade at the helm.

And having taken power during a time when the CCP's sway seemed to be wavering, he has worked hard to reverse trends that had threatened to weaken its centrality to Chinese society.

"The relentless Xi Jinping agenda of asserting party control over everything that moves is alive and well," said Kevin Rudd, a former Australian prime minister and an expert on China, during a recent Asia Society forum.

"They've got two sets of really conflicting tensions: how to reenergise growth in the economy, and how to maintain ideological control over the private sector," he added.

For decades, China - scarred by the dictatorial reign and cult of personality of founding leader Mao Zedong - eschewed one-man rule in favour of a more consensus-based, but still autocratic, leadership.

That model imposed term limits on the presidency, with Xi's predecessors Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao relinquishing power after 10 years in office.

Xi has torn up that rule book, abolishing term limits in 2018 and allowing a cult of personality to foster his all-powerful leadership.

Myanmar steps up

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Maungdaw township to observe the conditions.

Although Myanmar is now seeing a civil war and the junta government is facing intense pressure from the international community, the situation in Rakhine is better. There were clashes between the Arakan Army, a rebel group in Rakhine, and the Myanmar junta a few months back, but the situation is stable now.

"The Myanmar authorities have verified more Rohingyas in the recent weeks. They appear to be positive," said a Bangladesh foreign ministry official yesterday.

According to the ministry, Bangladesh has so far sent the lists of 8.26 lakh Rohingyas for verification,

and Myanmar has verified some 62,000.

"Several thousand Rohingyas may be repatriated in the coming months if everything goes smoothly. However, it is not finalised yet," the ministry official told this correspondent, seeking anonymity.

He said they would like to start the repatriation, at least.

Over one million Rohingyas are living in Bangladesh. Most of them fled a violent military crackdown in their homeland in 2017 and joined others who had fled earlier since 1980s.

Since the biggest influx in 2017, Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a bilateral deal for repatriation. But two repatriation attempts failed.

Transportation cost to be cut

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development is uninterrupted power and energy supply. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government has been doing this successfully for the last 14 years," he further added.

In 2018, the foundation stone for the construction of the Bangladesh-India Friendship Pipeline was laid to provide fuel supply to 16 districts of the northern parts of the country.

According to the project details, the construction period of the 126.57 km pipeline was fixed to complete in June 2023 at a cost of the project cost was Tk 520 crore, with the Indian government providing sharing Rs 337.08cr.

Nasrul thanked everyone involved in the project for its completion before the scheduled time.

Bangladesh is now set to start importing fuel oil from India through this cross-border pipeline which is scheduled to be inaugurated on March 18.

The two premiers will inaugurate the pipeline through video conferencing.

The Bangladesh Petroleum Corporation, the lone state-owned importer of fuel oil, plans to import around 2.3 lakh tonnes of fuel from Numanigarh Refinery Station in India to Parbatipur terminal in Dinajpur through a 131.57-km underground pipeline annually.

The pipeline stretching 125km inside Bangladesh territory and 5km inside India will add an additional 29,000 tonnes of fuel storage capacity in the northern region per day.

Only 28pc of target

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fake traders," Tanvir further said. Meanwhile, in Sirajganj, Aman procurement made a good progress this season.

SM Saiful Islam, district food controlling officer, said they have already collected 9,380 tonnes of rice against the target of 9,450 tonnes this season.

"We have repeatedly issued notices to the millers and inspired them to supply rice to make the procurement drive a success," he said.

Trump offered chance to testify to New York grand jury: reports

AFP, New York

New York prosecutors have offered Donald Trump an opportunity to testify to a grand jury, signaling an investigation into hush money the former president allegedly paid a porn star may soon end in an indictment, US media reported Thursday.

Trump was offered a chance to testify next week to a New York grand jury, whose investigation is said to involve a \$130,000 payment made just before the 2016 presidential election to an adult film actress known as Stormy Daniels, The New York Times and Washington Post reported.

No robber held

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Inspector (investigation) Shariful Islam confirmed this to The Daily Star yesterday.

Hours after the incident, police detained seven people for questioning, including the driver of a microbus hired by the robbers from a rent-a-car service.

Two directors of Money Plant Link Private Ltd, the firm assigned for transporting the money to ATMs, are also among the seven, who haven't shown arrested in the case filed in this connection.

"In fact, the driver and another detainee who is from the rent-a-car service helped us recover the trunks. The rest are officials and staffers of Money Plant. No robber has been arrested yet," said the inspector.

"One side of a trunk was bent and found empty. Another was half-empty while the other one was full. After counting, we found that the recovered amount is Tk 3 crore 89 lakh and 50 thousand."

A first information report was submitted to a Dhaka court yesterday. Talking about the heist, the officer said the robbers rented the microbus

Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, has said she had an affair with Trump years before he became president.

The Times said that such offers to testify "almost always indicate an indictment is close."

Both papers quoted people with knowledge of the proceedings led by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg, a Democrat who took office in January.

His predecessor, Cyrus Vance Jr, also a Democrat, had launched an investigation into Trump's finances in 2019, which resulted in a years-long legal battle over the billionaire's tax documents.

from Tongi. They held the driver hostage and kept him tied at the back of the vehicle when the robbery was going on.

When the robbers untied him in 300 feet area, he began to scream.

Then the robbers left with a trunk, and the driver and someone from the rent-a-car service informed police.

Money Plant Managing Director Joshoda Jibon Debnath told The Daily Star yesterday that the money was counted in front of him at the police station.

"I believe the investigators will track down robbers and the looted money," he said.

The robbery took place in Turag area around 7:15am on Thursday when officials of Money Plant were heading towards Savar EPZ in a microbus from Mirpur DOHS, with Tk 11.25 crore in four trunks.

Alamgir Hossain, director (operations) of Money Plant, filed a case against 10-12 unnamed people over the incident on Thursday.

"At least 10-12 robbers, aged between 30 and 40, carried out the robbery," he said in the case statement.

Position of Bangladesh

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The 2023 edition covers developments in 195 countries and 15 territories from January 1, 2022, through December 31, 2022.

Meanwhile, Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud said Bangladesh moved one notch up in the democracy index amid BNP's continuous hue and

cry that there is no democracy in the country and the people have no freedom of speech.

"It means the practice of democracy continues in Bangladesh. Under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina, progress has been achieved in all sectors, including freedom of speech," he said while exchanging views with reporters on the index, reports BSS.