

JAPAN, S KOREA INK CONTROVERSIAL INTELLIGENCE DEAL

TOKYO: South Korea and Japan reached a controversial deal yesterday to share defense intelligence, Japanese officials said, despite protests from opposition parties and activists in Seoul. Japan controlled the Korean peninsula as a colony from 1910-1945, with the legacy of the harsh rule marring relations with both North and South Korea today. South Korea and Japan were on the verge of signing a deal in June 2012, but Seoul suddenly backtracked, with Japanese

media blaming anti-Japanese sentiment among the South Korean public for the move.

Both sides reopened talks last month following North Korea's continued advances in its nuclear and missile programs, which are seen as a threat in both countries. Officials meeting in Japan's capital "reached a working agreement and conducted a provisional signing," Japan's foreign ministry said in a statement, without providing details. "We will

continue making final arrangements toward the official signing," the statement said.

The issue remains divisive in South Korea and the timing comes as the country has seen massive street demonstrations calling for the resignation of President Park Geun-Hye over a domestic political scandal. The deal has been fiercely opposed by South Korean opposition parties and civic activists, citing Seoul's failure to seek public support and

historical sensitivities. "Japan, which once occupied the Korean peninsula and enslaved Koreans with its military might, is still not admitting a lot of its past atrocities," the main opposition Democratic Party said in a statement yesterday before the agreement was announced.

"This deal is an unpatriotic, humiliating deal that is opposed by our own people and not accepted by history." The party also voiced concern over Japan's

growing military ambitions under Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, describing the deal as "the first step towards allowing and recognizing Japan's military rise." However Tokyo lauded the agreement, saying the move was "important" for checking North Korea's power. "It is important that Japan and South Korea cooperate to deal with North Korea's nuclear and missile issues," top Japanese government spokesman Yoshihide Suga told reporters. — AFP

PRO-RUSSIA CANDIDATE DODON WINS MOLDOVA PRESIDENCY

CHISINAU: Pro-Russian candidate Igor Dodon yesterday emerged as winner of Moldova's presidential runoff, viewed as an East-West choice in the impoverished ex-Soviet country. With 99.9 percent of ballots counted, Socialist Party chief Dodon had 52.3 percent of the votes, according to the electoral commission, with pro-European rival Maia Sandu on 47.7 percent. "We have won, everyone knows it," Dodon told a press conference overnight. The full results are expected to be announced later this week. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Moscow respected the results of the Moldovan vote and congratulated its winner.

The vote marks the first time in 20 years that Moldova-wracked by corruption scandals in recent years-is electing its leader by national vote instead of having parliament select the head of state. Wedged between Ukraine and Romania, the tiny nation of 3.5 million people is caught in a political tug-of-war between Russia and the West. Dodon had come out top in the first round of voting on October 30 with 48 percent ahead of Sandu, a centre-right former education minister who worked for the World Bank, with 38 percent.

They have diametrically opposed visions for Moldova's future. Dodon-who served as economy minister under a communist government between 2006 and 2009 - has called for deeper ties and boosting trade with Moscow. Sandu meanwhile had urged a path

towards Europe, calling for the withdrawal of thousands of Russian troops from the Russian-speaking separatist region of Transnistria, which broke away in the early 1990s after a brief civil war. Moldova signed an historic EU association agreement in 2014, and half of its exports now go to the bloc.

The move was bitterly opposed by Russia, which responded with an embargo targeting Moldova's crucial agriculture sector. "Close ties united us with Moldova before but then the scope of our relations slid," Peskov told journalists Monday. "But Russia has always been and remains committed to maintaining ties with Moldova." Both candidates criticized the vote as badly organized, highlighting the shortage of ballot papers for overseas voters. More than 4,000 Moldovan and international observers were on hand to monitor the vote. Turnout was 53.4 percent, the electoral commission said.

Corruption scandals

The vote comes as a Moscow-friendly general also claimed victory in ex-communist Bulgaria's presidential election Sunday, prompting Prime Minister Boyko Borisov to announce his resignation as his nominee was dealt a crushing defeat. Speaking at a polling station on Sunday, Dodon had described his campaign as "against the oligarchs, against those who have robbed our country and want to destroy it". — AFP



KARACHI: People offer funeral prayers for the victims of bomb blast at a shrine, in Karachi, Pakistan. — AP

ISLAMIC STATE FLOURISHES AND RECRUITS IN PAKISTAN

EXTREMISTS ADOPT NEW NAME 'ISLAMIC STATE IN KHORASAN'

ISLAMABAD: The Islamic State group is increasing its presence in Pakistan, recruiting Uzbek militants, attracting disgruntled Taliban fighters and partnering with one of Pakistan's most violent sectarian groups, according to police officers, Taliban officials and analysts. Its latest atrocity was an attack Saturday on a Sufi shrine in southwestern Pakistan that killed at least 50 people and wounded 100 others.

