

'Bullying acts'

Taiwan rebukes China over record fighter jet incursion

AFP, Taipei

Taiwan yesterday accused Beijing of bullying and damaging regional peace after Chinese fighter jets and bombers made their largest ever incursion into the island's air defence zone.

Beijing marked its National Day on Friday with its biggest aerial show of force against Taiwan to date, buzzing the self-ruled democratic island with 38 warplanes, including nuclear-capable H-6 bombers.

Democratic Taiwan's 23 million people live under the constant threat of invasion by China which views the island as its territory and has vowed to one day seize it, by force if necessary.

Under President Xi Jinping, Chinese warplanes are crossing into Taiwan's air defence identification zone (ADIZ) on a near daily basis. Xi has described Taiwan becoming part of the mainland as "inevitable".

But Friday's incursion sparked a particularly sharp rebuke from Taipei.

"China has been bellicose and damaging regional peace while engaging in many bullying acts," Premier Su Tseng-chang told reporters yesterday.

Friday's show of force came the same week Beijing accused Britain of "evil attentions" after it sent a frigate to sail through the Taiwan Strait.

China claims the strait as its own waterway, along with most of the disputed South China Sea. Most other nations view them as international waters open to all.

Beijing has ramped up pressure on Taipei since the 2016 election of President Tsai Ing-wen, who views the island as "already independent" and not part of a "one China".

Last year, Chinese military jets made a record 380 incursions into Taiwan's defence zone, and the number of breaches for the first nine months of this year has already exceeded 500.



Women's rights advocates take part in the nationwide Women's March, held after Texas rolled out a near-total ban on abortion procedures and access to abortion-inducing medications, in Austin, US, yesterday. Women's rights advocates was scheduled to join 660 marches planned around the United States yesterday to protest against recent efforts to restrict abortion access.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Quotes of the day



“Is this what the accountability that Biden promised looks like? MBS (Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman) took Jamal from me and the entire world. Will you hold him accountable or will you reward these murderers?”

HATICE CENGIZ, SAUDI DISSIDENT JOURNALIST JAMAL KHASHOGGI'S WIDOW, QUESTIONS US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN'S COMMITMENT TO HOLD SAUDIS ACCOUNTABLE THREE YEARS AFTER THE WRITER'S BRUTAL MURDER

Global Covid deaths hit 5m

US death toll crosses 700,000; Delta variant sweeps the world

REUTERS

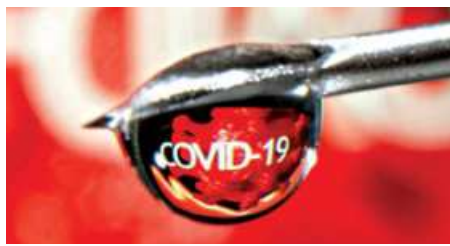
Worldwide deaths related to Covid-19 surpassed 5 million on Friday, according to a Reuters tally, with unvaccinated people particularly exposed to the virulent Delta strain.

The variant has exposed the wide disparities in vaccination rates between rich and poor nations, and the upshot of vaccine hesitancy in some western nations.

More than half of all global deaths reported on a seven-day average were in the United States, Russia, Brazil, Mexico and India.

While it took just over a year for the Covid-19 death to hit 2.5 million, the next 2.5 million deaths were recorded in just under eight months, according to a Reuters analysis.

An average of 8,000 deaths were reported daily across the world over the last week, or around five deaths every minute. However, the global death rate has been slowing in recent weeks.



More than half of the world has yet to receive at least one dose of a Covid-19 vaccine, according to Our World in Data. The United States, which has been battling vaccine misinformation that has caused about one-third of the population to avoid inoculations, surpassed 700,000 deaths on Friday, the highest toll of any country.

US cases and hospitalizations have been trending lower, but health officials are bracing for a possible resurgence as cooler weather forces more activities indoors.

Russia reported 887 coronavirus-related deaths on Friday, the largest single-

day death toll it has recorded since the pandemic began and the fourth day in a row it has set that record. Only 33% of Russia's eligible population has received a first vaccine dose.

As a region, South America has the highest death toll in the world accounting for 21% of all reported deaths, followed by North America and Eastern Europe contributing more than 14% of all fatalities each, according to Reuters analysis.

However, India, one of the first countries ravaged by the Delta variant, has gone from an average of 4,000 deaths a day to less than 300 as its vaccination campaign is rolled out.

About 47% of India's eligible population has received a first shot, with officials administering around 7,896,950 doses per day over the past week, a Reuters analysis of Our World in Data showed.

The Delta variant is now the dominant strain around the globe and has been reported in 187 out of 194 World Health Organization member countries.

NORTH KOREA'S RECENT MISSILE TESTS

UNSC fails to agree on joint statement

AFP, United Nations

The UN Security Council held an emergency meeting Friday on North Korea's recent missile tests but failed to agree on a joint statement, diplomats said.

The closed door meeting lasted just over an hour. It was requested by the United States, France and Britain.

The goal was to examine North Korea's launch early this week of what it called a hypersonic gliding vehicle. On Friday North Korean state media said the country has tested a new anti-aircraft missile.

