



Farmers are being stopped by police during a rally in support of the ongoing farmers protest against the central government's recent agricultural reforms in Mumbai, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

NEWS IN BRIEF

Israel opens embassy in UAE

Israel opened an embassy in the United Arab Emirates Sunday, its foreign ministry said, in a historic move four months after the Jewish state and the Gulf country normalised ties. The embassy is the latest in Israel's diplomatic outreach to the Arab world, with a flurry of normalisation agreements and new deals with four countries over recent months. "Today the Israeli embassy in Abu Dhabi has officially been opened, with the arrival of the mission head Eitan Naeh," the ministry said in a statement. "The Israeli embassy in the United Arab Emirates will advance relations between the countries on all levels." The UAE, along with Bahrain, signed a US-brokered deal in September to normalise relations with the Jewish state. The agreements, known as the 'Abraham Accords', shattered a longstanding Arab consensus that there should be no normalisation with Israel until it reaches a comprehensive peace deal with the Palestinians.

Taiwan expelled Chinese dredgers from its waters

Taiwan expelled nearly 4,000 Chinese vessels illegally dredging sand from its waters in 2020, authorities said yesterday, a more than six-fold increase on the year before as Beijing seeks to heap pressure on the democratic island. China has taken an increasingly belligerent tone towards Taiwan under President Xi Jinping -- especially over the last twelve months with Beijing's jets and bombers buzzing the island at a record rate. But the waters surrounding Taiwan have become another hot zone. Taiwan's coastguard yesterday told AFP it recorded a huge spike in Chinese sand dredgers illegally entering its waters. Up to November last year, it expelled 3,969 vessels, compared to 600 in 2019 and 71 in 2018.

Nine trapped Chinese miners confirmed dead



Chinese rescue workers have found the bodies of nine more miners after an explosion a fortnight ago, local officials said yesterday, raising the death toll to 10. It comes a day after 11 miners were pulled out alive from the mine in eastern Shandong province where the blast struck. One miner remains unaccounted for. A group of 22 were trapped hundreds of metres underground by the explosion on January 10, with some relying on food and medicine delivered through long shafts drilled by rescue teams. "From Sunday afternoon to this afternoon, rescue workers have not stopped searching, and found a further nine trapped miners who unfortunately all died," the mayor of Yantai city, Chen Fei, said at a briefing yesterday.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



PHOTO: REUTERS

Hospital staff work while Robot Franziska cleans the floor as a replacement for the missing cleaning personnel due to the coronavirus disease pandemic during a three-week test phase at the Neuperlach hospital in Munich, Germany yesterday.

CONTESTED BORDER AREA IN SIKKIM

Troops had 'minor face-off' with China last week: India

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian and Chinese troops were involved in a "minor face-off" last week in a disputed stretch of their shared border in the eastern Himalayas, the Indian army said yesterday, underlining the fraught situation at the border.

China said the two sides must refrain from escalatory actions.

Nuclear-armed India and China have been in a tense standoff since April in the western Himalayas and since then have bolstered forces all along the 3,800-km (2,350-mile) border.

"It is clarified that there was a minor face-off at Nakula area of North Sikkim on 20 January 2021 and the same was resolved by local commanders as per established protocols," the Indian army said in a statement. It gave no details.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian said he didn't have anything to offer on the incident but urged India to exercise restraint.

"I would like to stress though that China's border troops are committed to upholding peace and tranquillity along the border with India. We urge the Indian side to work in the same direction as us and



refrain from actions that might escalate or complicate the situation along the border," he told a regular news briefing.

"We hope both sides will take proper actions to manage their differences and take concrete actions to safeguard peace and stability along the border."

Sikkim is in the eastern Himalayas, thousands of miles away from Ladakh where the military crisis began last year and erupted into a hand-to-hand combat that left 20 Indian soldiers dead and an unspecified number of Chinese casualties.

Indian media reports said the latest row in Sikkim had resulted in injuries on both sides. "Media is requested to refrain from overplaying or exaggerating reports which are factually incorrect," it said.

US rejoins global fight

Analysis says half a million people died by extreme weather this century

REUTERS, Amsterdam

The United States marked its return to the global fight against climate change yesterday by joining high level talks on ways to better protect people and economies from the effects of global warming already taking place.

Less than a week after President Joe Biden announced the return of the United States to the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, his Special Climate Envoy John Kerry joined China's Deputy Prime Minister Han Zheng, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and other leaders at the Climate Adaptation Summit.

Britain said it plans to team up with Egypt, Bangladesh, Malawi, Saint Lucia and the Netherlands in an initiative that could include early warning systems for storms and investments in flood drainage and in drought-resistant crops.

This online event, hosted by the Netherlands, aims to set out practical solutions and plans for dealing with climate change in the period until 2030.

Ahead of the summit, more than 3,000 scientists from across the globe pressed

CLIMATE ADAPTATION SUMMIT



leaders to better protect people from the fall out of global warming.

