

## International

# Facing tumult at home, Trump sets out on lengthy Asian trip

## 12-day, 5-country trip, the longest Far East itinerary

HONOLULU: On his most grueling and consequential trip abroad, President Donald Trump stands ready to exhort Asian allies and rivals on the need to counter the dangers posed by North Korea's nuclear threat. The 12-day, five-country trip, the longest Far East itinerary for a president in a generation, comes at a precarious moment for Trump. Just days ago, his former campaign chairman was indicted and another adviser pleaded guilty as part of an investigation into possible collusion between his 2016 campaign and Russian officials.

With Trump set to arrive today in Japan, the trip presents a crucial international test for a president looking to reassure Asian allies worried that his inward-looking "America First" agenda could cede power in the region to China. They also are rattled by his bellicose rhetoric about North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The North's growing missile arsenal threatens the capitals Trump will visit. "The trip comes, I would argue, at a very inopportune time for the president."

He is under growing domestic vulnerabilities that we all know about, hour to hour," said Jonathan Pollack, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution in Washington. "The conjunction of those issues leads to the palpable sense of unease about the potential crisis in Korea." Trump's spontaneous, and at times reckless, style flies in the face of the generations-old traditions and protocol that govern diplomatic exchanges in Asia.

The grand receptions expected for him in Tokyo, Seoul, Beijing and beyond are sure to be lavish attempts to impress the president, who raved about the extravagances shown him on earlier visits to Saudi Arabia and France. The trip will also put Trump in face-to-face meetings with authoritarian leaders for whom he has expressed admiration. They include China's Xi Jinping,

whom Trump has likened to "a king," and the Philippines' Rodrigo Duterte, who has sanctioned the extrajudicial killings of drug dealers.

Trump may also have the chance for a second private audience with Russian President Vladimir Putin, on the sidelines of a summit in Vietnam. The White House is signaling that Trump will push American economic interests in the region, but the North Korean threat is expected to dominate the trip. One of Trump's two major speeches will come before the National Assembly in Seoul. Fiery threats against the North could resonate differently than they do from the distance of Washington.

Trump will forgo a trip to the Demilitarized Zone, the stark border between North and South Korea. All US presidents except one since Ronald Reagan have visited

### Face-to-face meetings with authoritarian leaders in Asia



the DMZ in a sign of solidarity with Seoul. The White House contends that Trump's commitment to South Korea is already crystal clear, as evidenced by his war of words with Kim and his threats to deliver "fire and fury" to North Korea if it does not stop threatening American allies. The escalation of rhetoric, a departure from the conduct of past presidents, has undermined confidence in the US as a stabilizing presence in Asia.

"There's a danger if there is a lot of muscle flexing," said Mike Chinoy, a senior fellow at the US-China Institute at the University of Southern California. "Trump has been going right up to the edge and I wouldn't rule out some sort of forceful North Korean reaction to Trump's presence in the region," he said. The White House said Trump would be undeterred. "The president will use whatever language he wants to use, obviously. That's been of great reassurance to our allies, partners and others in the region who are literally under



SEOUL: A South Korean supporter holds a sign reading 'We believe in Trump,' during a pro-US rally in Seoul yesterday, ahead of US President Donald Trump's visit to South Korea. Trump will arrive in Seoul on November 7, on a leg of his first trip to Asia. —AFP

the gun of this regime," White House national security adviser HR McMaster said Thursday.

"I don't think the president really modulates his language, have you noticed?" At each stop, Trump will urge his hosts to squeeze North Korea by stopping trading with the North and sending home North Korean citizens working abroad. That includes China, which competes with the US for influence in the region and provides much of North Korea's economic lifeblood. The White House is banking on the close relationships Trump has established with some Asian leaders to help make his demands more palatable.

Officials acknowledge that Trump does not yet have a

feel for Moon Jae-in, South Korea's newly elected liberal president. But Trump has demonstrated cordial relations with Xi and struck up a friendship with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, with whom he planned to golf on Sunday. While Xi and Abe have recently tightened their control on power, Trump arrives weakened by low poll numbers, a stalled domestic agenda and the swirling Russia probe. Many in the Asian capitals will view Trump warily. His early withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership demolished the Obama administration's effort to boost trade with some of the world's fastest-growing economies and sustain America's post-World War II strategic commitment to Asia. —AP

## Kim portraits and death threats: Life at N Korea school

TOKYO: Portraits of North Korea's late leaders hang proudly in the classrooms of the Korean High School in Tokyo, where the recent surge in tensions over Pyongyang's nuclear weapons program have seen faculty and staff subjected to death threats. It is one of 60 so-called "pro-Pyongyang" schools in Japan catering to an ethnic Korean community that-over decades-developed and maintained a link to North Korea despite never living there.

