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Move follows Pyongyang's launch of spy satellite N. Korea ends military accord with South

JESSE JOHNSON
STAFF WRITER

North Korea announced Thursday that it was "immediately" leaving a 2018 inter-Korean agreement that was intended to reduce tensions, state-run media said, after Seoul partially suspended the deal a day earlier in protest of Pyongyang's launch of a military spy satellite.

"We will withdraw the military steps, taken to prevent military tension and conflict in all spheres including ground, sea and air, and deploy more powerful armed forces and new-type military hardware in the region along the Military Demarcation Line," the North's Defense Ministry said, according to a statement carried by the official Korean Central News Agency.

Nuclear-armed Pyongyang said it would not be restrained by the agreement any longer, the report said, adding that the country would "immediately restore all military measures that have been halted."

Hours after the announcement, South Korean Defense Minister Shin Won-sik launched Seoul's partial suspension of the deal "a proportional response" and "minimal defensive measure" in the wake of the spy satellite launch, the Yonhap news agency reported, adding that South Korea, Japan and the U.S. could stage trilateral military drills over the weekend.

North Korea said Wednesday that it had successfully put its first military spy satellite into orbit, after a rocket carrying the payload passed over the Japanese archipelago late Tuesday, triggering a strong condemnation from Tokyo.

While the operational status of the satellite remains a question mark, officials from the North's space agency told leader Kim Jong Un during a visit to the agency's headquarters on Wednesday that it would "formally start its reconnaissance mission from December 1 after finishing 7 to 10 days' fine-tuning process."

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THE INDEPENDENT VOICE IN ASIA

KANSAI FETES THE CHAMPS



Hanshin Tigers outfielder Koji Chikamoto waves to a massive crowd during a victory parade for the Japan Series champions on Thursday in Kobe. The Tigers also held a parade later in the day in Osaka. Parades for the Orix Buffaloes, the Pacific League champions, were also held in each of the two cities. POOL/VIA KYODO

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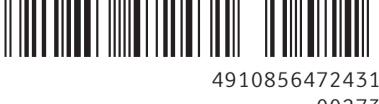


Widening the net

Aging soldiers prompt U.S. allies to expand recruitment drive | INSIGHTS, PAGE 4

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Personal shopping services get boost

ELIZABETH BEATTIE
STAFF WRITER

"So cheap" is the common refrain on social media as travelers pick through luxury goods or peruse second-hand shops in Japan, showing off their latest finds on TikTok and Instagram. For foreign visitors, "cheap" Japan is a thrill.

Since the nation's borders reopened more than a year ago, a steady wave of tourists has ventured into Japan, with the figure in October eclipsing pre-pandemic numbers. And on lifestyle blogs and websites, the country is regularly namechecked as a top shopping destination.

As a long-time base in Asia for luxury brands and a nation with its own globally renowned fashion companies, Japan is a top expansion choice for international retailers. Meanwhile, the country's creative and cultural allure, combined with its reputation for great service, have made the nation stand out as a shopping destination.

Adding to its attractiveness is the weak-

ness of the yen — as wide interest rate gaps between Japan and other countries have driven down the currency's value, Japan has become a cheaper destination for those earning in stronger currencies.

But shoppers who cannot physically be in Japan are still dipping their toes into the retail market, outsourcing their hunt for bargains to remote shopping services.

Personal Shopper Japan, for example, said the yen's dip has driven repeat buyers, with such customers purchasing 120% more and showing little concern for the service's fee, in stark contrast to earlier trends.

Customers seeking their services hail from Hong Kong, Singapore, the U.S., Britain, the United Arab Emirates and Australia, the company said, noting that there is demand for fashion, luxury brands and concert tickets.

Companies in overseas markets are also looking for creative ways to capitalize on this trend.

HKT, a Hong Kong-based e-commerce platform, recently launched the international shopping service Everuts in its home

market and has found Japan to be one of the most sought-after countries on the platform, with 15,000 requests from shoppers in Hong Kong each month — a number that has been growing, a spokesperson said. This made it the country with the highest number of requests.

The company currently has around 500 personal shoppers based in Japan.

"Japan has always been a hotspot for not only travelers from Hong Kong, but also shoppers in Hong Kong," the spokesperson said, noting that the country stands out as "a top shopping location," and that it will "always be a top requested country" for the platform.

