

# 'World wants justice, not hegemony'

Xi calls for fairer world order amid rivalry with US

REUTERS, Boao

Chinese President Xi Jinping yesterday called for a rejection of hegemonic power structures in global governance, amid growing tensions between Washington and Beijing over a widening range of issues including alleged human rights abuses.

Speaking at the annual Boao Forum for Asia, Xi criticised efforts by some countries to "build barriers" and "decouple", which he said would harm others and benefit no one.

China has long called for reforms of the global governance system to better reflect a more diverse range of perspectives and values from the international community, including its own, instead of those of a few major nations.

It has also repeatedly clashed with the biggest stakeholders in world governance, particularly the United States, over a range of issues from human rights to China's economic influence over other countries.

"The world wants justice, not hegemony," Xi said in remarks broadcast to the forum.

"A big country should look like a big country by showing that it is shouldering more responsibility," he said.



While Xi did not identify any country in his remarks, Chinese officials have in recent times referred to US "hegemony" in public criticisms of Washington's global projection of power in trade and geopolitics.

As the Biden administration rallies other democratic allies to harden their stance on China, Beijing is seeking to strengthen ties with its autocratic partners and economically dependent neighbours in Southeast Asia.

Chinese speakers at the Boao forum, Asia's answer to Davos, also affirmed Beijing's commitment to global free trade.

China's trade practices were a focus of an intense tariff war between Beijing and Washington under the Trump administration, with the United States accusing Beijing of unfair subsidies that give Chinese companies unfair advantage abroad and forced transfers of technology and intellectual property.

"The biggest experience that China's accession to the World Trade Organization 20 years ago is that we Chinese are not afraid of competition," Long Yongtu, China's former chief negotiator for the China's WTO entry in 2001, told the forum on Monday.



A migrant worker's family sits next to a bus at a bus station, as they wait to return to their village, after Delhi government ordered a six-day lockdown to limit the spread of the coronavirus disease, in Ghaziabad on the outskirts of New Delhi, India yesterday. India has recorded more than three million new infections and 18,000 deaths this month alone, dashing hopes in January and February that the country might have beaten the pandemic.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# 'Dire warning' for the planet

CO2 emissions set to surge as world eyes quick recovery from Covid crisis

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Climate-changing CO2 emissions are set to surge by the second-biggest amount in history this year as the global economy recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, the IEA warned yesterday, a day after UN chief warned days before a major climate summit.

The International Energy Agency estimated in its annual Global Energy Review that CO2 emissions will increase by almost five percent this year to 33 billion tonnes, largely reversing the decline registered last year as the pandemic idled swathes of the global economy.

While CO2 emissions are expected to remain below their 2019 level, the IEA expects global energy demand to surpass its 2019 level, with both gas and coal rising above pre-pandemic levels.

"Global carbon emissions are set to jump by 1.5 billion tonnes this year -- driven by the resurgence of coal use in the power sector," the IEA's Executive Director, Fatih Birol, was quoted as saying in a statement.

"This is a dire warning that the economic recovery from the Covid crisis is currently anything but sustainable for our climate."

He called the Leaders Summit on Climate to be hosted by US President Joe Biden on



Thursday and Friday a critical moment for nations to pledge immediate actions before the UN Climate Change Conference set for November in Glasgow.

"Unless governments around the world move rapidly to start cutting emissions, we are likely to face an even worse situation in 2022," said Birol.

The IEA sees a 4.5-percent jump in coal demand, surpassing the 2019 level and approaching its all-time peak from 2014, as the biggest reason behind the rise in CO2 emissions.

The electricity sector accounts for three-quarters of this increase.

More than four-fifths of the rise in coal demand is to come from Asia, led by China, although the US and Europe are also set to see increases.

While the increase in coal use will dwarf that of renewables, electricity generation from renewable sources is still tipped to jump by more than eight percent this year. The IEA expects both solar and wind to post their largest annual rises ever, at around 17 percent.

It expects renewables will provide 30 percent of electricity generation worldwide in 2021, their biggest share ever and up from less than 27 percent in 2019. China is expected to account for almost half of that increase.

The assessment came a day after UN warned that time was fast running out to tackle the climate crisis.

"We are on the verge of the abyss," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told a press conference as he unveiled the State of the Global Climate 2020 report by the UN's World Meteorological Organization (WMO).

"This is truly a pivotal year for humanity's future. And this report shows we have no time to waste, climate disruption is here," Guterres said, as he urged countries to "end our war on nature."

