

# North Korea Calls Pompeo 'Poisonous' to Diplomacy



North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho, right, shakes hand with U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo

North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong-ho on Friday called his American counterpart, Mike Pompeo, a "poisonous plant of American diplomacy", vowing to "shutter the absurd dream" that U.S. sanctions will force a change in Pyongyang.

Ri also accused Pompeo of casting "dark shadows" over the U.S.-North Korea talks, claiming that the U.S.

diplomat was more interested in his own political ambitions than in current U.S. foreign policy, Al-Jazeera reported.

The North's blistering rhetoric threatened to dim the possible resumption of nuclear negotiations between the countries.

Ri made the comments to protest Pompeo's remarks in an interview, in which he said Washington will maintain crippling sanctions on

North Korea unless it denuclearizes.

Ri noted that he could not just let the "reckless remarks" by Pompeo pass by him because they came amid a possible restart of the nuclear talks.

Ri added that Pompeo is a "brazen" man because he "had begged for" North Korean denuclearization and improved bilateral ties when he visited Pyongyang and met leader Kim Jong-un several times.

On Thursday, a North Korean spokesman had stated that Pyongyang has "no interest" in dialogue unless Washington stops "escalating hostile military moves".

But South Korean deputy national security adviser Kim Hyun-chong indicated that he remained upbeat about the possibility of talks.

North Korea has long denounced the joint exercises as a rehearsal for invasion of its territories. Washington stations nearly 30,000 troops in the South to purportedly defend it from its northern neighbor.

# India Steps Up Curbs in Kashmir on Friday Prayers



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Security forces had been deployed in downtown Srinagar on Friday as protesters are prepared to march to the office of the UN Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) — which monitors ceasefire violations along the border between India and Pakistan.

Several dozen armed forces blocked the main road leading to the office of UNMOGIP in Srinagar and public movement around it was blocked as well.

"The security forces closed streets so that people don't get to pray, or people don't gather here in large numbers, or protests don't happen," said a resident.

Police vans were also seen in the streets announcing a curfew and asking people to stay indoors.

Protest organizers urged people on Thursday to hold a rally after the Friday prayers in protest against the lockdown which was imposed on the region earlier this month.

The rally is also organized to protest against India's recent move to strip Jammu and Kashmir of its special autonomy.

The Muslim-majority Himalayan region has been in a crippling lockdown since New Delhi announced it was removing the region's special status on August 5th.

The move has prompted protests across the region over the past two weeks. Some gatherings drew hundreds of people.

Senior officials and eyewitnesses were quoted as saying that violent clashes took place between residents and police in many occasions, in which dozens were injured.

Eyewitnesses also said Indian troops fired tear gas, chilly grenades and rubber pellets to disperse protesters in the Rainawari, Nowhetta and Gojwara areas of the old city.

The government of Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, has said the cancellation of special status was necessary to integrate the disputed area fully into India.

Kashmir has been split between India and Pakistan since their partition from Britain in 1947. Both countries claim all of Kashmir and have fought three wars over the territory.

# Myanmar Troops' Sexual Violence Against Rohingya Shows 'Genocidal Intent': UN



File photo: Rohingya refugees walk towards a refugee camp after crossing the border in Anjuman Para near Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, November 19, 2017

UNITED NATIONS (Reuters) - Sexual violence committed by Myanmar troops against Rohingya women and girls in 2017 indicated the military's genocidal intent to destroy the mainly Muslim ethnic minority, United Nations investigators said in a report released on Thursday.

The panel of independent in-

vestigators, set up by the UN Human Rights Council in 2017, accused Myanmar's government of failing to hold anyone accountable and said it was responsible "under the Genocide Convention for its failure to investigate and punish acts of genocide".

A military crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state that began

in August 2017 drove more than 730,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. Myanmar denies widespread wrongdoing and says the military campaign across hundreds of villages in northern Rakhine was in response to attacks by Rohingya insurgents.

"Hundreds of Rohingya women and girls were raped, with 80 per cent of the rapes corroborated by the Mission being gang rapes. The Tatmadaw (Myanmar military) was responsible for 82 per cent of these gang rapes," the report said.

At a news conference in Myanmar on Friday, military spokesman Major-General Tun Tun Nyi called the accusations "groundless" and based on "talking stories".

"I cannot read out what they mentioned in their report, because it is not suitable to say in front of women in polite society," he said.

Myanmar has laws against sexual assault, he added, and soldiers were warned against it at military schools.

# Europe Brokers Deal to End Ocean Viking Refugees Standoff

MILAN/BRUSSELS (Reuters) - Six EU countries have agreed to take in 356 refugees stranded at sea for two weeks aboard the Ocean Viking rescue vessel, ending the latest standoff over migration to Europe across the Mediterranean.

The refugees aboard the ship, which is run by French charities, will be taken to Malta before being relocated to France, Germany, Romania, Luxembourg, Portugal and Ireland, the EU migration commissioner and Maltese prime minister said on Twitter.

"Welcome that a solution for the persons aboard Ocean Viking has been found and that all will be relocated," EU Commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said, praising Malta for overseeing the arrangement.



Rescued refugees rest aboard the Ocean Viking ship at the Mediterranean Sea

The plight of the Ocean Viking, run by Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) and another French charity, SOS Méditerranée, has exposed Europe's failure to come up with a coherent policy to deal with refugees from Africa through Libya.

