

## North Korea

## Officials abuse repatriated women

## Kim 'boasts' of nukes amid stalled US talks

SEOUL, South Korea, July 28, (AP): North Korea leader **Kim Jong Un** said his country's hard-won nuclear weapons were a solid security guarantee and a "reliable, effective" deterrent that could prevent a second Korean War, state media reported Tuesday.

Kim's comments before war veterans marking the 67th anniversary of the end of the 1950-53 Korean War again show he has no intention of abandoning his weapons as prospects dim for resuming diplomacy with the United States.

North Korea has previously ratcheted up fiery rhetoric or conducted weapons tests to wrest outside concessions. But some experts say Pyongyang will likely avoid serious talks with Washington before the US presidential elections in November as there is a chance for a US leadership change.

Kim said in his speech Monday his country has tried to become "a nuclear state" with "an absolute might" to prevent another war and that it has now built such a deterrent, according to the Korea Central News Agency.

"Now, we've changed to a country which can defend itself reliably and unwaveringly against high-intensity pressures and military threats and blackmailing by imperialistic reactionaries and hostile forces," Kim said.

"There won't be any war on this land again and our national security and future will be guaranteed firmly and permanently because of our reliable, effective self-defensive nuclear deterrent," Kim said.

Kim's speech followed recent remarks by both North Korean and US officials suggesting they were reluctant to engage in a new round of diplomacy on the North's nuclear program anytime soon.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo had said President Donald Trump would only want to engage with Kim if there were real prospects of progress. Kim's sister and senior ruling party official, Kim Yo Jong, said a new summit would be "unpractical" for North Korea and that Pyongyang won't gift Trump a high-level meeting that he can boast as a foreign policy achievement.

## Abruptly

Kim Jong Un and Trump met three times since Kim in 2018 abruptly reached out to Washington and Seoul for talks after expressing his intent to deal away his advancing nuclear arsenals. Many experts were skeptical of Kim's disarmament commitment and said he only aimed to weaken US-led sanctions and perfect his nuclear program.

The nuclear diplomacy remains largely stalled since a second Kim-Trump meeting in February 2019 in Vietnam collapsed without reaching any agreement because Trump Kim rejected Kim's proposal to get extensive sanctions relief in return for a limited denuclearization step.

Kim entered this year with a vow to bolster his nuclear program and threatened to unveil a new "strategic" weapon. He also said he would no longer be bound by a self-imposed moratorium on nuclear and long-range missile tests. Kim hasn't performed such high-profile weapons tests, which some analysts say could completely derail diplomacy with the United States.

North Korea's economic difficulties were believed to have worsened due to the coronavirus pandemic, which led North Korea to seal its border with China, its biggest trading partner and economic pipeline, in January.

Kim on Friday ordered the total lockdown of the city of Kaesong near the border with South Korea because a person there had suspected COVID-19 symptoms. North Korea has so far there has been no virus patient on its territory, a claim questioned by outside experts.

KCNA reported Tuesday authorities were swiftly supplying masks, medicines, test equipment, food and other necessities to Kaesong. It said authorities have boosted their border closures.

Experts say a pandemic in North Korea could cause devastating consequences because of its broken health care system and lack of medical supplies.

Meanwhile, the UN human rights office reported Tuesday that scores of North Korean women who had traveled abroad in a desperate search for work were abused by security officials and police through beatings, detention in unsanitary conditions, undernourishment and invasive body searches after being sent back home.

The United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights presented the findings in a new report that alleges "multiple and serious human rights violations by state security and police officials" in North Korea, based on 100 accounts from women who were detained in the secretive country from 2009 to 2019 after being forcibly returned home.

The women spoke to UN human rights officials after eventually fleeing North Korea following their detention.

Testimonies suggest the women, who often fell into the custody of human traffickers, faced bonded labor or sexual exploitation in other countries – then were deemed traitors or punished for contacting Christian groups abroad after their return.

"It is heartbreaking to read these stories of women who fled their country looking to make ends meet, but who ended up being punished," High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet said in a statement accompanying the report. She said the women "should be taken care of, not detained and subjected to further human rights violations."

"These women have a right to justice, truth and reparation," she added.

North Korea's diplomatic mission in Geneva did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The UN rights office also called on foreign countries where the women fled – at times including neighboring China – to respect the principle of "non-refoulement," or not returning people to countries where they could face a real risk of human rights violations.

"These accounts show once again the systemic nature of human rights violations in the DPRK, and the need to keep seeking pathways to proper accountability for such crimes," Bachelet said, using the acronym for North Korea's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The report only focused on women who had fled abroad, not the many people held in political prisons in North Korea which are believed to also be a site of human rights violations.