Statistics showed that 2020 was one of the three warmest years on record. The past six years, including 2020, have been the six warmest on record.

## RSF'S WORLD PRESS FREEDOM INDEX

# Journalism partly 'blocked' in more than 130 countries

AFP, Paris

The annual report by Reporters Without Borders (RSF) yesterday said that journalism was at least partly blocked in nearly three-quarters of the 180 countries surveyed.

Its World Press Freedom Index found 73 countries "totally blocked or seriously impeded" journalism, while it was "constrained" in 59 others, adding that many governments had used the pandemic to worsen repression.

"Journalism is the best vaccine against disinformation," RSF secretary-general Christophe Deloire said in a statement.

"Unfortunately, its production and distribution are too often blocked by political, economic, technological and, sometimes, even cultural factors."

Eritrea, North Korea, Turkmenistan, China and Djibouti fared worst overall in this year's RSF ranking.

Norway, Finland, Sweden, Denmark and Costa Rica were ranked highest.

The Middle East and North Africa region continues to be the most repressive for

journalists, the report found, highlighting the worsening situation in Iran, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Syria over the past year.

"In this region, still the toughest and most dangerous for journalists, the pandemic has exacerbated the problems that have long plagued the press, which was already in its death throes," it said.

Malaysia recorded the worst deterioration, down 18 places in the ranking to 119, due in part to a recent "anti-fake news" law "allowing the government to impose its own version of the truth".

RSF said the global level of media freedom remained largely stable overall for the past year, but noted that the figures had deteriorated by 12 percent since the ranking was first launched in 2013.

Part of the problem is falling trust in journalists, fuelled by political polarisation and online misinformation. RSF noted a recent survey by the Edelman Trust that found 59 percent of respondents across 28 countries believed journalists deliberately misled the public.



Cuba's Miguel Diaz-Canel reacts as Raul Castro raises his hand during the closing session of the VIII Congress of the Communist Party in Havana, Cuba, on Monday. Cuba turned the page on the Castro era on Monday with the ruling Communist Party electing President Miguel Diaz-Canel to replace Raul Castro as party chief although he said he would continue to consult his predecessor on strategic decisions. The succession marks the end of six decades of rule by brothers Fidel and Raul Castro, who led a 1959 revolution in the Caribbean island nation of 11 million, installing a Communist-run country on the doorstep of the United States.

PHOTO: REUTERS

# Pakistan bows to Islamist hardliners

Parliament set to debate on expelling French ambassador on alleged blasphemy

AFP, Lahore

Pakistan's parliament has postponed until Friday a debate on whether the country should expel the French ambassador, as the government bids to appease a radical party that has threatened more violent protests unless the envoy is kicked out.

The Tehreek-i-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) has waged an anti-France campaign for months since President Emmanuel Macron defended the right of a satirical magazine to republish cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammad (pbuh) -- an act deemed blasphemous by many Muslims.

Interior Minister Sheikh Rashid Ahmed yesterday said the government had held negotiations with TLP leaders, who agreed to call off the protests after learning a resolution would be discussed in parliament on the future of the French envoy. However, TLP leaders said protests would continue.

At a special session of the National Assembly yesterday, the speaker pushed back a resolution by a ruling party member on the issue, saying it should be tabled collectively by the government and opposition, before adjourning until Friday.

Several police officers and TLP supporters were killed in clashes this week.

The French embassy last week recommended all its citizens leave the country, and on Monday a source at the foreign ministry said Paris was recalling all non-essential staff and their families.

The Pakistan government banned the TLP last Wednesday -- effectively labelling the group a terror organisation -- and police arrested thousands of protesters during clashes, but Rashid said no action would be taken against them.

## NEWS IN BRIEF



### Chad President Idriss Deby killed in battle

Chad's President Idriss Deby, who ruled his country for more than 30 years and was an important Western ally in the fight against Islamist militants in Africa, has been killed in a battle against rebels in the north. His son, Mahamat Idriss Deby Itno, was named interim president by a transitional council of military officers, army spokesman Azem Bermendao Agouna said on state television. Deby, 68, took power in a rebellion in 1990 and was one of Africa's longest-ruling leaders, surviving numerous coup attempts and rebellions. He was killed just after he was declared winner of a presidential election that would have given him a sixth term in office. Most of the opposition boycotted the vote. How he died isn't yet clear, but Bermendao said Deby -- who often joined soldiers on the battlefield in his military fatigues -- took charge against advancing "terrorists from Libya" on Monday.