On Tuesday, around a hundred ref-

ugees stranded for weeks on board another rescue ship, the Open Arms, disembarked on the Italian island of Lampedusa after an Italian prosecutor ordered the ship's seizure and evacuation. Spain, France, Germany, Luxembourg and Portugal agreed to take them in.

# Japan Slams South Korea's Decision to Scrap Intel-Sharing Deal

TOKYO (Dispatches) - Seoul's decision not to extend its agreement with Japan on exchanging military intelligence sparked an angry reaction in Tokyo, which branded the move as absolutely inadequate, as the row between the two neighbors escalates.

The deal in question — the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) — is set to expire on August 24. It allowed both nations to share classified information, particularly on North Korea, RT reported.

The decision not to prolong it delivers a "completely mistaken response", according to Foreign Minister Taro Kono.

He warned that Seoul is misreading the existing security environment.

Tokyo also summoned the South Korean ambassador to lodge a formal protest over the move, which comes at a time as both states are locked in a bitter trade row.

Japan earlier removed its neighbor from the white list of trading partners, citing South Korea's allegedly lax re-export rules, which reportedly allowed some of its sensitive materials to land up in the hands of Pyongyang.

Seoul denied the accusations and in turn downgraded Japan's trading status. It also alleged that Tokyo's actions were in fact provoked by a South Korean court ruling allowing locals to demand compensation from Japanese companies over forced labor during colonial occupation.

# Climate Activists Demonstrate Outside Brazil Embassies in Paris, London

PARIS/LONDON (Reuters) - Several hundred environmental activists demonstrated on Friday outside the Brazilian embassy in Paris as a clash between the two countries' leaders over the issue of climate change intensified, while similar protests took place in London.

On Thursday, French President Emmanuel Macron and U.N. Secretary General António Guterres expressed concerns about wildfires that are raging in the Amazon, but Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro responded angrily to what he regarded as meddling.

Anti-Bolsonaro protesters chanted outside the Brazil Embassy in Paris carrying placards with messages such as "Bolsonaro Out!" ("Fora Bolsonaro").

Climate activist group Extinction Rebellion said protesters were also gathering at the Brazilian embassy in London calling on Bolsonaro to protect the Amazon rainforest.

The dispute between Bolsonaro and Macron worsened on Friday, when Macron's office said Bolsonaro was lying when Bolsonaro played down concerns about climate change at the G20 summit in Japan in June.

## News in Brief

WASHINGTON (Dispatches) - The majority of Americans expressed disapproval of the performance of U.S. President Donald Trump, according to a new poll. Sixty-two percent of Americans said they disapprove of the job Trump is doing, while just 36 percent approve, according to the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research poll released on Thursday. Trump's poor ratings in the AP-NORC poll were linked to his handling of several key issues: immigration, health care, foreign and guns policy, particularly following recent mass shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio, which left 31 people dead. Trump, who always attacks news media reporting against him and is now facing reelection in 14 months, claimed on Sunday that various media outlets were deliberately giving him negative coverage to affect his approval ratings in the build up to the 2020 presidential election.

DUBLIN/BRUSSELS (Reuters) - The European Union piled pressure on Friday on Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro over fires raging in the Amazon basin, with Ireland and France saying they could block a trade deal with South America. Bolsonaro has rejected what he calls foreign interference in domestic affairs in Brazil, where vast tracts of the Amazon rainforest are ablaze in what is known as the burning season. He said the army could be sent to help fight the fires. Environmentalists have blamed deforestation for an increase in fires and accuse the right-wing president of relaxing protection of a vast carbon trap and climate driver that is crucial to combating global climate change.

OSLO (Reuters) - The explosion that killed five Russian scientists during a rocket engine test earlier this month was followed by a second blast two hours later, the likely source of a spike in radiation, Norway's nuclear test-ban monitor said on Friday. The second explosion, detected only by infrasonic air pressure sensors and not by the seismic monitors that pick up movements in the ground, was likely from an airborne rocket powered by radioactive fuel, the Norsar agency said. Russia's state nuclear agency, Rosatom, on Aug. 10 said the accident involved "isotope power sources" but did not give further details.

WARSAW (Reuters) - Poland's ruling nationalist Law and Justice (PiS) party, hit by two high profile resignations, lost 5 percentage points in an opinion poll published on Friday ahead of October's election. This is the first poll that has shown the gap between PiS and pro-democratic opposition narrowing significantly in the campaign for the vote in which the deeply divided nation will elect members of the upper and lower houses of parliament. The figures come after a deputy justice minister resigned this week following a website's report he sought to discredit judges critical of the government's judicial reforms by planting media rumors about their private lives.

JAKARTA (Reuters) - Indonesian rescuers searched on Friday for 30 people missing from the blazing wreckage of a ferry off the coast of Java island. The KM Santika Nusantara was traveling between the country's second-largest city of Surabaya and the town of Balikpapan on Borneo island with 277 people on board, when it caught fire on Thursday evening, government official Syahrul Nugroho told TV channel TV One. "About 245 people have been evacuated using small boats, while 30 passengers are still missing," he said. Officials have given no details on the cause of the fire. Rescue efforts were complicated by the boat's manifest listing only 111 passengers, officials said.