

North Korea's Kim in Singapore for Summit With Trump



Singapore's Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan welcomes North Korean leader Kim Jong Un on his arrival in Singapore on June 10, 2018.

SINGAPORE (AFP) -- North Korean leader Kim Jong Un arrived in Singapore Sunday for an unprecedented summit with Donald Trump, with his nuclear arsenal at the top of the agenda and the U.S. president calling it a "one-time shot" at peace.

Bringing the Korean War to a formal end 65 years after hostilities ceased will also be on the table at the first-ever meeting between a North Korean leader and a sitting president of its "imperialist enemy".

It is an extraordinary turnaround from the tensions of last year, when Kim accelerated his weapons programs -- earning the North more sets of UN Security Council

sanctions -- and the two men traded personal insults and threats of war. But critics charge that the meeting risks being largely a triumph of style over substance.

Kim arrived in Singapore on board an Air China 747 that according to flight tracking website Flightradar24 took off from Pyongyang in the morning ostensibly bound for Beijing, then changed its flight number in midair and headed south.

He was driven into the city centre in a stretch Mercedes-Benz limousine accompanied by a convoy of more than 20 vehicles, and later met Singaporean President Lee Hsien Loong, thanking him for hosting the event.

"If the summit becomes a success, the Singaporean efforts will go down in history," Kim said, while Trump was flying from Canada on board Air Force One after leaving a G7 meeting early.

Authorities imposed tight security around the Singapore summit venue and related luxury hotels -- including installing extra pot plants outside Kim's expected accommodation to obstruct reporters' views.

Washington is demanding the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the North, while Pyongyang has so far only made public pledges of its commitment to the denuclearization of the peninsula -- a term open to wide interpretation -- while seeking security guarantees.

Former U.S. deputy secretary of state Richard Armitage expected little progress on the key issue of defining denuclearization.

"The success will be in the shutter clicks of the cameras," he said. "They both get what they want."

Trump insisted last week that the summit would "not be just a photo op", saying it would help forge a "good relationship" that would lead to a "process" towards the "ultimate making of a deal".

But as he embarked for Singapore he changed his tune, calling it a "one-time shot" and adding he will know "within the first minute" whether an agreement will be possible.

Chinese President Blasts 'Selfish' U.S. Policies



A TV screen shows a live broadcast of Chinese President Xi Jinping attending a group photo of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit at the media center, in Qingdao, Shandong Province, China June 10, 2018.

QINGDAO, China (Reuters) -- Chinese President Xi Jinping, whose country is locked in a high-stakes trade dispute with the United States, on Sunday said China rejects "selfish, shortsighted" trade policies, and called for building an open global economy.

Xi did not mention the United States during a speech at a summit meeting of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), a regional security bloc led by China and Russia.

"We reject selfish, shortsighted, closed, narrow policies, uphold World Trade Organization rules, support a multilateral trade system, and building an open world economy," Xi said in a speech in the port city of Qingdao.

The United States and China have threatened tit-for-tat tariffs on goods worth up to \$150 billion (112 billion pounds) each, as President Donald Trump has pushed Beijing to open its economy further and address the United

States' large trade deficit with China.

Xi spoke hours after Trump said he was backing out of the Group of Seven communique, thwarting what appeared to be a fragile consensus on a trade dispute between Washington and its top allies.

"We must ... discard Cold War thinking, group confrontation; we object to acts of getting one's own absolute security at the cost of other countries' security," Xi said.

The SCO was launched in 2001 to combat security concerns in China, Russia and across Central Asia.

It added two new members, India and Pakistan, last year and Iran has been knocking at the door. Tehran is currently an observer rather than a full member of a bloc that also includes four ex-Soviet Central Asian republics.

Xi also said China would offer the equivalent of 30 billion yuan (£3.5 billion) in loans under a framework formed by SCO countries.

Basques Form 202 km Human Chain for Independence



People join hands to form a 202 km (125 miles) long, according to organizers, human chain linking the cities of San Sebastian, Vitoria and Bilbao to call for a right to vote on Basque independence, near Vitoria, Spain, June 10, 2018.

MADRID (Reuters) -- Tens of thousands of people from Spain's Basque Country joined hands to form a human chain running some 202 kilometers Sunday to call for the right to hold a regional independence vote.

Spain's Constitution, created in 1978

after the end of dictator Francisco Franco's regime, states that the country is indivisible and last-year's attempt by Catalonia to hold a secession referendum was met with a harsh legal crackdown.

Former Prime Minister with the conservative People's Party (PP) Mariano

Rajoy, who has been roundly criticized for his handling of the Catalan crisis, was ousted by Socialist leader Pedro Sanchez in a no confidence vote June 1.

Sanchez, who now heads the government following the vote, has called for renewed talks with the Catalan leadership.