The top five product categories are fashion, snacks, cosmetics, hobbies and houseware, with customers "especially eager to purchase local *omiyage* (souvenir) snacks, as well as fashion brands based in Harajuku."

"There is also a large anime fanbase in Hong Kong, making Japan a hotspot for hobby purchases such as manga or anime

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No Gaza hostage release before Friday: Israel

GAZA STRIP/JERUSALEM

REUTERS, AFP-JIJI

The release of hostages under a temporary truce between Israel and Palestinian Hamas militants will not happen before Friday, Israel's national security adviser and the U.S. said, dashing hopes of relatives that some would be freed on Thursday.

Israel and Hamas agreed early on Wednesday to a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip for at least four days, to let in humanitarian aid and free at least 50 hostages held by militants in the enclave in exchange for at least 150 Palestinians jailed in Israel.

The starting time of the truce and release of hostages captured by Hamas during its Oct. 7 attack on Israel is yet to be officially announced. An Egyptian security source said mediators had sought a start time of 10 a.m. on Thursday.

Speaking on Thursday morning, Qatar's foreign ministry spokesperson Majid bin Mohammed Al Ansari said an announcement on the beginning of the truce could come in the next few hours. Qatar has been mediating in the negotiations on the truce.



"The negotiations on the release of our hostages are advancing and continuing constantly," Israeli National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi said in a statement released by the prime minister's office.

"The start of the release will take place according to the original agreement between the sides, and not before Friday," it said.

White House spokesperson Adrienne Watson said final logistical details for the release were being worked out. "That is on track and we are hopeful that implementation will begin

on Friday morning," Watson said.

A Palestinian official said on Thursday that a delay in implementation of a truce in the Gaza Strip between Israeli forces and Hamas was due to "last minute" details over which hostages would be released and how.

There was no let-up in the fighting early on Thursday, reports said.

Palestinian media said Israeli aircraft and artillery struck Gaza's southern city of Khan Younis in at least two waves and 15 people were killed. Attacks were also reported in several other parts of Gaza, including the Jabalia and Nuseirat camps.

Israel said its forces carried out aerial strikes on over 300 Hamas targets over the past day. It was not possible to independently verify the reports.

In Israel, sirens warning of incoming rocket fire from Gaza blared in communities near the border with the enclave, the military said. There were no reports of damage or injuries.

Israel's public broadcaster Kan, citing an unidentified Israeli official, reported there was a 24-hour delay in the truce because the agreement was not signed by Hamas and mediator

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SPOTLIGHT: A HEAD FOR PROVOCATION

Takeshi Kitano causes a commotion in 'Kubi' | PAGE 10

University eyes shake-up amid drug scandal

JIJI

The board of Nihon University on Wednesday recommended that President Takeo Sakai and Vice President Yasuhiro Sawada step down over a drug scandal involving members of the Japanese university's American football team, people familiar with the matter said.

The board gave Sakai and Sawada until Monday to respond to the nonbinding recommendation. Mariko Hayashi, chair of the university's Board of Trustees, agreed to a 50% pay cut.

In the scandal, there was a 12-day gap between when Sawada found plant fragments and other suspicious items at the team dormitory and when the university contacted police.

A report issued last month by an independent investigation committee said the gap is the biggest cause of the loss of public trust in the university, blaming Sawada, Sakai and Hayashi for its poor governance.

The university set up a panel last week to discuss governance improvement measures and plans to report the outcome to the education ministry as early as this month.

In August, a member of the football club was arrested for alleged possession of cannabis and an illegal stimulant. Another member was arrested last month on suspicion of violating the special marijuana control law. The two students were residents of the dormitory for the football team in Tokyo. The team is a 21-time winner of the Koshien Bowl, the national college football championship game.

At a news conference held in August, after the arrest of the first suspect, the university was criticized for not swiftly reporting its discovery of plant samples and other suspicious items in the member's dormitory to police.

According to a record of conversations between Hayashi and Sawada, which was provided to Jiji Press by Sawada's attorney, Hayashi on Sept. 4 demanded Sawada's resignation. She cited concerns that Sawada, who kept these items for the 12 days, could be charged with violating the cannabis control law.

Sawada has insisted that he had informed Hayashi through the university's president about the handling of the drug issue, denying that he acted arbitrarily.

JRA

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