

Cyber attacks can lead to 'real war'

Biden warns rivals

AGENCIES

President Joe Biden on Tuesday warned that if the United States ended up in a "real shooting war" with a "major power" it could be the result of a significant cyber attack on the country, highlighting what Washington sees as growing threats posed by Russia and China.

Cybersecurity has risen to the top of the agenda for the Biden administration after a series of high-profile attacks on entities such as network management company SolarWinds, the Colonial Pipeline company, meat processing company JBS and software firm Kaseya hurt the US far beyond just the companies hacked. Some of the attacks affected fuel and food supplies in parts of the United States.

"I think it's more than likely we're going to end up, if we end up in a war - a real shooting war with a major power - it's going to be as a consequence of a cyber breach of great consequence and it's increasing exponentially, the capabilities," Biden said during a half-hour speech while visiting the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI).

During a June 16 summit in Geneva between Biden and Russian President Vladimir Putin, Biden shared a list of critical infrastructure the US considers off-limits to nation-state actors.

Biden also highlighted the threats posed by China, referring to President Xi Jinping as "deadly earnest about becoming the most powerful military force in the world, as well as the largest and most prominent economy in the world by the mid-40s, the 2040s."

The United States and Russia were holding a fresh round of talks in Geneva yesterday aimed at stabilising the thorny relationship between Moscow and Washington.

The talks, being led by US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov, are expected to last most of the day. Both sides said they do not expect any major breakthroughs in the talks.



This picture taken on Tuesday night and released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday shows fireworks during the 7th National Conference of War Veterans in front of the Monument to the Victorious Fatherland Liberation War in Pyongyang, to mark the 68th anniversary of the end of the Korean War. North and South Korea are in talks to reopen a joint liaison office that Pyongyang demolished last year and hold a summit as part of efforts to restore relations, three South Korea government sources with knowledge of the matter said.

PHOTO: AFP

Earth's 'vital signs' worsening

Scientists warn 'overexploitation' of resources making several climate 'tipping points' unavoidable

AFP, Paris

The global economy's business-as-usual approach to climate change has seen Earth's "vital signs" deteriorate to record levels, an influential group of scientists said Wednesday, warning that several climate tipping points were now imminent.

The researchers, part of a group of more than 14,000 scientists who have signed on to an initiative declaring a worldwide climate emergency, said that governments had consistently failed to address the root cause of climate change: "the overexploitation of the Earth".

Since a similar assessment in 2019, they noted an "unprecedented surge" in climate-related disasters, including flooding in South America and Southeast Asia, record-shattering heatwaves and wildfires in Australia and the US, and devastating cyclones in Africa and South Asia.

Of 31 "vital signs" -- key metrics of planetary health that include greenhouse gas emissions, glacier thickness, sea-ice extent and deforestation -- they found that 18 hit record highs or lows.

For example, despite a dip in pollution linked to the pandemic, levels of atmospheric CO2 and methane hit all-time highs in 2021.

Greenland and Antarctica both recently showed all-time low levels of ice mass, and glaciers are melting 31 percent faster than they did just 15 years ago, the authors said.

Both ocean heat and global sea levels set new records since 2019, and the annual loss rate of the Brazilian Amazon reached a 12-year high in 2020.

Echoing previous research, they said that forest degradation linked to fire, drought and logging was causing parts of the Brazilian Amazon to now act as a source of carbon, rather than absorb the gas from the atmosphere.

Livestock such as cows and sheep are now at record levels, numbering more than four billion and with a mass exceeding that of all humans and wild land mammals combined, they said.



Tim Lenton, director of the University of Exeter's Global Systems Institute and study co-author, said the recent record-breaking heatwave in the Western United States and Canada showed that the climate had already begun to "behave in shocking, unexpected ways".

"We need to respond to the evidence that we are hitting climate tipping points with equally urgent action to decarbonise the global economy and start restoring instead of destroying nature," he said.

The researchers said there was "mounting evidence that we are nearing or have already crossed" a number

of climate tipping points.

These include melting of the Greenland and West Antarctic ice sheets, which may now be irreversible on a centuries-long time scale, regardless of how or if humankind slashes its emissions.