Jong Un



In this photo provided by The Korea Botanical Garden, statues of a man kneeling in front of a girl symbolizing victims of sexual slavery by Japan's World War II military at the Korea Botanical Garden in Pyeongchang, South Korea. The statue has become the latest subject of diplomatic sensitivity between the countries, with Tokyo's top government spokesman questioning whether the figure represents Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. (AP)

## New statues stoke sensitivity between South Korea, Japan

A pair of new statues in South Korea of a man kneeling in front of a girl symbolizing a victim of sexual slavery by Japan's wartime military is the latest subject of diplomatic sensitivity between the countries, with Tokyo's government spokesperson questioning whether the male figure represents the Japanese prime minister.

Kim Chang-ryeol, owner of a botanic garden in the mountain town of Pyeongchang, told The Associated Press on Tuesday that he canceled an unveiling ceremony for the bronze statues that was to take place on Aug. 10 because of what he described as unwanted controversy.

Kim said the statues were his idea, but that he didn't specifically intend the

male figure to be Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. Since his inauguration in 2012, Abe has stoked anger among South Koreans over his nationalistic stance on Japan's wartime past and his demands that South Korea remove similar statues symbolizing sexual slavery victims in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul and other sites.

But the statues at Kim's garden also drew criticism among some South Koreans, who described them as tacky or excessively provocative on social media. Kim defended the statues, saying they reflect his wish for the countries to resolve their conflicts over history. He didn't expect the statues to trigger political debates. (AP)



In this July 5, 2017, file photo, provided by the South Korea Defense Ministry, South Korea's Hyunmoo Missile II is fired during the combined military exercise between US and South Korea at an undisclosed location in South Korea. South Korea said Tuesday, July 28, 2020, it has won US consent to use solid fuel for space launch vehicles, a move that experts say would enable Seoul to launch its first surveillance satellites and accumulate technology to build more powerful missiles. (AP)



Gibson

Thurtell

## Asia

## Police arrest chief of strike:

Police arrested a leader of an anti-racism protest and shut down the demonstration before it started Tuesday after courts ruled the gathering in downtown Sydney was illegal due to the coronavirus pandemic threat.

Organizer **Paddy Gibson** was among six people arrested in a park known as The Domain before the rally was due to start at noon. Two police officers were photographed leading a defiant Gibson away.

Police outnumbered protesters. Officers told demonstrators to move on as they arrived and the area was cleared 15 minutes before the scheduled start.

New South Wales state Assistant Police Commissioner Mick Willing said five protesters were issued 1,000 Australian dollar (\$710) fines for breaching pandemic restrictions. Another protester was charged with using offensive language. (AP)

## Vietnam locks down city:

Vietnam on Tuesday locked down its third-largest city for two weeks after 15 cases of COVID-19 were found in a hospital, the government said.

The new cases in the central city of Da Nang are the first confirmed to be locally transmitted in the country in over three months.

Public transport into and out of Da Nang was canceled. Over the weekend, thousands of mostly Vietnamese tourists cut short their summer holidays in the popular beach destination. The lockdown has dealt a hard blow to the city's tourism industry, which was just being revived after earlier coronavirus cases mostly subsided at the

## Diplomacy

## Officials prompt calls for unity

## US-China spats rattle world

BEIJING, July 28, (AP): Antagonisms between the U.S. and China are rattling governments around the world, prompting a German official to warn of "Cold War 2.0" and Kenya's president to appeal for unity to fight the coronavirus pandemic.

Global trade already was depressed by two years of tariff warring between the world's two biggest economies. That rancor has spread to include Hong Kong, Chinese Muslims, spying accusations and control of the South China Sea.

Caught in the middle, other world governments are trying to defend their own interests.

**Germany:** Chancellor Angela Merkel wants to preserve trade and cooperation on global warming but says security law tightening Beijing's control over Hong Kong is a "difficult issue."

The potential disruption from the Hong Kong security law of the autonomy Beijing promised to the former British colony is no reason to stop talking but is "a worrying development," Merkel said Monday.

Europe's biggest economy has yet to take a final position on Chinese tech giant Huawei despite U.S. pressure to exclude its equipment from next-generation telecom networks as a possible security risk.

"China is an important partner for us but also a competitor," Foreign Minister Heiko Maas said in a statement after a videoconference Friday with his Chinese counterpart, Wang Yi.

Peter Beyer, the government's coordinator for trans-Atlantic cooperation, expressed alarm in an interview with the Redaktion-Netzwerk Deutschland newspaper group.

**France:** President Emmanuel Macron calls President Donald Trump "my friend" but is trying to avoid riling Beijing. France has not echoed Trump's criticism of Beijing's handling of the coronavirus, but legislators applauded Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian last week when he condemned abuses of minority Uighurs in China's northwest.

Le Drian mentioned "mass arrests, disappearances, forced labor, forced sterilizations, the destruction of Uighur cultural heritage." He said France has asked that the camps be closed.

Trump's ambivalence toward U.S. allies and flouting of diplomatic norms has alarmed France.

