

'Madman' Kim Jong Un to be 'tested like never before', says Trump as he piles on new sanctions against

22/09/2017 09:50 by admin

Washington: US President Donald Trump on Friday renewed his rhetorical offensive against North Korean dictator Kim Jong Un, calling the reclusive leader "obviously a madman". Terming North Korea's nuclear weapons and missile development a grave threat to peace and security, he said, "it is unacceptable that others financially support this criminal, rogue regime."

US President Donald Trump

"Kim Jong Un of North Korea, who is obviously a madman who doesn't mind starving or killing his people, will be tested like never before!" the President tweeted as he added economic sanctions to his fiery military threats against Pyongyang.

Trump's move to punish foreign companies that deal with the North was the latest salvo in a US-led campaign to isolate and impoverish Kim's government until his country halts its missile and nuclear tests. Trump announced the measures on Thursday as he met leaders from South Korea and Japan, the nations most immediately imperilled by North Korea's threats of a military strike.

Trump said as he joined Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and South Korean President Moon Jae-in for lunch. "Tolerance for this disgraceful practice must end now."

Hours later, Kim branded Trump as "deranged" and warned that he will "pay dearly" for his threat to "totally destroy" the North if it attacks. The rare statement from the North Korean leader responded to Trump's combative speech days earlier where he not only issued the warning of potential obliteration for the isolated nation, but also mocked the North's young autocrat as a "Rocket Man" on a "suicide mission."

Returning insult with insult, Kim said Trump was "unfit to hold the prerogative of supreme command of a country." He described the president as "a rogue and a gangster fond of playing with fire." He characterized Trump's speech to the world body on Tuesday as "mentally deranged behaviour."

Trump's executive order expanded the Treasury Department's ability to target anyone conducting significant trade in goods, services or technology with North Korea, and to ban them from interacting with the U.S. financial system.

Trump also said China was imposing major banking sanctions, too, but there was no immediate confirmation from the North's most important trading partner. China's central bank would not take questions by phone Friday and did not immediately respond to a faxed request for comment.

Trump praises China for cutting off business with N Korea

Trump praised China for instructing its banks to cut off business with Pyongyang, but neither the Chinese nor Trump

officials were ready to say so. Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin said he had spoken at length Thursday with the head of China's central bank but "I am not going to comment on confidential discussions."

If enforced, the Chinese action Trump described could severely impede the isolated North's ability to raise money for its missile and nuclear development. China, responsible for about 90 percent of North Korea's trade, serves as the country's conduit to the international banking system.

Trump said the China action he described "was a somewhat unexpected move and we appreciate it."

China remains leery of pressuring North Korea into collapse and has resisted cutting off its critical oil supplies, not wanting chaos on its border. Along with Russia, China wants the U.S. to seek dialogue with the North. American officials say the time isn't right for any formal diplomatic process. Foreign Minister Wang Yi said Thursday that negotiations are the "only way out" of the nuclear standoff.

Several news outlets this month have reported Chinese steps to restrict banking transactions, but the government hasn't made a formal announcement. Asked for comment last week, the Foreign Ministry said China has always fully implemented U.N. sanctions on North Korea but opposes "unilateral" restrictions imposed by another country on Chinese entities. China's embassy in Washington declined to comment Thursday.

- AP