There are around 500,000 ethnic Koreans in Japan-mostly descendants of civilians taken from their homes during Japan's brutal colonization of the Korean peninsula from 1910 until Tokyo's defeat in World War II in 1945. The division of the peninsula into North and South and the devastating 1950-53 Korean War that followed also divided the community, and schools like Korean High emerged with backing from pro-North organizations and funding from Pyongyang. They continue to teach Korean language and history under the guidance of the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, which acts as the North's de-facto embassy in Japan in the absence of formal diplomatic relations. Ethnic Koreans have long suffered discrimination in areas like employment and social welfare, and principal Shin Gil-Ung said anger over North Korea's nuclear program-expected to dominate US President Donald Trump's visit to Japan starting Sunday-has only made things worse.

### Bomb scares

"Every time news (about North Korea) breaks, we get anonymous calls threatening to bomb the school or kill students at a nearby station," Shin said. "Female students have had to stop wearing the ethnic school uniform on their commute," he adds sadly. Japan has been at the sharp end of recent provocations from Pyongyang, which fired two missiles over its northern islands in quick succession, prompting terrified residents to rush for shelters. And with the belligerent regime in Pyongyang threatening to "sink" Japan into



TOKYO: Hwang Song-Wi, a Tokyo Korean high school student commutes in a subway train to go home after the school in Tokyo. —AFP

the sea, the sense of tension and anxiety has left many ethnic Koreans feeling conflicted-especially the younger generation for whom modern Japan is the only home they have known.

One Korea High student, 17-year-old Hwang Song-Wi, says he watches the news with "mixed feelings", and that he both "trusts and doubts" reports from both sides in the crisis. Ri Chun-Hui, a Tokyo-based lawyer, said the anger directed at his community as a result of Pyongyang's provocations are nothing new-noting a similar backlash that followed the abduction of a number of ordinary Japanese citizens by North Korean agents in the late 1970s and early 80s.

"Koreans were once thought of as victims of Japan's colonization but we are now treated as if we were all perpetrators of the abductions," said Ri. "The sentiment that you can attack anything linked to North Korea now prevails in Japan," he added. The kidnapped citizens were taken to the North in order to train spies in Japanese language and culture. Then-leader Kim Jong-Il later allowed five of them and their families to return to Japan, but many believe Kim did not come clean

about other abductees, including Megumi Yokota who vanished when she was 13. Trump, who mentioned Yokota in his recent UN General Assembly speech, is scheduled to meet abductee families during his trip.

### 'One ethnic people'

For Korean parents in Japan who want their children to learn the Korean language and history, a "pro-Pyongyang" school is virtually the only option-no matter their own political persuasion. "Because they are not Japanese, I want my children to go to a Korean school ... and learn the language and the ethnic spirit. Those are the most important things," said Hwang's mother, Oh Jong-E, adding that shared ancestry trumped the division of the Korean peninsula. "I basically believe there is no North or South. We are one ethnic people," said Oh, herself a former pupil of the school. According to one official from the General Association of Korean Residents in Japan, Pyongyang has channeled 48 billion yen (\$423 million) to schools in Japan since 1957, although it was unclear what, if any, funds the cash-strapped North provides today. —AFP

## 'Fake News, Crooked Hillary, Rocket Man': Trump's list of foes

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump makes no bones about calling out his perceived foes, most frequently using Twitter. From the moment he launched his campaign for the White House, the New York real estate tycoon has embraced a no-holds-barred style which includes flinging insults at those he sees as his opponents. Trump's thin-skinned displeasure has focused on targets far and wide, from the "fake news" media to fellow politicians-both Republican and Democrat-to Hollywood celebrities and star athletes. Here is a non-exhaustive list of subjects of Trump's ire:

### 'Fake News' media

Trump's most frequent target of complaint is the mainstream media-particularly CNN and The New York Times-which he claims treat him unfairly. "Wow, so many Fake News stories today. No matter what I do or say, they will not write or speak truth. The Fake News Media is out of control!" he tweeted in October. In February, Trump went so far as to call the press the "enemy of the American people." "The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @CNN, @NBCNews and many more) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American people. SICK!" he said in a tweet. Trump removed that tweet but reposted it soon afterward adding another two broadcasting outlets — @ABC and @CBS-which he had apparently initially overlooked. Trump has also called out members of the media individually, describing MSNBC's Mika Brzezinski as "dumb as a rock" and dubbing her co-host Joe Scarborough "Psycho Joe."

