North Korea’s Kim blasts South media over flood damage ‘rumours’

AFP- North Korean leader Kim Jong Un accused South Korean media outlets of spreading rumours about flood damage and casualties in his country, state media said Saturday, days after Seoul reached out to offer humanitarian aid.
North Korea said earlier this week there had been unspecified casualties resulting from the flooding in its northern regions, in addition to damage to thousands of homes.

Seoul on Thursday said it was willing to “urgently provide” humanitarian assistance to “North Korean disaster victims” following a South Korean news report that the toll of dead and missing could be as high as 1,500.

The report by TV Chosun, which was later picked up by other outlets, also reported on the possible death of rescue workers killed in helicopter crashes.

But North Korea’s Kim slammed the reports for “spreading the false rumor that the human loss … is expected be over 1,000 or 1,500”, according to Pyongyang’s Korean Central News Agency.

Kim “bitterly censured the inveterate habits and despicable nature of the ROK scum,” referring to South Korea, KCNA said Saturday.

The flooding reports constituted a South Korean “smear campaign to bring disgrace upon us and tarnish” the North’s image, he added.

Pyongyang said Wednesday that officials who neglected their disaster prevention duties had caused unspecified casualties, without specifying the location.

But it said Saturday that there were no casualties at all in the Sinuiju area, the region Pyongyang said suffered the “greatest flood damage”.

It claimed North Korea’s Air Force rescued over 5,000 people, with around 4,200 of them saved by helicopter “within a few hours”.

Relations between the two Koreas are at one of their lowest points in years, but South Korea’s unification and foreign ministries this week expressed condolences for the North’s flood victims.

Seoul said Friday it had received no response after trying to offer humanitarian aid via the Koreas’ liaison office communication channel.

North Korea declared the South its principal enemy earlier this year, and Pyongyang has not responded to inter-Korean liaison hotline calls since April 2023.

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