They said increasing ocean deoxygenation and warming waters were threatening warm-water coral reefs, upon which half a billion people rely for food, income and storm protection.

The study has been published in the journal BioScience.

The authors echoed previous calls for transformative change in six areas: eliminating fossil fuels, slashing pollutants, restoring ecosystems, switching to plant-based diets, moving away from indefinite growth models, and stabilising the human population.

They also called for climate change education to be included in school core curriculums globally in order to raise awareness.

In the immediate term, they proposed a trio of emergency responses to the climate emergency.

These consisted of "a significant carbon price", a global phase-out and ban of fossil fuels, and the development of strategic climate reserves such as restoring and maintaining carbon sinks and biodiversity hotspots.

"Policies to combat the climate crisis or any other symptoms should address their root cause: human overexploitation of the planet," said William Ripple, distinguished professor of ecology at Oregon State University's College of Forestry.

NEWS IN brief

Ecuador strips Assange of citizenship

Ecuador has revoked the citizenship of Julian Assange, the founder of WikiLeaks who is currently in a British prison. Ecuadorian authorities said Assange's naturalisation letter had multiple inconsistencies, different signatures, the possible alteration of documents and unpaid fees, among other issues. Assange received Ecuadorian citizenship in January 2018. Assange spent seven years holed up inside Ecuador's London embassy, where he fled in 2012 to avoid extradition to Sweden to face allegations of rape and sexual assault, which he denied. Sweden dropped the sex crimes investigations in November 2019. US prosecutors have indicted Assange on 17 espionage charges and one charge of computer misuse over WikiLeaks' publication of thousands of leaked military and diplomatic documents.

18 workers killed in India as truck rams into bus

Eighteen migrant labourers sleeping on a highway in northern India after their bus broke down died when a truck rammed into the vehicle, police said yesterday. At least 19 others were injured in the accident in Uttar Pradesh state, a senior police officer told reporters. Most of the passengers were returning home to the eastern state of Bihar after working in the states of Punjab or Haryana. The passengers got off the bus after its axle shaft broke and were sleeping next to it when a truck crashed into it from behind. About 150,000 people are killed each year in traffic accidents in India, according to the government.



WHO sounds alarm on 'harmful' e-cigarettes

Electronic cigarettes and similar devices are dangerous to health and must be regulated to curb the tobacco industry's "criminal" tactics to get young people hooked on nicotine, the World Health Organization warned Tuesday. "Nicotine is highly addictive. Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) are harmful, and must be better regulated," said WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. The UN health agency's eighth tobacco report said ENDS manufacturers often target youths with thousands of tantalising flavours -- the document listed 16,000 -- and reassuring statements. Doctor Vinayak Prasad, who heads the WHO's Tobacco Free Initiative, said targeting children "with toxic and poisonous products is a criminal action". The report said there were still more than a billion smokers around the world. Tobacco is responsible for the deaths of eight million people a year, including one million from second-hand smoke, it stressed.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS, THE STATESMAN

'Trusting West doesn't work'

Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday said that the outgoing government's experience of engaging with world powers including the United States shows that "trusting the West does not work". President Hassan Rouhani's signature diplomatic achievement, a 2015 nuclear deal with major powers, gave Iran some relief from international sanctions in exchange for limits on its nuclear programme. But it was torpedoed in 2018 by then US President Donald Trump, who unilaterally withdrew from the agreement and reimposed punishing sanctions. "Future generations should use this experience. It was made clear during this government that trusting the West does not work," Khamenei told outgoing President Hassan Rouhani and members of his cabinet. "They are the enemy after all,"



he added. Rouhani is scheduled to hand over power to President-elect Ebrahim Raisi, an ultraconservative, next month. Iran's ultraconservative camp, which deeply distrusts the United States, has repeatedly criticised Rouhani over the 2015 deal.