"Our fast-warming world is already experiencing major disruptions from more intense droughts, fires, heat waves, floods, destructive tropical cyclones and other extreme events", the scientists, including five Nobel laureates, said in a statement.

"Unless we step up and adapt now, the results will be increasing poverty, water shortages, agricultural losses and soaring levels of migration with an enormous toll on human life."

Climate change could depress global

food production by up to 30%, while rising seas and greater storms could force hundreds of millions in coastal cities out of their homes, summit organiser the Global Center on Adaptation (GCA) said.

According to a new assessment of the direct threat posed to humanity by climate change, almost half a million people have died in natural disasters linked to extreme weather events in the last 20 years.

The mortality burden of climate-related catastrophes such as storms, flooding and heatwaves is overwhelmingly borne by developing countries.

Germanwatch's Global Climate Index examined the impact of two decades of extreme weather events, particularly the 2019 storm season, which produced hurricanes and cyclones that devastated parts of the Caribbean, east Africa and south Asia.

"This shows that poor vulnerable countries face particularly great challenges in dealing with the consequences of extreme weather events," said co-author David Eckstein.

"They urgently need financial and technical assistance."

BJP should be rechristened 'Bharat Jalao Party'

Mamata tells rally in Hooghly

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

Days after being "insulted" by the supporters of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) at an event organised on the occasion of Netaji SB's birth anniversary in Kolkata, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee said yesterday that the BJP should be rechristened "Bharat Jalao Party".

Addressing a public rally in Hooghly's Pursura months ahead of state legislative assembly election, the chief minister said she was insulted and had to face taunts in presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Victoria Memorial event on Saturday. She had refused to speak at the event after she was interrupted with chants of "Jai Shri Ram".

"Would you invite anyone to your house and then insult the person? Is this the culture of Bengal or our country? I would have had no problem if slogans hailing Netaji were raised. But they didn't do that. To taunt me, they shouted slogans which had no relation to the programme. I was insulted in front of the prime minister of the country. This is their (BJP) culture," the Trinamool Congress boss said.

Targeting potential defectors, the CM said that those planning to leave the TMC should do it as soon as possible as the party didn't need them.

"Those who are lining up to leave the Trinamool Congress should leave as early as possible. Bengal and TMC don't need you. The party would not have given them a ticket anyway, so they are leaving in fear," Banerjee said.

TMC heavyweight Suvendu Adhikari and MP Sunil Kumar Mandal were among the several party legislators who defected to the BJP earlier last month.

A day after the heckling on Saturday, it emerged that BJP leaders had cornered a big share of invitation cards to the Ministry of Cultural Affairs event and given them to party activists who were present in the crowd in disproportionate numbers, say sources.



Palestinians take part in a protest against what they say are food aid cuts by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) in al-Shati refugee camp in Gaza City yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Republicans signal deep resistance

Pelosi to send Senators single article of impeachment passed in House

AFP, Washington

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi was set to send the Senate a single article of impeachment yesterday accusing Donald Trump of inciting the Capitol riot, formally triggering the first-ever impeachment trial of a former president.

Pelosi, the top Democrat in Congress, vowed last week that the trial -- already scheduled to open in the second week of February -- should proceed, saying, "I don't think it will be long, but we must do it."

But Republican lawmakers signalled over the weekend that Democrats may struggle to secure Trump's conviction over the storming of US legislative buildings earlier this month, which left five people dead.

Senior figures in Trump's party have pushed back with both political and constitutional arguments, raising doubts that Democrats -- who control 50 seats in the 100-seat chamber --

TRUMP SENATE TRIAL



can secure the 17 Republican votes to reach the two-thirds majority needed to convict.

"I think the trial is stupid. I think it's counterproductive. We already have a flaming fire in this country and it's like taking a bunch of gasoline and pouring it on top," Marco Rubio, the top Republican on the Senate Intelligence Committee, told Fox News Sunday.

He acknowledged that Trump -- who had urged thousands of his

supporters to flock to Washington and protest the congressional certification of Joe Biden's victory -- "bears some responsibility for what happened."

But to "stir it up again" could only hurt the country, said Rubio, a presidential candidate beaten by Trump in the 2016 primary.

Other Republicans argued that the Senate has no authority to put a private citizen -- as Trump now is -- on trial.

Senator Mike Rounds told NBC's "Meet the Press" that the constitution does not allow for the impeachment of a former president.

But Senator Mitt Romney, the Republicans' 2012 presidential candidate and a frequent Trump critic, told CNN that "the preponderance of legal opinion is that an impeachment trial after a president has left office is constitutional. I believe that's the case."

Nepal's PM ejected from ruling party

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepal's caretaker Prime Minister K P Sharma Oli was thrown out of the country's ruling Communist party yesterday, his opponents said, in protest at his abrupt decision in December to dissolve parliament and call for an early general election. Oli remains in office despite the expulsion.

Yesterday, dozens of protesters who marched near Oli's residence to oppose the parliament's dissolution clashed with police who used water cannons and caned some with rattan sticks to break up the anti-Oli rally. Witnesses said some protesters were injured in the clash.