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# HALLIGAN PLANS PEACE MISSION TO DISARM KIM

Dáil team hopes to 'reduce tension' in North Korea

**EXCLUSIVE**

By **Senan Molony**  
Political Editor

**A GOVERNMENT minister is planning to lead Cabinet colleagues on a mission to North Korea to reduce tensions on the troubled peninsula.**

Junior Enterprise Minister John Halligan has written to the North Korean embassy in London seeking permission for a parliamentary visit by himself, Transport Minister Shane Ross and Disability Minister Finian McGrath.

Mr Halligan and Mr McGrath told the Irish Daily Mail they would welcome an

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Visit: John Halligan hopes to lower tensions between Kim Jong-un and the West

## Prolific DoneDeal conman is jailed

A PROLIFIC DoneDeal website scam artist was caught red-handed selling stolen goods while out on bail for a series of other thefts.

Owen Maughan, 40 - who has 91 previous convictions - was jailed yesterday for four years after he used the popular website to advertise and sell livestock trailers which were stolen from various marts last year.

Detective Paul McNulty, who investigated the father of five's activities, told the sentence hearing that while on bail, Maughan 'persisted in this crime wave, selling tickets and things on DoneDeal that do not exist and selling stolen livestock trailers'. He added: 'I would say this is one of the nastiest crimes there is.'

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## Leo takes home key and jobs

LEO Varadkar was honoured with the key to the city of San Francisco last night during his US trade visit.

Mr Varadkar not only pocketed the key, but managed to take home news of hundreds of jobs pledged by Facebook's chief executive Mark Zuckerberg.

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# Ministers plan talks with 'the main man'



Despot: Kim Jong-un

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opportunity to hold talks with Kim Jong-un – dubbed 'Little Rocket Man' by Donald Trump.

Mr Halligan said: 'There are plans. We have already made contact with the North Korean embassy. It's not definite, but we would hope to go in January or February.'

His Cabinet colleague Mr McGrath told the Mail last night: 'It would be a one-item agenda, and that is nuclear disarmament. If you're going there, you would have to meet the main man.'

Mr Halligan, who has visited South Korea in the last 12 months, admitted the Independent Alliance had not yet mentioned the planned week-long trip to the Taoiseach.

The Department of Foreign

## 'Could help to lower tensions'

Affairs is currently advising Irish citizens against all non-essential travel to the secretive state.

'We may not be able to go as members of the Government, but we can go as parliamentarians from the Dáil,' Mr Halligan said. 'My view is that it could help to lower tensions.'

'We would talk about culture and not conflict. I don't think it is good enough that all we have from the West at present is Donald Trump threatening to obliterate North Korea.'

Shane Ross indicated yesterday that he was aware of Mr Halligan's undertaking and was awaiting developments.

Mr Halligan explained: 'I have no hesitation in saying that I'm against any country having



They come in peace: From left, Ministers John Halligan, Shane Ross and Finian McGrath

nuclear weapons, and the whole thing would be to urge them to come back from that.

'We would have no interest in seeing his nuclear missile testing sites, or any other weapons or military display. But who is afraid of dialogue? One of the things we'd like to do is have greater cooperation in education with them.'

Mr Halligan said a large delegation of North Koreans had come to his home county of Waterford 20 years ago to see the workings of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Eireann, 'and they were very interested, and very easy to talk to'. He said: 'You were able to talk to them about the benefits of democracy and the importance of the UN.'

'It [the trip] would be a peace initiative, and we in Ireland are well placed to talk to them in a friendly way. Somebody has to re-engage with them... I don't believe we should cut them off. We'd like to go and talk and help – Shane, Finian and myself.'

However, a Fine Gael backbencher poured scorn on the idea. Noel Rock TD said: 'While I

appreciate the Independent Alliance's sincere commitment to the cause of North Korea, I would have to question how this trip got to such an advanced stage without any consultation with the Taoiseach.

'Based on the experience of the Irish Daily Mail's own Matt Cooper – where he said he felt in danger during a trip there as a journalist – sending three [Cabinet] ministers to North Korea

## 'Relations at a dangerous level'

could pose a serious issue for our own national security.

'All told, I think it's a bad Korea move,' Mr Rock said.

However, Mr McGrath said: 'My position is quite clear: I would do anything to push the nuclear disarmament agenda. I feel very strongly that relations between the US and North Korea are at a very dangerous level. If we can do anything to facilitate interna-

tional peace, we should do it.'