### Indian railway 'superhero' pulls off dramatic rescue

An Indian railway worker has been hailed a "superhero" after he sprinted more than 30 metres along a track to grab a boy from the path of an express train. CCTV images of Mayur Shelke's incredible rescue have gone viral on social media with many lauding the selfless 30-year-old. The six-year-old boy was with his partially sighted mother on Saturday at Vangani station -- about 70 kilometres east of Mumbai -- when he fell off the platform edge onto the track. Shelke was alerted by cries for help from the mother and immediately started running along the track. He is seen in images released by the Indian Central Railways grabbing the boy, throwing him back onto the platform and then climbing up himself barely two seconds before the Udayan Express thundered through.

### Rahul Gandhi tests positive for Covid-19

India's Congress Party leader Rahul Gandhi yesterday said that he has tested positive for Covid-19 and has "mild symptoms". Rahul had campaigned in West Bengal assembly elections and yesterday asked all to self-isolate themselves who came in contact with him. Another top Congress leader and former PM, Manmohan Singh, has been hospitalised as a precautionary measure with a high fever. The 88-year-old leader, who received two doses of Covaxin, also tested positive for Covid-19.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

# NGOs call for \$5.5b to save 34m from famine

AFP, Geneva

More than 260 non-governmental organisations signed an open letter yesterday urging governments to donate \$5.5 billion to prevent famine from reaching 34 million people in 2021.

The sum was called for by the United Nations' World Food Programme (WFP) and Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in March to swiftly scale up action to avert famine.

The NGOs said donations so far this year had been a mere fraction of what was required to prevent situations from worsening in hunger hotspots around the world.

The letter was penned by NGOs working with an estimated 270 million people "facing hunger, starvation or famine all over the world".

They include Oxfam, Christian Aid, World Vision, Tearfund, Save the Children and Care International.

"In Yemen, Afghanistan, Ethiopia, South Sudan, Burkina Faso, DR Congo, Honduras, Venezuela, Nigeria, Haiti, Central African Republic, Uganda, Zimbabwe, Sudan and beyond we help people who are doing all they can to simply get through one more day," the letter said.

"These people are not starving, they are being starved," the NGOs insisted. "There is no place for famine and starvation in the 21st century. History will judge us all by the actions we take today."

The WFP and FAO call issued last month sought to avert famine through measures including humanitarian food assistance and cash transfers.

The WFP estimated that up to 270 million people were acutely food insecure or at high risk at the outset of 2021.

## RISING TENSIONS ALONG RUSSIA-UKRAINE BORDER

# Kiev demands more sanctions

Says Moscow will soon have over 120,000 troops on its borders

AGENCIES

Russia will soon have more than 120,000 troops on Ukraine's border, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba said yesterday, calling for new Western economic sanctions to deter Moscow from "further escalation".

Washington and Nato have been alarmed by the large build-up of Russian troops near Ukraine and in Crimea, the peninsula that Moscow annexed from Ukraine in 2014.

Western officials say the concentration of forces is now larger than during that annexation. The figure given by Kuleba is higher than Ukraine's previous estimate of 80,000 Russian troops, of which 50,000 were new deployments.

Russia has said its troop build-up is a three-week snap military drill to test combat readiness in response to what it calls threatening behaviour from Nato. Moscow yesterday also accused



Czechs urge allies to expel Russian intelligence officers in act of solidarity

Doctors denied access to 'very weak' Navalny

the US and Nato of "provocative activity" in the waters and airspace of the Black Sea.

In another development, the Czech Republic yesterday asked European Union and Nato allies to take action in solidarity with Prague in its row with Moscow, including expelling Russian intelligence officers from their countries, acting Foreign Minister Jan

Hamacek said.

The country on Saturday evicted 18 Russian embassy staff, whom it identified as intelligence officers, over suspicions that Russian secret services were behind explosions at a privately-operated arms depot in 2014.

Moscow has denied any of its agents were involved in the blast, which killed two people, branding the Czech stance a provocation, and expelled 20 Czech diplomats and other staff in retaliation.

Meanwhile, Alexei Navalny's doctors were again denied access to the jailed Kremlin critic, as lawyers for the hunger-striking opposition figure said he was "very weak" and demanded he be transferred to a civilian hospital.

West has warned Moscow of "consequences" if Navalny dies.

The Kremlin however has dismissed the foreign outcry saying that Navalny does not deserve any special treatment.