

South Korea

US man extradited

US, SKorea talk N-threat

SEOUL, Sept 23, (AFP): Senior South Korean and US defence officials met in Seoul on Wednesday for talks focused on responding to the possibility of an imminent North Korean rocket launch and later nuclear test.

The two-day talks follow statements earlier this month by the respective heads of the North's space and atomic energy agencies that fuelled concerns over its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.



Yoo

There has been widespread speculation that Pyongyang may carry out a satellite rocket launch to mark the 70th anniversary of the ruling Workers Party on October 10.

The North insists its space programme is purely scientific, but the US, South Korea and their allies deem any such rocket launch to be a disguised ballistic missile test that violates UN resolutions.

Although there have been no physical signs of North Korea preparing a launch, the director of its space agency said the world would soon see "a series of satellites... soaring into the sky."

A day later, the head of the national atomic agency said the North's main nuclear weapons complex was fully operational — including a uranium enrichment plant and a five-megawatt reactor seen as the country's main source of weapons-grade plutonium.

Policy

Opening Wednesday's talks in Seoul, Seoul's deputy minister for policy at the defence ministry, **Yoo Jeh-Seung**, said the meeting would seek to "firm up the combined defence posture" of South Korea and the United States.

"(This) carries special importance when North Korea's nuclear and missile threats are growing," he was quoted as saying by the Yonhap news agency.

The White House has already warned Pyongyang to refrain from any "irresponsible provocation" that might aggravate regional tensions.

The US officials at the talks included Abraham Denmark, deputy assistant secretary of defense for East Asia, and Elaine Bunn, deputy assistant secretary of defense for nuclear and missile defense policy.

The chief US envoy to the six-party talks on ending North Korea's nuclear weapons programme arrived in South Korea Tuesday and was expected to join the discussions.

The North's only successful satellite launch was of its Unha-3 rocket in December 2012 — a move that resulted in UN sanctions and a surge in military tensions that culminated two months later in the North's third nuclear test.

The Unha-3 is seen as a prototype intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), although the North has yet to conduct a test showing it has mastered the re-entry technology required for an effective ICBM capability.

Developing a working ICBM would be seen as a game-changer, bringing the mainland United States within range of a possible nuclear strike.

Also:

SEOUL: An American man suspected of killing a South Korean college student in 1997 protested his innocence as he arrived in Seoul under guard on Wednesday after being extradited from the United States.

Arthur Patterson, 35, is expected to face trial on charges that he killed **Jo Jung-Pil**, who was stabbed multiple times with a knife in a fast-food restaurant toilet in the nightlife district of Itaewon, close to the US military base in Seoul.

TV footage showed a stony-faced Patterson walking through the arrival gate in Incheon airport, handcuffed and escorted by South Korean officials.

"I'm still shocked that I'm here," Patterson told reporters, denying his involvement in the killing.

The son of an US military contractor, he was only 17 at the time of Jo's killing.

He was initially tried as an accomplice, while a Korean-American man who was at the scene was charged with a murder.

Both accused the other of killing Jo.

Patterson served 18 months in prison for lesser charges including destruction of justice, while the main suspect — Edward Lee — was sentenced to 20 years in jail for murder.



Demonstrators protest against Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's controversial security bills and his nuclear policy in Tokyo on Sept 23. Some 25,000 demonstrators protesting against nuclear power, the Okinawa base and the Abe government marched through downtown Tokyo. (Inset) Nobel Literature Prize laureate Kenzaburo Oe speaks at a rally to protest against Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's controversial security bills and his nuclear policy in Tokyo on Sept 23. (AFP)

China

5 police killed in Xinjiang knife attack

Leading Chinese lawyer says was tortured

Week of celebrations marks 800th b-day

Mongolia honours China conqueror Kublai Khan

BEIJING, Sept 23, (Agencies): In his first interview in five years, leading Chinese rights lawyer Gao Zhisheng said he was tortured with an electric baton to his face and spent three years in solitary confinement during his latest period of detention since 2010.