Nuke tests in French Polynesia: Macron admits 'debt'

French President Emmanuel Macron said on Tuesday that Paris owed "a debt" to French Polynesia over nuclear tests conducted in the South Pacific territory between 1966 and 1996, but stopped short of apologising. "I want truth and transparency," Macron said in a speech to Polynesian officials, adding that there should be better compensation for victims of the tests. The legacy of French testing in the territory remains a source of deep resentment and is seen as evidence of racist colonial attitudes that disregarded the lives of locals. Officials denied any cover-up of radiation exposure earlier this month after French investigative website Disclose reported in March that the impact from the fallout was far more extensive

than authorities had acknowledged, citing declassified French military documents. Only 63 Polynesian civilians have been compensated for radiation exposure since the tests ended in 1996. Disclose said, estimating that more than 100,000 people may have been contaminated in total, with leukaemia, lymphoma and other cancers rife.



Ivory Coast arch foes reconcile with a hug

Ivory Coast President Alassane Ouattara and long-time rival Laurent Gbagbo hugged on Tuesday at their first meeting in over a decade, part of efforts to ease political tensions in the West African country. "I'm happy to see you," Ouattara said as he welcomed the former president at the presidential palace in Abidjan. Ivory Coast has for more than a decade faced political tension, mistrust and violence. A 2010-11 civil war killed over 3,000 people as the two men vied for power. The civil war began after Gbagbo, now 76, refused to concede electoral defeat to Ouattara in Dec. 2010, and he was arrested following the war, which made global headlines. He returned from exile in June after being acquitted by the



International Criminal Court of war crimes. Ouattara said he and Gbagbo would continue to meet. "It is important for everyone to know that we have decided to restore trust and ensure that Ivorians reconcile and trust each other as well. The past events have been painful. Too many died and we must try to put that behind us," Ouattara said.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Afghanistan risks becoming a 'pariah state'

Warns Blinken in India as Taliban promise China not to allow cross-border separatism

AFP, New Delhi

Afghanistan would become a "pariah state" if the Taliban take control by force, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said yesterday, as a top-level delegation from the insurgent group visited China to assure officials of their international obligations.

"An Afghanistan that does not respect the rights of its people, an Afghanistan that commits atrocities against its own people would become a pariah state," Blinken told reporters in India.

In China, the Taliban's leadership assured Beijing the group will not allow Afghanistan to be used as a base for plotting against another country.

Beijing confirmed the thrust of the talks, which were led on the Chinese side by Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

In New Delhi, Blinken warned the Taliban they would have to change if they wanted global acceptance.

"The Taliban says that it seeks international recognition. ... The taking over of the country by force and abusing the rights of its people is not the path to



achieve those objectives," he added. Meanwhile, in a move that is likely to provoke anger in China, Blinken yesterday met with a representative of Tibet's spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama, in New Delhi. Analysts say China, whose stated foreign policy position is non-interference in other countries' issues, is uneasy about the religiosity of the Taliban given their proximity to Muslim-majority Xinjiang. But the meeting gifts legitimacy to an insurgent group craving international recognition -- and a potential diplomatic shield at the UN -- to match their military march across the nation.

Blinken issues veiled warning on democracy, rights in India

AFP, New Delhi

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken issued a veiled warning yesterday about Indian democracy backsliding in his first official visit to New Delhi.

Rights groups say civil liberties and the space for dissent are under increasing attack in the world's biggest democracy under Modi's government.

Blinken told civil society groups that the US and India are "connected by shared values" such as rule of law and freedom of religion. But he added: "Both of our democracies are works in progress... As I said before, sometimes that process is painful. Sometimes it's ugly. But the strength of democracy is to embrace it."

Blinken left for Kuwait later yesterday.

Congratulations



We congratulate Mr. Mohammad Mubashair Rahman (Fahad) for his graduation degree. Mr. Fahad has been awarded graduation (Hons) degree with Excellent grade in Banking Finance and Management from Loughborough University (Alhumdulillah). Loughborough is a very reputed university in UK.

Mr. Fahad is the eldest son of LR Group Chairman Mr. Mohammad Lutfar Rahman and Vice Chairman of LR Group Shoma Alam Rahman. We express our heartiest felicitations to him and wish him continuous success in life.

May ALLAH (SUBHANAHU WA TA'ALA) bless him with prosperity & success and achieve every goal in life.

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