

GREENLAND ROW

Nato cannot negotiate for Denmark

Says Danish govt after Trump announced a deal

AFP, Copenhagen

Nato chief Mark Rutte cannot negotiate on behalf of Denmark over Greenland, the Danish government said yesterday, a day after US President Donald Trump announced a deal following talks between the two men.

Trump backed down on threats to seize Greenland by force after meeting Rutte on Wednesday, saying he had reached a “framework” of a deal on the Danish autonomous territory.

Details of the agreement made at the World Economic Forum in the Swiss ski resort of Davos remain scant.

“The position of Denmark and that of Greenland are the same, and no negotiations were held yesterday



with Nato about our sovereignty,” Denmark’s Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen told Danish television.

“Of course it is only Denmark and Greenland themselves that can make decisions on issues concerning Denmark and Greenland,” she said earlier in a statement.

The US and Denmark will renegotiate a 1951 defence pact on Greenland, a source familiar with the talks between Trump and Rutte told AFP yesterday.

Putting US military bases on Greenland under US sovereignty had not been discussed during the talks, the source said.

Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen said on social media yesterday that Rutte “cannot negotiate an agreement on behalf of Denmark or Greenland”.

However, he said Rutte had “worked loyally to maintain unity within Nato” and it was “very positive” that the alliance wanted to do more to strengthen Arctic security. “We have a clear red line,” he added. “We will not cede sovereignty over parts of the kingdom.”



Family members and colleagues carry the body of a Palestinian journalist killed in an Israeli strike, during a funeral procession in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. Gaza’s border crossing with Egypt will reopen next week, the Palestinian technocrat leader Ali Shaath announced.

PHOTO: AFP

Death toll in Karachi mall fire hits 55

AFP, Karachi

The death toll from a mall fire in Pakistan’s biggest city rose to at least 55 people, a Karachi government official said yesterday.

“A total of 55 bodies have been recovered since Saturday night” when the fire erupted, said Javed Nabi Khoso, deputy commissioner of Karachi’s south district.

Relatives of those still missing have criticised the slow operation at the three-storey Gul Plaza, where rescuers are scouring the wreckage for human remains. More than 50 families have given DNA samples, provincial health official Summaiya Syed told journalists Wednesday.

‘Finger on trigger’

Iran warns as Trump says it wants talks

AFP, Paris

The commander of Iran’s Revolutionary Guards yesterday warned Washington that the force had its “finger on the trigger” in the wake of mass protests, as US President Donald Trump said the Islamic republic still appeared interested in talks.

A fortnight of protests starting in late December shook the clerical leadership under supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, but the movement has petered out in the face of a crackdown that activists say has left thousands dead, accompanied by an unprecedented internet blackout.

The prospect of immediate American action against Tehran appears to have receded over the last week, with both sides insisting on giving diplomacy a chance even as US media report Trump is still studying options.

Addressing the World Economic

Forum in Davos, Trump said the US struck Iranian uranium enrichment sites last year to prevent Tehran from making a nuclear weapon. Iran denies its nuclear programme is aimed at seeking the bomb.

“Can’t let that happen,” he said, adding: “And Iran does want to talk, and we’ll talk.”

Guards commander General Mohammad Pakpour warned Israel and the US “to avoid any miscalculations, by learning from historical experiences and what they learned in the 12-day imposed war, so that they do not face a more painful and regrettable fate”.

“The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps and dear Iran have their finger on the trigger, more prepared than ever, ready to carry out the orders and measures of the supreme commander-in-chief -- a leader dearer than their own lives,” he said.

‘India somewhat overreacted’

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Pakistan is their decision.”

“Of course, it is regrettable, but I cannot change their decision. If they think they are not safe here, let them do it,” he said.

“If we want good bilateral relations, we first have to decide that we want good bilateral relations. And if we just go on taking one step after another, it will spiral the relations downwards.”

“If I look at my acquaintance with India over the last close to 40 years in different capacities, I would say that it has overreacted somewhat. I would expect more subtle reactions from India.”

Bangladesh-India relations have remained strained since the fall of the Awami League regime and the flight of deposed leader Sheikh Hasina to India. Following recent demonstrations in various parts of India, including near Bangladesh missions, Bangladesh suspended consular services at its missions in New Delhi, Agartala and Kolkata.

Touhid said both Bangladesh and India need to take positive steps to keep relations strong, as they have not been at a desirable level.

“I would say that we should have had more interactions, more understanding of each other, and I wish that to happen.”

Despite the desire to improve ties, Touhid said there is a general feeling in Bangladesh that India’s response has not been very positive and that Bangladesh’s sensitivities have not been adequately addressed.

Bangladesh expects that as long as Hasina remains in India, she would refrain from making statements that do not align with the situation in Bangladesh and

that do not bode well for relations between the two countries, he added.

On India’s allegations of attacks against minorities, the adviser said there is no denial that some incidents have taken place, but the government has taken immediate actions.

He said he does not welcome the official concerns expressed by India in this regard, calling it “absolutely an internal affair of Bangladesh”.

“We do not speak about actions against minorities in India, and I would expect the Indian authorities to follow the same.”

On Jamaat-e-Islami’s rise in Bangladesh, Touhid said Jamaat is an “open political party” in Bangladesh and has had a support base for a long time.

Referring to the BJP’s rise in India, he said there should be no problem in accepting that Jamaat’s footprint might increase in Bangladesh, as “they have been in politics and there are ups and downs in politics”.

Asked why Dhaka’s ties with Islamabad are improving while relations with New Delhi are “seemingly deteriorating”, Touhid said Bangladesh has taken no steps to “take down the relationship with India”.

On the other hand, relations with Pakistan were deliberately worsened throughout the last term of the Awami League regime, he said.

Bangladesh still has certain unresolved issues with Pakistan, which it continues to pursue, but Dhaka has tried to some extent to re-establish a normal relationship with Islamabad.

“There is nothing unusual about it. It’s just another neighbouring country,” Touhid said.

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