While most from the Basque Country, which already has a high level of self-determination and, like Catalonia, has its own language and culture, do not support independence, many believe the population should be given the right to vote.

The human-chain protest was organized by Basque group Gure Esku Dago (In Our Own Hands) and ran from Donostia (also known as San Sebastian) to the Basque parliament in Gasteiz (Vitoria).

The Spanish government, backed by the constitutional court, maintains that any ballot on regional independence is illegal.

An Oct. 1 ballot on Catalonia's separation from Spain and consequent unilateral declaration of independence by the regional government prompted Madrid to take control of the region and arrest the civil servants involved in the vote.

Former U.S. Ambassador to UN: Benefits of Destroying Rohingya Exceed Costs



Rohingya refugees wait for rice delivery during a foggy morning at the Nayapara refugee camp near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh on December 25, 2017.

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The "benefits of destroying the Rohingya population exceed the costs" for Myanmar, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations has said.

Samantha Power, who served in the role from 2013 to 2017, said there was a lack of diplomacy surrounding the crisis.

There have been accusations of ethnic cleansing in Myanmar after continued attacks on Rohingya Muslims forced hundreds of thousands of them to flee into neighboring Bangladesh.

Speaking in Armenia at the Aurora Prize for Awakening Humanity, Power, a former adviser to Barack Obama, said the Rohingya had been "systematically murdered, raped and deported from their country".

"And no contact group has been formed, there has been no high level ministerial summit that I am aware of," she said.

"There has been humanitarian systems, the United Nations Secretary General has used his voice, but if you actually want to change the calculus of a government that has decided to expel and destroy a group, which it looks like the Myanmar government and military have decided to do, you have to change the incentives for them."

She added: "Right now they think the benefits of destroying the Rohingya

population exceed the costs. The only way that gets changed is through dealing with their sources of revenue, and through them feeling such concerted and sustained diplomatic pressure, not just from the UN secretary general, or the high commission for human rights, but from a coalition of diverse countries -- the neighbors, bringing in China."

More than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled across the border to Bangladesh amid increasing violence. Representatives said they were disappointed that a UN agreement signed earlier this week did not address one of their key demands -- citizenship of Myanmar.

Most refugees say they are desperate to go home, but fear going back unless they are given protection and citizenship.

Earlier this week Burmese and UN agencies signed an agreement that could -- eventually -- lead to the return of some of the 700,000 Rohingya who fled persecution in their homeland and are now crowded into makeshift camps in Bangladesh.

Rohingya Muslims have long been treated as outsiders in Myanmar, despite many of their families having lived in the country for generations.

They have been denied citizenship since 1982, effectively rendering them stateless, and forcing many to cross by land into neighboring Bangladesh.

Germany Uses Murder Case to Toughen Migration Rules

BERLIN (Reuters) -- Chancellor Angela Merkel's conservatives called Sunday for stricter immigration rules and faster deportation of failed asylum seekers after a public outcry over a 14-year-old German girl who was allegedly raped and killed by an Iraqi man.

Police in the Kurdistan region of Iraq said on Saturday the 20-year-old suspect, identified by German authorities as Ali Bashar, had admitted to the murder of Susanna Feldman in Germany, where the case has stoked the immigration debate.

Iraqi authorities extradited Bashar on Saturday after Kurdish security forces had taken him into custody on Friday. He left Germany together with relatives earlier this month.

"The procedures and rules for asylum, refuge and integration must be put under scrutiny," Christian Baldauf, leader of Merkel's conservatives in the state parliament of Rhineland-Palatinate, told Rheinpfalz am Sonntag newspaper.

The Iraqi suspect, who arrived in Germany at the height of Europe's migrant crisis in 2015, was known to police because he had become violent with officials over his asylum status.

Bashar had previously been suspected in the rape of an 11-year-old girl at a refugee center, although an investigation was inconclusive. His asylum request was rejected in December 2016.

Merkel's decision to welcome more than one million refugees in 2015 has boosted support for the anti-immigrant Alternative for Germany party. The government has put aside more than 20 billion euros (\$23.5 billion) to integrate asylum seekers (€23.5 billion) to tackle the root causes of migration.

Baldauf said the state's answer to the murder case should not be "chintzy populism" or a racist hate campaign.

"It's about speeding up investigations and court decisions, reaching faster verdicts and finding ways of deporting perpetrators and potential offenders without exceptions," he said.

Wolfgang Schaeuble, president of the Bundestag lower house of parliament and former finance minister, said Germany had to correct its relatively generous asylum rules.

"We must cut back parts of our German law, if we want to come to a common European asylum policy," Schaeuble told Wirtschaftswoche magazine.

Schaeuble added he had already fought against "some exaggerations" in Germany's asylum law when he was interior minister in the 1990s.

Feldman, a Jewish teenager from Mainz near Frankfurt, was found dead on Wednesday in a wooded area in Wiesbaden, near a refugee center where the alleged attacker had lived, German police said.