A spokesman at the Embassy of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to Britain – which covers Ireland – expressed doubt over whether Mr Halligan's letter had been received. 'I have nothing to disclose to you,' he declared, declining to give his name as he was 'just a staff member'.

The Ambassador, Choe Il, was unavailable and Kim Song Gi, consular attaché, was visiting a relative in hospital.

Ireland is one of only nine states or territories to have a [North] Korean Friendship Association listed on the DPRK's website.

Mr Halligan said he believed it's inevitable that North Korea will move in the direction of democracy eventually.

'There is hope, if other people make the effort and talk. If we could meet Kim Jong-un, why not? I will talk to anyone.'

'I have been to the West Bank and I've met members of the Israeli government and the Palestinian authority.'

senan.molony@dailymail.ie

## Hospital dealt with 150 cases of superbug in just half a year

By Katie O'Neill  
Health Reporter

THERE were 150 recorded cases of the deadly superbug CPE in Tallaght Hospital in the latter half of last year. The superbug which has a 50% mortality rate when it enters the bloodstream was declared a national health emergency last week.

Data provided in Tallaght Hospital's 2016 quality review shows there were 115 cases of hospital-acquired CPE, and 34.2 cases of new CPE in Tallaght Hospital between July and December of last year.

The outbreak peaked in October when 49 new cases were recorded in the hospital. The report notes 'there was a marked increase in the number of patients carrying CRE' in the hospital in 2016.

'The hospital responded rapidly to this challenge by introducing a range of measures to screen those who might be affected and manage those who were carrying the bacteria.'

'Patients were treated as normal for their presenting conditions but additional infection control precautions such as isolation were required in many cases.'

CPE or CRE (Carbapenem resistant Enterobacteriaceae), as it is referred to in the report, is a bacteria carried in the gut which becomes an infection if it enters the bloodstream. More than one in two patients who develop CPE infection die as a result.

The superbug has been declared a public health emergency by Simon Harris who ordered a meeting of a crisis team last month which has not met since the Ebola epidemic.

The potentially fatal superbug CPE – Carbapenemase Producing Enterobacteriaceae – first appeared here in 2008. And last month the HSE told the Irish Daily Mail that CPE was responsible for 100 beds being closed across the public hospital network.

The superbug has been detected in eight healthcare facilities here to date, the Department of Health said. A situation the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation said it can be exacerbated by overcrowding.

Separately, the quality audit revealed there were 1,208 complaints about the care received by patients and in relation to problems with the hospital in 2016, up from 936 the previous year.

According to the report, there were 633 medication safety incidents and near misses in the hospital last year – this refers to medication errors, adverse drug reactions and near misses. Eleven of these incidents resulted in serious harm while 66 related to temporary harm.

There were 2,898 incidents or near misses reported by frontline staff in Tallaght last year.

## 'Vulnerable' man nearly died while being robbed of €4



Accused: Scott, 24

A MAN almost died after he was viciously attacked by two other men who robbed him of just €4, a court has heard.

The victim was allegedly set upon by the pair in the car park of a supermarket on Saturday night, a garda told a court. The 53-year-old man was described as 'vulnerable' and in the care of the HSE.

Patrick Sweeney, 20, and Stephen Scott, 24, appeared at a special sitting of Letterkenny District Court in Co. Donegal yesterday.

Garda Detective Joseph Kealy told the

By Stephen Maguire

court he objected to bail for Mr Scott because of the seriousness of the case. He felt Mr Scott, of 35 Meadowbank, Letterkenny, was a flight risk.

He told Judge Paul Kelly that the victim lived near the accused, and he feared the injured man could be intimidated. 'I feel if they met on the road that he [the accused] would intimidate the injured party,' he said.

The alleged attack was said to have taken place in the car park of a supermar-

ket at Circular Road. A file is to be sent to the DPP and further charges are expected.

'This man was severely assaulted. He was punched, kicked and stamped upon. 'I think we're very fortunate that the injured party didn't receive fatal injuries,' Detective Kealy told the court.

Mr Scott has pleaded not guilty to the charges. Judge Kelly refused bail and remanded him in custody to appear by videolink next Monday. Mr Sweeney, 20, of 11 Glencar Park, Letterkenny, did not apply for bail and will also appear by videolink on Monday.



Remanded: Sweeney