### 'Crooked Hillary'

Trump's attacks on Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton were relentless during the 2016 campaign, during which he would refer to her as "Crooked Hillary." But even now that he is ensconced Trump has not stopped firing jabs at Clinton. "Crooked Hillary Clinton now blames everybody but herself, refuses to say she was a terrible candidate," Trump tweeted in May. He mocked her again in October saying: "I was recently asked if Crooked Hillary Clinton is going to run in 2020? My answer was, 'I hope so!'"

### 'Witch hunt'

The FBI-and now special counsel-investigation into whether members of Trump's campaign colluded with Russia to get him elected has been a frequent target of the president's fury. He has repeatedly derided it as a "witch hunt," a "hoax" and a "charade." "The story that there was col-

lusion between the Russians & Trump campaign was fabricated by (the Democrats) as an excuse for losing the election," he tweeted in May. "You are witnessing the single greatest WITCH HUNT in American political history-led by some very bad and conflicted people," Trump tweeted in June.

### 'Toxic and WEAK'

Two Republican senators-Bob Corker of Tennessee and Jeff Flake of Arizona-have come out strongly against Trump and have been targets of his Twitter tirades. Trump has referred to Corker, who is not particularly tall, as "liddle" Bob Corker, and dismissed him as a "lightweight" and claimed he "couldn't get elected dog catcher in Tennessee." "People like liddle Bob Corker have set the US way back," he said last month. As for Flake, Trump said he's "toxic" and "WEAK on borders, crime and a non-factor in Senate." —AFP

### News in brief

#### Typhoon Damrey kills 19

HANOI: Typhoon Damrey killed at least 19 people in central and southern Vietnam yesterday, the government said, after the storm swept into the country just days ahead of the APEC summit of Asia-Pacific leaders. Damrey reached land at 4 am local time with winds gusting at up to 90 kmph that tore off more than 1,000 roofs, knocked down hundreds of electricity poles and uprooted trees. At least 12 people were missing and over 370 houses had collapsed, the Communist state's search and rescue committee said. Over 33,000 people had been evacuated. The government earlier said six ships had capsized with 61 people on board in the South China Sea and that 25 people had been rescued, but gave no details as to the possible fate of the others.

#### 31 sexual abuse cases

UNITED NATIONS: Thirty-one new cases alleging sexual abuse or exploitation by United Nations personnel, nearly half of which involve the UN refugee agency, were filed between July and September for events stretching back at least three years, the UN said on Friday. Not all of the allegations have been verified and some are in preliminary assessment phase, said UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric in a press briefing. During the three month period, 14 investigations have been launched and one case has been proven, he said. Of the 31 cases, 12 involve military personnel from peacekeeping operations including those in the Central African Republic and Mali. The majority of the civilian staff cases, 15, involve the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

#### Insulting anthem 'criminal'

BEIJING: China's rubber-stamp legislature yesterday made disrespecting the national anthem a criminal offense punishable by up to three years in prison amid rising nationalist appeals from the ruling Communist Party under the leadership of President Xi Jinping. The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress passed an amendment to the country's criminal law outlining punishments for people found "seriously" disrespecting the national anthem in public. The move follows Xi's appointment to a second five-year term as party leader, for which he has touted a vision of achieving a "Chinese Dream" of a powerful, prosperous nation.

#### US strikes IS in Somalia

WASHINGTON: The US conducted a pair of drone strikes against Islamic State fighters in Somalia on Friday, the first time America has hit the jihadists in the Horn of Africa nation, officials said. The strikes occurred in northeastern Somalia and killed "several terrorists," the US military's Africa Command said in a statement. According to Voice of America, which cited the chairman of the town of Qandala in the semi-autonomous region of Puntland, six missiles hit an IS base in Buqa village, 60 kilometers away. "Local residents and pastoralists were shocked and fled from the area," Jama Mohamed Qurshe told VOA. AFRICOM spokesman Lieutenant Commander Anthony Falvo said no civilians were in the vicinity of the strikes. "They struck their intended targets," he told AFP, noting these were the first anti-IS air strikes in Somalia.