The group said in a statement that a suicide bomber attacked the shrine with the intent of killing Shiite Muslims and issued a picture of the attacker. When IS circulated a photograph of one of the attackers in last month's deadly assault on a police academy in southwestern Baluchistan province, two Taliban officials said that the attacker was an Uzbek, most likely a member of the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan.

Suicide attacks

More than 60 people, most of them police recruits, were killed in that Oct 26 attack when three assailants battled security forces for hours before being killed or detonating their suicide vests. The Taliban officials, both of whom are familiar with the IMU, spoke on condition of anonymity because their leadership has banned them from talking to the media. Authorities initially said the police academy attack was orchestrated by militants hiding out in Afghanistan and blamed Pakistan's virulently anti-Shiite group, Lashkar-e-Jhangvi.

But IS later claimed responsibility and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi spokesman Ali Bin Sufyan said they partnered with IS to carry out the assault. In Afghanistan and Pakistan, the extremist group has adopted the name the Islamic State in Khorasan - a reference to an ancient geographical region that encompassed a vast swath of territory stretching from Turkmenistan through Iran and Afghanistan. IS in Khorasan has

set up its base in Afghanistan's eastern Nangarhar province, and while it has pledged allegiance to the Islamic State group in Syria and Iraq, it remains unclear whether there are direct operational or financial links between the two.

According to police, Afghan officials and IS media outlets, the majority of Islamic State fighters in Afghanistan are Pakistani nationals, mostly from the tribal regions. Disgruntled Taliban fighters from Pakistan and Afghanistan have joined along with foreign fighters, mainly from central Asia. The group's leader until his death in July in a drone strike was Hafiz Saeed Khan, a former Pakistani Taliban commander. IS has never acknowledged Khan's death, which was confirmed by both the Afghan and US militaries.

Counterterrorism officials in Pakistan say that IS has begun reaching out to local militants through its rich social media presence. "They are inspiring the like-minded youth in Pakistan through their strong social media propaganda," said Junaid Sheikh, a senior counterterrorism commander in the southern city of Karachi. "There is evidence that militants of other organizations like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi, Al-Qaeda in the Subcontinent and other Sunni extremist organizations switched their ideology toward Daesh and acted like their activists," he said, using an Arabic acronym for IS.

Significant threat

The recruitment of Uzbek militants is particularly worrisome and a "significant threat to our national security," he added. He said Uzbek fighters have carried out numerous major attacks in Pakistan, including a 2011 attack on a naval base and a 2014 attack on the Karachi Airport. Local militant groups provided the intelligence to carry out the attacks, he said. A resident of Afghanistan's Nangarhar province who did not want to be identified for fear of retribu-

tion said he spoke with two Iranian Islamic State members late last year.

Unlike the Pakistani and Afghan insurgents, the resident, who fled to Pakistan after his home was overrun by IS fighters, said the foreign fighters were friendly and engaged with local residents. One Iranian fighter said he was recruited for his computer skills, the resident said. Previously, Uzbek insurgents normally allied with the Pakistani and Afghan branches of the Taliban, having sworn allegiance to Taliban founder Mullah Mohammed Omar. However, many Uzbek fighters split from the Taliban and declared allegiance to IS last year after it was revealed that Taliban officials had hidden the fact that Mullah Omar had died two years earlier.

A senior police official in Pakistan's eastern Punjab province, where several militant groups are headquartered, said the IS group is firmly entrenched in Pakistan and its roots are growing stronger as it aligns with Pakistan's Sunni Muslim extremist groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi. The police official spoke on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to the media. The official also said that Lashkar-e-Jhangvi had largely relocated from Punjab to Baluchistan province in the face of a major military campaign.

"Pakistani Taliban factions that have sparred with the parent Pakistani Taliban have tended to express public support for ISIS," said Michael Kugelman, senior associate for South Asia at the US based Wilson Center. "I could certainly envision collusions materializing between disaffected Pakistani Taliban fighters now aligned with ISIS, and Uzbek militants with preexisting ties to the Pakistani Taliban. Either way, at the end of the day, all of these terrorists are cut from the same cloth ideologically and so we should never rule out operational partnerships." — AP

PAKISTAN ARRESTS 10 FOR FLOGGING TRANSGENDER

ISLAMABAD: Pakistani police arrested 10 alleged members of a criminal gang yesterday accused of flogging a transgender woman and posting a video of the abuse on social media, officials said. The arrests were made in the eastern city of Sialkot after a video of the flogging was shared thousands of times on social media, said police official Iqbal Sindhu.