The Nobel Peace Prize nominee also vowed to never leave China despite the hardships and having to live apart from his family.

For years, Gao's supporters feared he might perish inside a remote Chinese prison. He survived his prison term. But when he was released in August 2014 from prison to house arrest, the formerly outspoken lawyer could barely walk or speak a full, intelligible sentence, raising concerns that one of the most inspirational figures in China's rights movement had been permanently broken — physically and mentally.

He is now speaking out once again in an exclusive interview with The Associated Press.

"Every time we emerge from the prison alive, it is a defeat for our opponents," Gao said in the face-to-face interview.

Gao, who lives under near-constant guard in Shaanxi province, gave the interview earlier this year on the condition that it not be published or aired for several months, until he could finish the manuscripts of two books and send them safely outside of China for publication, which he now says he has done. He also later sent the AP his manuscripts and gave permission to quote from them.

The 51-year-old attorney gained international recognition for his courage defending members of the outlawed spiritual movement Falun Gong and fighting for the land rights of farmers. In and out of detention since 2006, Gao upset authorities in 2010 by publicly denouncing the torture he said he had undergone.

In this year's interview and in one

of his books, he recounts a new round of torture as well as three years in solitary confinement which he says he survived thanks only to his faith in God and his unwavering hope for China. He also declared his decision not to go into exile outside China, even if that means being separated from his wife, daughter and son, who are living in the United States.

"I thought about giving up and giving my time to my family, but it's the mission God has given me" to stay in China, Gao said.

Gao's wife, Geng He, said in an interview in California that she does not understand why her husband was imprisoned, and why he continues to be kept under house arrest.

Also:

BEIJING: At least five police officers have been stabbed to death by sepa-

ratists in a knife attack at a coal mine in China's violence-prone far western region of Xinjiang, US-based Radio Free Asia reported on Wednesday.

The incident happened last Friday at the Sogan colliery in Aksu, the report said, citing police from the area. Dozens were also injured, it said.

The attack was "a long-planned, well-prepared, large-scale attack by separatists against police officers and mine owners at a coal field in our county", according to a government notice cited by Radio Free Asia.

Repeated calls to the Xinjiang government and public security departments were not answered. Such incidents are frequently reported in overseas media but not confirmed by the Chinese government until days later, if ever.

In June, Radio Free Asia said at least 18 people died when ethnic Uighurs attacked police with knives and bombs

at a traffic checkpoint in the old Silk Road city of Kashgar.

BEIJING: Campaign groups on Wednesday condemned Britain's finance minister for touting business opportunities ahead of human rights on a visit to China's violence-wracked Xinjiang region.

George Osborne pledged Britain would "support the growth" of the area, the homeland of the mostly-Muslim Uighur minority, where clashes have killed hundreds in recent years.

China blames Islamist separatists for the violence and has imposed tough security measures, including restrictions on religious practice, mass trials, and multiple executions.

Its policies have drawn condemnation from rights advocates and Uighurs, who complain of cultural repression and discrimination.



In this photo taken earlier in 2015, Gao Zhisheng smiles as he talks to journalists in a cave home in northwestern China's Shaanxi province. Leading Chinese rights lawyer Gao said in his first interview in five years that he was tortured with an electric baton to the face and spent three years in solitary confinement during his latest period of detention since 2010. (AP)



Turnbull



Razak

Asia

Turnbull admits 'concerns':

Australia's new Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** Wednesday admitted he had concerns about asylum seekers being held in Pacific island camps, but gave no indication of immediate change to the hardline policy.

All asylum seekers coming by boat to Australia are sent to camps in Papua New Guinea and Nauru and ultimately denied resettlement in Australia even if they are found to be genuine refugees.

Asked about the plight of hundreds of these people, some of whom have been in the much criticised camps for two years, Turnbull admitted to having concerns.

