

# **North Korea's Kim says must deliver 'serious blow' to those imposing sanctions - KCNA**

SEOUL (Reuters) – North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country needs to deliver a “serious blow” to those imposing sanctions by ensuring its economy is more self-reliant, state media Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said on Thursday.

It was the first time Kim stated North Korea's position on the second U.S.-North Korea summit in Hanoi that collapsed in February, and signalled a continued focus on economic development, a strategic direction officially declared a priority last April.

On North Korea's position on the summit, Kim said “We must deal a serious blow to the hostile forces who are mistakenly determined to bring us down with sanctions by advancing the socialist construction to a high level of self-reliance that fits our circumstances and state, based on our own power, technology and resources,” according to KCNA.

U.S.-North Korean engagement has appeared to be in limbo since the Feb. 27-28 summit in Hanoi, which collapsed over differences about how far North Korea was willing to limit its nuclear programme and the degree of U.S. willingness to ease economic sanctions.

Kim has continued to highlight his economic push in recent weeks despite the lack of sanctions relief.

State media have published images and reports of Kim's visits to at least four economic projects in five days over the past week, including a remodelled department store, tourist resorts, and an economic hub near the border with China.

Despite no direct mention of the United States, by linking sanctions with “hostile forces” that impose them Kim is showing a slightly stronger stance toward Washington than was recently in state media, analysts said.

The comments were also reported hours ahead of a summit between U.S. President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in in Washington on Thursday to discuss North Korea and other alliance issues.

“It did not directly mention the U.S., but linked sanctions with hostile forces,” said Shin Beom-chul, a senior fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul. “He’s saying North Korea would take an independent course unless the U.S. offered to lift sanctions. You maintain sanctions, you’re a hostile force; if you ease sanctions, you’re not.”

North Korea is expected to convene a session of its rubber-stamp legislature, the Supreme People’s Assembly, on Thursday.

Reporting by Joyce Lee; Editing by Leslie Adler & Kim Coghill

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