The video shows the gang leader pinning the woman face down on a bed with his foot and beating her with what appears to be a leather belt. At one point, while another gang member continues the flogging, the leader places his foot on the victim's neck and twists her arms. Police chief Abid Khan said five of those arrested have been charged with torture and extortion, while the other five are under investigation.

The alleged gang leader, who identified himself as Jajja, told Dunya News that he

was friends with the victim. "I was punishing him because he didn't refrain from his bad habits, which I pointed out to him several times," he said in an interview conducted while he was in police custody. Transgender people in Pakistan are social outcasts who are often forced into begging, dancing and prostitution to earn money. Fearing attacks, most either change their names or use only one name.

TransAction, a local transgender rights group, posted a video interview with another transgender woman who identified herself as Jolie and said she was present when the attack took place. She said the gang members barged into a house where several transgender women were living, beating and torturing one of them for several hours and shaving the heads of others. Sindhu, the police official, confirmed Jolie was present at the scene. — AP



SIALKOT: People allegedly involved in the flogging of a transgender person arrive at a court in Sialkot, Pakistan yesterday. — AP

PAKISTAN ACCUSES INDIA OF KILLING SEVEN TROOPS

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistani military accused India yesterday of killing seven soldiers in cross-border fire in disputed Kashmir, in what appeared to be an unusually high toll after months of surging tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbors. "Seven (Pakistani) soldiers embraced shahadat (martyrdom) at the Line of Control (LoC) in Bimber sector in a crossfire LOC violation by Indian troops late last night," the military said in a statement. "Pakistani troops while responding to Indian unprovoked firing targeted Indian posts effectively." There was no immediate response to the allegation from Indian officials.

Tensions across the long-disputed de facto Himalayan border reached dangerous levels in September, when India blamed Pakistani militants for a raid on an army base that killed 19 soldiers. India said it had responded by carrying out "surgical strikes" across the heavily militarized border, sparking a furious reaction from Islamabad, which denied the strikes took place. There have since been repeated outbreaks of cross-border firing, with both sides reporting deaths and injuries including of civilians, though the deaths of seven

soldiers in what appeared to be one such incident is relatively high.

The border skirmishes come against the backdrop of months of protests against Indian rule of Kashmir, sparked by the killing of a popular rebel leader in July. Nearly 90 people, most of them young protesters, have been killed in clashes with security forces in Indian-administered Kashmir since then. Pakistani Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif accused India of carrying out the latest cross-border skirmishes in an effort to distract the world's attention from the violent protests. "We are fully capable of defending our soil against any aggression," he added in a statement.

Nearly 90 people, most of them young protesters, have been killed in clashes with security forces in Indian-administered Kashmir since the killing of a popular young rebel leader in July. Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since the end of British colonial rule in 1947. Both claim the Himalayan territory in full and have fought two wars over the mountainous region. The two sides have also expelled diplomats in a tit-for-tat row that has even spilled into the glamorous world of Bollywood. — AFP



JHELUM: Pakistani army chief Raheel Sharif (4th left) and military officials offer funeral prayers for soldiers who were killed in cross-border firing at the Line of Control (LoC) in Bimber sector, in Jhelum some 120 kms south of Islamabad. — AFP

Announcement: Chaillot Prize 2016

The European Union Delegation to Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar announces the launch of the Eighth Edition of the Chaillot Prize for the Promotion of Human Rights in the GCC Region. The Prize honours local civil society organisations, public or private institutions, as well as individuals for their efforts in promoting general awareness of human rights and the rights of vulnerable groups in the GCC region.

In 2016, the Chaillot Prize will be awarded to applicants from the Kingdom of Bahrain, State of Qatar, Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates for actions, campaigns or projects launched (or in progress) after the 1st of January 2016.

The deadline for submitting applications for this year's edition is 28 November 2016. The Prize Winner will be determined by the European Union Delegation in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi in close cooperation with the Embassies of European Union Member States accredited to the GCC countries. An awarding ceremony will be organised in December 2016 to mark the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations General Assembly, on the 10th of December 1948, at the Palais de Chaillot, in Paris.

Interested candidates are invited to refer to the Award Rules and Procedures and the Application Form published on

<https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/saudi-arabia/>
For questions and clarifications, applicants may call on +966 11 482 057 or write to DELEGATION-SAUDI-ARABIA-HUMAN-RIGHTS@eeas.europa.eu