

Iran won't allow IS presence on border

Says President Ebrahim Raisi

AFP, Tehran

Iran will not allow the Islamic State group to establish a presence on the country's border with Afghanistan, President Ebrahim Raisi warned yesterday.

"We will not allow terrorist organisations and IS to set up next to our border and strike other countries and the region," Raisi said as he wound up a visit to Tajikistan.

"The presence of IS in Afghanistan is dangerous not only for Afghanistan but also for the region," he told state television.

The Taliban took Afghanistan's capital on August 15, exploiting a vacuum caused by the withdrawal of US troops from the country and a collapse by the Afghan army.

Iran, which shares a 900-kilometre (560-mile) border with Afghanistan, did not recognise the Taliban during their 1996 to 2001 stint in power.

But Tehran has appeared to soften its tough stance towards the Sunni militia in recent times in the name of pragmatism.

The Islamic republic has stressed that the Taliban must be "part of a future solution" in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan's new rulers have formed a government composed entirely of Taliban and belonging almost entirely to the Pashtun ethnic group.

"A government belonging to only one ethnic or political group cannot solve Afghanistan's problems," Raisi said, calling for a government with representation for all Afghans.

Passenger flights between Iran and Afghanistan resumed on Wednesday, Iran's state-run al-Alam TV channel reported. An Iranian Mahan Air plane landed on Wednesday in Kabul with 19 passengers on board, coming from the city of Mashhad, it said.



Victoria police clash with protesters during "The Worldwide Rally for Freedom" demonstration in Melbourne, Australia yesterday. Australia's police arrested 235 people in Melbourne and 32 in Sydney yesterday at unsanctioned anti-lockdown rallies and several police officers were injured in clashes with protesters.

PHOTO: REUTERS

MORE NEWS

UK identifies case of 'mad cow' disease

British officials have identified a single case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE), commonly known as mad cow disease. The Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) said this week that the dead animal had been removed from a farm in Somerset, southwest England, adding there was "no risk to food safety". "The UK's overall risk status for BSE remains at controlled and there is no risk to food safety or public health," said Chief Veterinary Officer Christine Middlemiss. APHA will launch a "thorough investigation of the herd, the premises, potential sources of infection and will produce a full report on the incident in due course".

US Capitol on high alert

Hundreds of police officers were on duty around the US Capitol yesterday braced for a rally by supporters of the hundreds of people who breached the building on January 6 trying to overturn former President Donald Trump's election defeat. A black eight-foot-high (2.44 m) fence which surrounded the white-domed building for about six months after the attack is back, 100 National Guard troops are on standby and security officials are performing additional checks on travelers arriving at Washington's nearest airport in an effort to prevent violence. Organizers of the "Justice for J6" rally said they expected a peaceful event, but US Capitol Police Chief J. Thomas Manger told reporters on Friday "there have been some threats of violence" linked to the event.



Guantanamo 9/11 trial suspended amid Covid scare

The pretrial hearing in the case against accused 9/11 attacks mastermind Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and four others was suspended Friday amid a coronavirus scare in the courtroom at the US naval base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. An official of the Office of Military Commissions, which conducts the Guantanamo trials, said that the confirmed infection of a media reporter who was at the court all last week and the suspected infection of another person who had been in the courtroom caused the judge to halt the hearing. It would have been the final day after two weeks in which the new judge, Air Force Colonel Matthew McCall, sought to get the long-festering case back on track after an 18-month delay due to the pandemic.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

THREE-DAY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Russia claims foreign interference in vote

AFP, Moscow

Russia's elections commission said yesterday that it had recorded foreign interference in its ongoing three-day parliamentary elections.

The polls, which culminate today and come after an unprecedented crackdown on Kremlin critics and dissenting voices, allow Russians to cast their ballots online.

The elections commission said that it had recorded "three cyberattacks" on its resources "from foreign countries".

"Yesterday, we recorded three targeted attacks from abroad," said the head of the commission's centre for informatisation, Alexander Sokolchuk.

He said two of the attacks were aimed at the commission's website, while a third was a DDoS attack.

"The attack was quite powerful," the Interfax news agency cited Sokolchuk as saying. He added that "preparations" for further attacks "are underway for tomorrow".

Sokolchuk did not name the countries involved. Russian authorities have previously claimed that Western social media platforms are interfering in its affairs by not removing information related to jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Navalny, who was detained in February and has seen his organisations banned and his top allies arrested or flee the country, has pushed a "Smart Voting" strategy to defeat Kremlin-aligned politicians in the parliamentary elections.

Cut methane in climate fight

EU, US urge world leaders; UN chief warns failure to slash emissions setting world on 'catastrophic' path to 2.7C warming

AGENCIES

The European Union and the United States yesterday called on more nations to join a pledge to slash methane gas emissions and cut warming by at least 0.2 degrees Celsius by 2050.

The initiative -- unveiled by President Joe Biden on Friday -- means countries would commit to a collective goal of reducing emissions of the powerful greenhouse gas by at least 30 percent from 2020 levels by 2030.

"Important step taken with President Biden towards a Global Methane Pledge," European Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen wrote on Twitter.

"We will reach out to global partners to bring as many as possible on board for tackling methane emissions."

A joint statement from the EU and US said that Argentina, Ghana,



Indonesia, Iraq, Mexico, and the United Kingdom had "already indicated their support" for the pledge.

The initiative is set to be formally launched at the major COP26 summit organised by the United Nations in Glasgow, Scotland in November, reports AFP.