An autopsy showed she had been the victim of a violent and sexual attack. Police said there was no evidence her religion had been a factor and the Central Council of Jews in Germany cautioned against attributing any anti-Semitic motive.

News in Brief

QINGDAO, China (AFP) -- Russian President Vladimir Putin said Sunday it was too early to discuss in detail a possible prisoner exchange with Ukraine, amid hopes for the release of film director Oleg Sentsov and others during the World Cup. But the Kremlin leader indicated that backdoor negotiations were apparently underway, raising hopes for the release of dozens of prisoners including Sentsov, who is undertaking a high-profile hunger strike at a prison in Russia's far north. "It's so far premature to say how this issue will be solved," Putin told reporters at a security summit in the Chinese city of Qingdao, adding he would not want to comment for now "so as not to violate anything here and not to disrupt anything." Putin and Ukrainian leader Petro Poroshenko discussed a possible exchange of prisoners in a rare phone call Saturday and agreed that officials from the two countries would visit their prisoners "in the near future." Putin said it was Poroshenko who initiated the discussion.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- The U.S. Air Force has temporarily grounded its entire fleet of B-1 heavy bombers over safety concerns, officials said. The safety stand-down, ordered Thursday, follows an investigation into an emergency landing made at Midland, Texas on May 1. Four crewmembers had to land their bomber after some sort of "inflight emergency," officials said. No one was harmed. During the investigation into that incident, "an issue with ejection seat components was discovered that necessitated the stand-down. As these issues are resolved, aircraft will return to flight," the Air Force said in a statement. The B-1B Lancer is a supersonic bomber that can carry the heaviest conventional payload of all the U.S. military's planes. It has wings that can adjust according to its speed and cargo. Though it was originally designed as a nuclear bomber it can no longer carry such weapons.

PARIS (AFP) -- France and Germany are "determined" to reach a compromise on President Emmanuel Macron's proposals for a shake-up of the eurozone, a French government source told AFP Sunday after marathon talks between the two countries. Paris and Berlin are racing to bridge the gap between Macron's ambitious EU reform agenda and Chancellor Angela Merkel's more prudent approach by a crunch eurozone summit on June 29. French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire spent nearly 14 hours holed up with his German counterpart Olaf Scholz at a Paris hotel on Saturday, the source told AFP. While the talks, which lasted into the early hours of Sunday, did not yield an agreement the ministers discussed "all the unresolved issues" and made "substantial progress", the source said.

ISLAMABAD (AP) -- The party of Pakistan's former military dictator Pervez Musharraf announced that he will run for a seat in parliament in July 25 national elections. The move comes after the country's Supreme Court conditionally allowed Musharraf to return from Dubai, where he has been living in self-exile to avoid arrest on criminal charges. Musharraf's party said he will campaign for a seat representing the northern town of Chitral. Also on Saturday, the party of popular longtime opposition politician Imran Khan said he will run for a seat in the National Assembly, which was dissolved May 31 upon completing its five-year term. Khan is seeking to become the next prime minister. Khan's party is expected to face a tough challenge from candidates backed by former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, who was disqualified from holding office in July by the Supreme Court on corruption charges. The party of former President Asif Ali Zardari is also fielding candidates across the country in hopes of getting a majority in parliament. Zardari said he will run for a seat representing southern Sindh province.

VATICAN CITY (AP) -- A Vatican court has indicted on child pornography possession charges a diplomat recalled from Washington last year amid ongoing investigations in three jurisdictions. The Vatican said in a statement Saturday that Monsignor Carlo Capella, who was the No. 4 official in its Washington embassy, would face a trial starting June 22. Capella, a high-ranking priest in the Vatican's diplomatic corps, was the subject of investigations by the Vatican and in the United States and Canada. He has been in Vatican custody since April. The Vatican recalled him after the U.S. State Department notified it in August of a "possible violation of laws relating to child pornography images" by a diplomat in Washington. Canadian police have said Capella allegedly uploaded child porn from a social networking site over the 2016 Christmas holiday.

NEW DELHI (AP) -- Indian police have arrested 15 men after the latest in a spate of lynching's incited by rumors spread on WhatsApp of strangers abducting children, an officer said Sunday. A mob in a mainly tribal area of the northeastern state of Assam pulled two men out of their car on Friday night and beat them to death before police could arrive. A video on YouTube shows the badly bruised and bleeding men pleading for their lives. The two friends, residents of Guwahati city in the state, were returning from a picnic spot. "We have arrested 15 persons. We have also zeroed in on a couple of people who recorded and uploaded the video," senior state police official Mukesh Agrawal told AFP. "The villagers got suspicious of the strangers as for the last three or four days messages were going around on WhatsApp, as well as through word of mouth, about child lifters roaming the area," the officer said.