"I understand the issue, I have the same concerns about it, about the situation of people on Manus and Nauru... as I would think almost all Australians do," he said in an interview with Sky News. (AFP)

Suu Kyi urges 'brave' votes:

Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi said Tuesday supporters need not be afraid when they cast ballots in a landmark election, as she rallied against government neglect while campaigning in her rural constituency.

Suu Kyi received a rock star welcome in her impoverished constituency of Kawhmu, as she worked to bring her party victory in the first nationwide polls it has fought for 25 years.

"It's not 1990 anymore, so people don't need to be afraid. They can be brave to vote for the National League for Democracy," she told a rally in remote Wah Ba Lauk Tauk village, referring to elections that were won by her party but ignored by the then-junta.

The NLD is expected to sweep the Nov 8 parliamentary polls, seen as a test of democratic progress in a nation that only emerged in 2011 from a half-century of military rule.

But beyond that, much remains uncertain. (AFP)

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Razak party plays race card: When thousands of Malay Muslims marched through Kuala Lumpur last week to support his scandal-wracked government, Malaysian Prime Minister **Najib Razak** kept his distance.

He neither attended nor officially endorsed the racially charged rally by members of Malaysia's majority community.

But several members of Najib's political

party told Reuters they helped an ultranationalist Malay group stage the "Malay Pride" rally. Critics accused the organisers of stoking racial tensions in multicultural Malaysia to distract from a multi-million-dollar corruption scandal swirling around the prime minister.

Protesters at the rally held signs reading "Don't insult Malays and Islam" and "#najibstays". Some were eventually dis-

persed by riot police outside Chinatown, where many Chinese businesses are located. (RTRS)

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Defence points to flaws: Lawyers defending two Myanmar migrant workers on trial for the Thai holiday island murders of two British backpackers sought on Wednesday to expose holes in a police investigation they maintain was botched and

intended to frame the suspects.

The conduct of Thailand's police and treatment of its huge Myanmar labour force has been central to the trial of the young men accused of killing Hannah Witheridge and David Miller a year ago on the southern island of Koh Tao.

Post-mortem examinations showed the victims suffered severe head wounds and Witheridge was raped, but lawyers and

activists say the two Myanmar accused, Zaw Lin and Win Zaw Htun, have been made scapegoats for the killings.

The case has attracted extensive media attention in Britain and raised questions about Thailand's ability to protect its tourists. The bodies of Miller, 24, and Witheridge, 23, were found on a beach on the small island popular with backpackers and divers. (RTRS)

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Times blocked in Thailand: The local printer of the International New York Times decided not to publish Tuesday's edition in Thailand because of an article on the future of the Thai monarchy that it called "too sensitive to print" in the country, where strict laws limit open discussion of the royal family.

The article, headlined "As Thai king ails, crown's future unclear," discussed the declining health of 87-year-old King Bhumibol Adulyadej and concerns about the monarchy's succession. The story, published on the front page of the newspaper's Asia editions, was written by its Bangkok-based correspondent.

In an email sent to subscribers, the newspaper said the decision to block Tuesday's edition was made by its Thailand-based printer.

"Today's edition of the International New York Times was not printed in Thailand because it includes an article that our locally contracted printer deemed too sensitive to print," the newspaper said. (AP)

Malaysia detains 8 for blast questioning

KUALA LUMPUR, Malaysia, Sept 23, (AP): Eight people, including four believed to be ethnic Uighurs, have been detained in connection with last month's bombing of a shrine in Bangkok that killed 20 people, a senior official said Wednesday.

National deputy police chief Noor Rashid Ibrahim said they were detained in the past week in Kuala Lumpur as well as in northeastern Kelantan state.

Uighurs are an ethnic minority in China and complain of oppression by the government.



Myanmar's opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi speaks during an election campaign in a village in Kungyangon, Sept 22, on the outskirts of Yangon, Myanmar. Myanmar's general elections are scheduled for Nov 8, the first since a nominally civilian government was installed in 2011. (AP)