"Rapidly reducing methane emissions is complementary to action on carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases, and is regarded as the single most effective strategy to

reduce global warming in the near term and keep the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius within reach."

UN chief Antonio Guterres warned Friday that a failure to slash global emissions is setting the world on a "catastrophic" path to 2.7 degrees Celsius heating.

His comments come as a United Nations report on global emissions pledges found instead of the reductions needed to avoid the worst effects of climate change, they would see "a considerable increase".

This shows "the world is on a catastrophic pathway to 2.7-degrees of heating," Guterres said in a statement.

The figure would shatter the temperature targets of the Paris climate agreement, which aimed for warming well below 2C and preferably capped at 1.5C above pre-industrial levels.



A string quartet plays onboard a violin-shaped boat, titled "Violin of Noah", that was built during the coronavirus disease pandemic by artist Livio De Marchi in collaboration with Consorzio Venezia Sviluppo and is dedicated to people who have died from the disease, in Venice, Italy yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Vaccine nasal sprays aim to 'shut door' on coronavirus

AFP, Paris

Could delivering Covid-19 immunity directly to the nose -- the area of the body via which it is most likely to be transmitted -- help conquer the pandemic?

The World Health Organization says clinical trials are underway to evaluate eight nasal spray vaccines that target Covid-19.

The most advanced effort so far by China's Xiamen University, the University of Hong Kong and Beijing Wantai Biological Pharmacy has completed phase-2 trials.

"When the virus infects someone it usually gets in through the nose," said researcher Nathalie Mielcarek who is working with the Lille Pasteur Institute to develop a nasal spray vaccine against whooping cough.

"The idea is to shut the door."

An article published in Scientific American in March urged developing nasal spray vaccines because they have an immediate effect on the virus in an infected person's mucus.

There they trigger production of an antibody known as immunoglobulin A, which can block infection.

"This overwhelming response, called sterilising immunity, reduces the chance

that people will pass on the virus," said the article.

The vaccines currently available offer strong protection against severe forms of Covid-19 but are less reliable at preventing the spread of the virus.

Stimulating immunity directly in the nose "lowers the risk of infecting other people", said Mielcarek.

"From there you have less of the virus infecting the lungs and so fewer severe cases since the viral load is lower," she added.

An article published in March by Gavi the Vaccine Alliance noted other advantages, including the fact that the sprays don't need refrigeration and don't need to be administered by health professionals.

"People would be able to self-administer them at home," the article says.

And in a French study on mice presented last week, 100 percent of subjects vaccinated with the spray survived infection while all unvaccinated mice died. "The vaccinated animals... showed low levels of the virus so they are not contagious anymore -- that's one of the advantages of the nasal spray," Philippe Manguin, CEO of the French institute that hopes to patent the vaccine told AFP.

Prince Philip's will sealed for 90 years

AFP, London

The will of Queen Elizabeth II's late husband Prince Philip will remain sealed from the public for 90 years "to protect the dignity and standing" of the monarch, a High Court judge has ruled.

Philip, who was formally known as the Duke of Edinburgh, died on April 9 aged 99, just weeks short of his 100th birthday.

It is convention for senior members of the royal family to ask that their will remain private.

Judge Andrew McFarlane of the High Court, ruled on Thursday that the will remain sealed for 90 years, when it will then be opened for historians to use.

There was a "public interest in protecting the private rights of the close members of the Royal Family", he ruled.



SEPTEMBER 19

1985 - Up to 12,000 people were killed when an earthquake hit Mexico City and the adjoining region. The quake measured 8.1 on the Richter scale.

2002 - South Korean troops enter demilitarised zone separating North and South to clear a path through minefields for transport links following historic agreement days earlier.

2006 - Thai military stages coup as Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra prepares to address the United Nations decades.

SOURCE: REUTERS

Two-time MP Babul Supriyo quits BJP, joins TMC

NDTV ONLINE

Former Union Minister Babul Supriyo joined Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's Trinamool Congress yesterday, two months after he was asked to resign as junior minister in the Environment Ministry and a month after saying he won't join any other party and would quit politics.

Later, he amended his plans and said he would remain a Member of Parliament.

"If opportunity comes your way, you should decide, and I have decided to take this," Supriyo told reporters yesterday. He was listed as the BJP's star campaigner for the Bhabanipur bypoll, where the BJP's Priyanka Tibrewal will contest against Banerjee on September 30.

Supriyo, the two-time MP, is the fifth BJP leader - the four others were BJP MLAs - to join Trinamool Congress after Banerjee's party won the assembly election in May and retained power.

Trinamool leader Kunal Ghosh yesterday said more BJP leaders are in

talks to join the party. "Many BJP leaders are in communication with Trinamool leadership. They are not satisfied with BJP. One (Mr Supriyo) joined today, another wants to join tomorrow. This process will go on. Wait and watch," Ghosh said, news agency ANI reported.

Supriyo was seen to be upset after he was made to quit as Union Minister in the government led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who refreshed the cabinet by appointing 43 new names in July.

"I'm surely sad for myself," Supriyo had tweeted on July 8, the day he resigned as Union Minister, and later deleted the post to replace with a new one that said he was "extremely happy" that he left the stint "without a spot of corruption on me".

In photos tweeted by the Trinamool yesterday, Supriyo, flanked by party leaders Abhishek Banerjee and Derek O'Brien, wearing a scarf adorned with the party's election symbol is seen smiling and shaking hands with Abhishek Banerjee.





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