

Headlines:

- **North and South Korea Begin Talks**
- **Sri Lankan Government Declares State of Emergency**
- **Another Double Agent Poisoned**

Details:

North and South Korea Begin Talks

South Korean delegation envoys have confirmed North Korea's Kim Jong-un is willing to discuss scrapping their nuclear arsenal. South Korea's statement quoted Kim as making it clear North Korea "would have no reason to keep nuclear weapons if the military threat to the North was eliminated." North Korean officials have made comments to this effect in the past, but telling it to the South Korean delegation shows it's a clear message intended to be sent to the US as an inducement to talks. The US presence in much of the Asia-Pacific is predicated on the North Korean threat. This has allowed it to station 20,000 soldiers in South Korea and maintain bases in the region. All of this has been to maintain a containment strategy around China. But the US has ensured no resolution has evolved as this would weaken the case for its presence in the region. But with the US commitment in question to the security of the region South Korea used the Winter Olympics to invite North Korean officials to the South. All of this took place without the US in the middle and now the announcement of direct talks between the North and the South, without the US is a significant development.

Sri Lankan Government Declares State of Emergency

A state of emergency has been declared in Sri Lanka following anti-Muslim riots that have killed at least two people. Dozens of mosques and homes were damaged on Monday night as crowds went on a rampage, sparking fears that communal violence could spread. Rajith Keerthi Tennakoon, executive director of the Centre for Human Rights Sri Lanka, condemned the "unfathomable police inefficiency" that he said led to the violence. "Social media pages rallied Sinhalese mobs to assemble in Teldeniya town at 10am. At 11am, there was a proclivity for violent confrontations to take place as mobs gathered. The destruction of Muslim properties started taking place from around 1pm," Tennakoon told Al Jazeera. Najah Mohamed, secretary of the National Front for Good Governance party in Sri Lanka, told Al Jazeera that attacks are spreading all over the country, not just in Kandy. "We are facing the same situation that we had experienced with the previous government with tension, hate, and violence against Muslims are rampant especially where they are a dispersed community," said Mohamed.

Another Double Agent Poisoned

Britain's foreign secretary called Russia "a malign force around the world," and vowed to retaliate if investigators find that Moscow was behind the apparent poisoning of a former spy and his daughter in southern England. The former spy, Sergei Skripal, 66, and his 33-year-old daughter were critically ill after being exposed to "an unknown substance." Once jailed in Russia for working as a double agent, Mr. Skripal was resettled in Britain in 2010. The episode is reminiscent of the case of Alexander Litvinenko, a former Russian spy who was fatally poisoned in London in 2006.