

# Regional News

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## Korea military talks collapse

Working-level military talks between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK) at the truce village of Panmunjom ended in an impasse on Wednesday.

An official from the ROK's Defense Ministry told Yonhap News Agency on condition of anonymity that the talks stalled and both sides were unable to reach an agreement on a date for future dialogue.

Discussions between colonels from both sides lasted for two days, and their meeting was the first dialogue since the exchange of fire at the ROK's Yeonpyeong Island in November.

Analysts said the deadlock was possibly due to the ROK's demand that Pyongyang apologize for the attack on the island and the sinking of the ROK warship Cheonan last March, which the DPRK denies having caused.

"Our stance has not changed. A higher-level military meeting will be possible only if the DPRK takes responsible measures for the attacks on Yeonpyeong Island and the Cheonan warship and promises not to carry out any more provocations," an ROK Defense Ministry spokesman told Yonhap after the military meeting.

Xinhua News Agency reported that the DPRK condemned Seoul's bid to take Pyongyang's uranium enrichment program to the United Nations Security Council (UNSC).

Rodong Sinmun, the newspaper of the DPRK's ruling Workers' Party, published a commentary warning that the ROK's attempt would esca-



Democratic Republic of Korea Colonel Ri Son-kwon (center-right) crosses the border line to attend talks at the truce village of Panmunjom. The two countries held talks designed to reduce heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

AFP

late the confrontation between the two sides.

The article stressed that the DPRK's uranium enrichment program is for peaceful purposes and Seoul will not benefit from its attempt to refer the issue to the UNSC "along with outside forces". It also warned that such moves will hamper the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

"The ROK's actions in recent years have shown that policy of the current Lee Myung-bak government toward the DPRK shares no common ground with the 'Sunshine Policy' (pursued by the previous ROK administration of president Roh Moo-hyun)," said Zhang Liangui, an expert on Korean

affairs at the Central Party School in Beijing.

"Seoul has set the condition that the DPRK must give up its nuclear program if it expects more economic assistance and cooperation," Zhang said.

Fortunately, some signs of an easing in cross-border tension continue to exist with the ROK agreeing in principle to hold talks with the DPRK about reunions of separated families and other humanitarian issues.

"We conveyed our agreement to hold the Red Cross talks, as it is important for the DPRK and the ROK to discuss and resolve such issues of

humanitarian concerns," ROK Unification Ministry spokeswoman Lee Jong-joo told a media briefing.

The last round of temporary reunions for families separated by war 60 years ago took place last November, before the attack on Yeonpyeong.

In a survey by Professor Eun Ki-soo of Seoul National University, the proportion of ROK respondents with a positive view of reunification with the DPRK dropped from 58 percent in 1995 to only 12.3 percent in 2008, according to a report in the Straits Times newspaper.

CHINA DAILY — AGENCIES

## India mired in corruption scandals

By COOMI KAPOOR

Ailed Raja jailed at last, screamed the front-page headline spread across all of eight columns of an English daily in India. The reference was to former telecom minister A. Raja, who was at the centre of a huge corruption scandal.

**Comment**  
**Greed, lethargy**  
**fuel India's**  
**corrupt,**  
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to hand-picked parties three years ago, touching off a huge public outcry against a humongous scam.

It was the unrelenting campaign against corruption of the Manmohan Singh government which culminated in the arrest of the 47-year-old Dravida Munnetra Kazhgam (DMK) politician last week.

Groomed by DMK patriarch and Tamil Nadu (a southern state in

India) Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi as the party's subaltern face, Raja, a forceful Tamil orator, had risen fast in the party hierarchy.

From the word go, he set out to grant licenses for the launch of new cellular phone services to only those who would do "business" with him.

Applications for allotment of 2-G spectrum were arbitrarily rejected, eligibility criterion willfully changed, time deadlines for submission of applications surreptitiously altered to issue 157 licenses out of the 500-odd applicants.

Some of the successful applicants did not meet basic conditions.

Others immediately encashed the licenses at huge profits while still others failed to launch operations even after getting the licenses.

In sum, it was a huge scam which the Comptroller and Auditor-General (CAG) of India reckoned could cost the taxpayers anything between US\$12 billion to \$35 billion.

Prime Minister Manmohan Singh

had stoutly defended Raja, arguing that he had done no wrong.

Even when tell-tale evidence of wrong-doing surfaced, the government stuck to its 'no-wrong-was-done' position.

However, the report of the CAG and the intervention of the Supreme Court forced India's central government to relent.

Last November, Raja was made to resign and the apex court undertook to monitor the investigations in the case.

The government was on the back foot not only because of Raja's 2-G scam but due to a series of such scandals.

Judicial activism had further exposed its seamier side.

It had tied itself in knots in the appointment of a controversial official as the Central Vigilance Commissioner. The chief ombudsman of the government was expected to be above reproach.

But retired bureaucrat, P. V. Thom-

as, was himself listed as an accused in an old corruption case.

This was by no means the only embarrassment for the Government.

The investigations in the Commonwealth Games corruption scandal, too, were moving at a snail's pace.

Three aides of Suresh Kalmadi, the head of the Games Organizing Committee, were arrested but had to be released for want of a charge-sheet.

Kalmadi, a Congress MP, was interrogated a couple of times but, as yet, there was no move to arrest him.

Ordinary people believed that he was the kingpin in the scam.

In the season of scams, more muck piled up for the government when it was revealed that the government-controlled broadcaster, Doordarshan, had contracted with a British company to telecast the Games at an exorbitantly inflated price.

THE STAR, ASIA NEWS NETWORK