"Sino-American tensions don't benefit France," said Valerie Niquet of the Foundation for Strategic Research, a think tank. "We share the same interests as the United States towards China, we adopt more or less the same positions, so it doesn't bring us any positive element."

**Europe:** Europe's "strategic relations" with China will be an issue for the European Union while Germany holds the rotating presidency of the 27-nation bloc, Merkel said this month.

EU foreign ministers have not managed to agree on a common position on China. Regarding Hong Kong, options include closer scrutiny of exports of sensitive technology to the territory and changing visa policies for its residents. But there is no talk of economic sanctions or targeting Chinese officials with penalties.

## Message

"The message is that the recent actions change the rules," said the top EU foreign policy official, Josep Borrell. "This will require a revision of our approach and will clearly have an impact on our relations."

**South Korea:** South Korea is squeezed between its main military ally and its biggest trading partner.

In 2016, Beijing destroyed supermarket operator Lotte's business in China after the conglomerate sold a plot of land in South Korea to the government for an anti-missile system over Chinese objections.

Washington is unhappy with South Korea's desire to ease sanctions on North Korea to encourage disarmament and uneasy about its use of Huawei technology.

Trump complains about the cost of stationing 28,500 U.S. troops in South Korea to protect against North Korean threats. A cost-sharing agreement expired in 2019 without a replacement.

The US-Chinese row "has thrown a question to South Korea" about which side to choose, the newspaper Dong-A Ilbo said in an editorial Monday.

**India:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi has tried to embrace both Chinese President Xi Jin-

ping and President Donald Trump, but the pandemic and a border clash that killed at least 20 Indian soldiers have fueled anti-Chinese sentiment.

Protesters have called for boycotts of Chinese goods and burned Chinese flags. They applauded the government's ban on the popular Chinese video-sharing app TikTok and some other Chinese apps.

Washington wants stronger ties with India and supported its controversial move a year ago to split its only Muslim-majority state, redivide Jammu and Kashmir, into two federally controlled territories. This month, White House Chief of Staff Mark Meadows said the United States would stand up to China on the Indian border dispute.

"For India it is opportune that the U.S. is applying more pressure on China, and it can get it to behave, that would be welcomed by the entire neighborhood," said Jayadev Ranade, president of the Center for China Analysis think tank in New Delhi.

**Africa:** China-US tensions are taking a toll: The African Development Bank said last year trade disruption due to the tariff war could lead to a 2.5% drop in economic output for some African countries.

Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta said political disputes should be set aside to better fight the coronavirus.

"Let's not be sucked back into isolationism or unilateralism. We need each other today more than ever," Kenyatta said at an Atlantic Council event last month. "We're not going to fight coronavirus if one country fails and another succeeds."

**Southeast Asia:** The 10-nation Association of Southeast Asian Nations has avoided taking steps that would alienate Washington or Beijing, both important trading partners.

"The great powers, as they escalate their rivalry, will woo us into their side," said Harry Roque, a spokesman for Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte. "We will advance our national interest."

The region's most sensitive conflict – over control of the South China Sea – escalated when the Trump administration publicly rejected most of Beijing's claims to one of the world's busiest waterways.

end of April. Hotel guests quickly ended their stays and canceled upcoming trips upon the news of the first case, one hotelier said on the condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. (AP)

**Chinese fall victim:** Australian police have revealed that Chinese students based in Sydney are being

forced to stage photos and video of themselves bound and blindfolded in an extortion scam described as virtual kidnapping.

Eight students this year have fallen victim to the scams, which have netted criminal syndicates 3.2 million Australian dollars (\$2.3 million), New South Wales state Police Detective Chief Superintendent Darren Bennett said Monday.

The students are typically telephoned by a Mandarin speaker who purports to be someone holding authority in China such as an embassy, police or tax official. They are told they risk deportation or arrest unless their families pay a ransom.

The students send images of themselves bound and gagged, move into hotels and cut off all communications.

New South Wales Assistant Police Commissioner **Peter Thurtell** said Chinese authorities had assured Australian police that under no circumstances would a government agency contact

a student overseas to demand money. (AP)

## US envoy shaves mustache:

The US ambassador to South Korea has shaved his mildly controversial mustache, saying it was too uncomfortable to keep while wearing a coronavirus mask during South Korea's notoriously hot summer.

Harry Harris' facial hair had drawn criticism from the media and a small number of online commentators, who compared his mustache to those worn by colonial Japanese governors during the country's brutal rule of the Korean Peninsula from 1910 to 1945.

Harris, a retired Navy admiral who became ambassador in July 2018, acknowledged in January that his mustache had become "a point of some fascination here." He also said he was being criticized for his ethnic background as a Japanese-American. (AP)

"Glad I did this," Harris tweeted



A couple wearing face masks look at their mobile phones in front of a big poster in Hong Kong on July 27. (AP)