

Biden, Yoon warn N Korea of nuclear response

China warns US, S Korea against ‘provoking confrontation’

AFP, Washington/ Beijing

US President Joe Biden and his South Korean counterpart Yoon Suk Yeol warned North Korea it would face a nuclear response and the “end” of the leadership there if Pyongyang uses its own arsenal.

Speaking at the White House after Oval Office talks during only the second state visit so far in the Biden presidency, the two leaders said the US security shield for South Korea was being strengthened in the face of the nuclear-armed North’s aggressive missile tests.

Following the statement by Biden and Yoon, China yesterday warned Washington and Seoul against “provoking confrontation” with North Korea.

Biden and Yoon also made clear that if the isolated, communist dictatorship in North Korea attacks the South or the United States, the response will be devastating.

“A nuclear attack by North Korea against the United States or its allies... will result in the end of whatever regime were to take such an action,” Biden told reporters at a joint press conference with Yoon.



Yoon said his priority was to secure peace through “superiority of overwhelming forces and not a false peace based on the goodwill of the other side.”

“In the event of a North Korean nuclear attack,” he said, Washington and Seoul have agreed to “respond swiftly, overwhelmingly and decisively using the full force of the alliance including US nuclear weapons.”

Yoon and Biden issued what was titled the Washington Declaration, bolstering the US nuclear umbrella over South Korea, which is increasingly nervous about the saber-rattling in the north.

Chinese foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning referring to the warning by US and S Korea, said, “All parties should face up to the crux of the (Korean) peninsula issue and play a constructive role in promoting a peaceful settlement of the issue.”

She urged against “deliberately stirring up tensions, provoking confrontation and playing up threats”.

Biden and Yoon also agreed that the US security shield for S Korea would be strengthened in the face of the nuclear-armed North’s missile tests.

Beijing condemned that decision saying, Washington “ignores regional security and insists on exploiting the peninsula issue to create tension.”

“What the US is doing ... provokes confrontation between camps, undermines the nuclear non-proliferation regime and the strategic interests of other countries,” Mao said.



Damaged cars and buildings are seen at the central market during clashes between the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces and the army in Khartoum North, Sudan yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

XI-ZELENSKY CALL

Moscow welcomes peace effort

Warns against testing its ‘patience over nuclear escalation’

AGENCIES

The Kremlin yesterday said it welcomed any attempt to end the Ukrainian conflict, on Moscow’s terms, a day after the leaders of China and Ukraine had their first call since the offensive.

“We are ready to welcome anything that can bring forward the end of the conflict in Ukraine and the achievement of Russia’s goals,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, according to AFP.

“As for the very fact of communication, this is the sovereign matter of these countries,” Peskov added.

Meanwhile, Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said that Russia does not intend to take the path of nuclear escalation in its standoff with the West over Ukraine but others should not test its patience, reports Reuters.

Her comments follow a flurry of warnings by senior Russian officials, including President Vladimir Putin,

that Western military support for Ukraine is increasing the risks of a catastrophic nuclear conflict.

“We will do everything to prevent the development of events according to the worst scenario, but not at the cost of infringing on our vital interests,” Zakharova told a regular news conference.

“I do not recommend that anybody doubt our determination and put it to the test in practice,” she added.

Russia has strongly criticised the supply of Western arms to Ukraine and the expansion of the NATO military alliance closer to its borders. Finland, which shares a long border with Russia, this month became the 31st member of NATO, while Ukraine itself also wishes to join, though it faces opposition from some countries.

“They (the United States) continue to deliberately infringe on our fundamental interests, deliberately generate risks and raise the stakes in the confrontation with Russia...,” said Zakharova.



A local woman speaks on her phone as she sits on a bench next to a residential house damaged by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in Mykolaiv, Ukraine yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

UKRAINE WAR Russia fines Wikipedia again over article

REUTERS

A Russian court yesterday fined the Wikimedia Foundation, which owns Wikipedia, two million roubles (\$24,510) for not deleting what it said was “banned content” related to the Russian military, Interfax reported.

It said this was the seventh fine imposed on Wikimedia in 2023 for not removing prohibited information. The fines now total 8.4 million roubles.

The latest penalty was for not removing an article about a military unit that contained “classified military information” about its location, composition and equipment, including information related to the progress of what Russia calls its special military operation in Ukraine.

Horn of Africa drought made possible by global warming Say climate scientists

AFP, Paris

A devastating drought that has struck the Horn of Africa could not have occurred without global warming, according to a new report released yesterday from an international team of climate scientists.

“Human-caused climate change has made agricultural drought in the Horn of Africa about 100 times more likely,” said a summary of the report by the World Weather Attribution (WWA) group.

“The ongoing devastating drought would not have happened at all without the effect of greenhouse gas emissions,” it added.

Since late 2020, countries on the Horn of Africa – Djibouti, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan and Sudan – have been suffering the worst drought in 40 years. The extended drought has led to the deaths

of millions of heads of cattle and wiped out crops.

The WWA study concentrated on the three areas worst hit by the drought: southern Ethiopia, Somalia and eastern Kenya.

While climate change had little effect on total annual rainfall in the region, “higher temperatures have significantly increased evaporation from soil and plants, which has made dry soils much more likely”, according to the 19 scientists who contributed to the WWA report.

“Without this effect, the region would not have experienced agricultural drought – when crops and pastures are affected by dry conditions – over the last two years,” the summary added.

“Instead, widespread crop failures and livestock deaths have left more than 20 million people at risk of acute food insecurity.”





We are deeply saddened by the sudden demise of Trustee Dr. A Majeed Khan, Founder President of Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), on April 26, 2023. Inna Lillahe Wa Inna Ilaihe Rajeun.

A former cabinet minister of the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, Dr. Khan also served as the Ambassador to France, Spain and Morocco. Born in Faridpur in 1929 and educated in Kolkata, London, and Minnesota, he was the first PhD recipient in Sociology and Anthropology from Bangladesh.

He was a member of the Phi Beta Kappa Society in the USA and received the prestigious Doctor of Humane Letters from Hamline University, St Paul Minnesota. He held various positions at Hamline University, Minnesota, USA; University of Wisconsin, USA; and taught at universities in the Netherlands, Sweden and Jordan. Dr. Khan was a member of the Executive Board and Permanent Representative to UNESCO and was honoured with the Officier of the L'Ordre des Palmes Académiques in France.

Apart from IUB, he played pivotal roles in establishing a number of other organizations including the Education, Science, Technology and Cultural Development Trust (ESTCDT); Chittagong Independent University (CIU); Academy for Rural Development, Comilla; College of Social Work at Rajshahi University; and the University of Information Technology and Sciences (UITS).

The IUB family, including the members the Board of Trustees, ESTCDT, faculty and administration, students, and the alumni community, expresses heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and prays to the Almighty for the eternal peace of his departed soul.