"France wanted a public statement but Russia and China said that this was not the time, that they needed more time to analyze the situation," a diplomat from a country that is part of the Security Council told AFP.

In 2017 at the behest of the Trump administration, the Security Council imposed tough economic sanctions against North Korea three times after it staged a nuclear test and several involving conventional missiles. The council passed them unanimously each time. But since then the council has failed to reach a common stance on North Korea.

Several times China -- Pyongyang's key ally -- and Russia have requested in vain the partial lifting of sanctions against North Korea.

MORE NEWS

UK army to deliver petrol from Monday amid fuel crisis

The British army will begin delivering petrol to fuel stations tomorrow after fears over tanker driver shortages led to panic buying and forced the government to offer visa waivers to foreign truckers to plug the shortfall. "Almost 200 military tanker personnel, 100 of which are drivers, will be deployed from Monday to provide temporary support as part of the government's wider action to further relieve pressure on petrol stations and address the shortage of HGV drivers," the government said in a news release issued Friday. Motorists queued at fuel pumps across Britain at the beginning of the week, draining tanks and fraying tempers. Business minister Kwasi Kwarteng said the situation is improving and emphasized that there was no national shortage of fuel in the UK.

US official calls for Pakistan action on militants before visit

A top US official called Friday for Pakistan to take action against all extremist groups ahead of a visit to Islamabad, which has sought reconciliation with militants both at home and in Afghanistan. Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman will meet on October 7-8 with officials in Pakistan, which has long faced US accusations of playing a double game in Afghanistan where the Taliban swept back to power in August. "We seek a strong partnership with Pakistan on counterterrorism and we expect sustained action against all militant and terrorist groups without distinction," Sherman told reporters. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan said in an interview aired Friday that his government had opened talks with Pakistani Taliban about laying down their arms. Sherman will also visit India and Uzbekistan.

Trump asks US judge to force Twitter to restart his account

Former US president Donald Trump asked a federal judge in Florida on Friday to ask Twitter to restore his account, which the company removed in January citing a risk of incitement of violence. Trump filed a request for preliminary injunction against Twitter in the US District Court for the Southern District of Florida, arguing the social media company was "coerced" by members of the US Congress to suspend his account. Twitter and several other social media platforms banned Trump from their services after a mob of his supporters attacked the US Capitol in a deadly riot on Jan. 6. That assault followed a speech by Trump in which he reiterated false claims that his election loss in November was because of widespread fraud. Before he was blocked, Trump had more than 88 million followers on Twitter and used it as his social media megaphone.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



QATAR VOTES IN FIRST LEGISLATIVE POLLS A Qatari woman casts her ballot at a polling station in the capital Doha, yesterday, during the country's first ever legislative vote. The candidates are mostly men, with just 28 women among the 284 hopefuls running for the 30 available council seats. The remaining 15 seats will be appointed by the all-powerful Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani. Analysts say the vote is a symbolic nod to democracy and will not lead to power shifting away from the ruling family.

PHOTO: AFP

CLIMATE CHANGE

Big nations must 'stretch to do more'

Says Kerry ahead of crucial COP26

REUTERS, Milan

The world's major economies must "stretch to do more" at next month's UN climate talks to show they are serious about wanting to tackle global warming, US Climate Envoy John Kerry said yesterday.

The COP26 conference in Glasgow aims to secure more ambitious climate action from the nearly 200 countries that signed the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit global warming to well below 2.0 degrees Celsius - and to 1.5 degrees preferably - above pre-industrial levels.

"We now have about 55% of global GDP (gross domestic product) committed to undertake tracks that will hold the temperature to 1.5 degrees. There are other countries now sharpening their pencils," Kerry said during a pre-COP26 meeting in Milan, Italy.

"Well below 2.0 degrees Celsius means well below ... the common sense meaning of that is not 1.9, 1.8 or 1.7 (degrees)," he added.

New energy and funding pledges from the United States and China have raised negotiators' hopes, but many G20 countries - including major polluters such as China and India - have yet to announce updates of their short-term climate action plans.

Climate activists have called for a transparent climate finance system and more grants to help the people most exposed to the impact of climate change. Wealthy nations that pledged a decade ago to mobilize \$100 billion a year to help vulnerable countries adapt and transition to cleaner energy are still short of their 2020 goal.

Kerry said he expected donors to fulfil the \$100 billion pledge, but added that a post-2025 finance plan "with an emphasis not just on billions, but on trillions" would be required.



SEPTEMBER 19

2333 BC - State of Gojoseon (Modern day Korea) founded by Dangun Wanggeom during the reign of the Chinese Emperor Yao.

1932 - Iraq became independent after the British mandate ended, and joined the League of Nations.

1990 - Reunification of East and West Germany. West German flag is raised above the Brandenburg Gate on the stroke of midnight.

SOURCE: WEBSITES

Duterte to retire

AFP, Manila

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte yesterday said he will not run for vice president in 2022 and will retire from politics, potentially paving the way for his daughter to contest the country's highest office.

Duterte, who polls show remains almost as popular as when he was swept to victory in 2016 on a promise to rid the country of drugs, is constitutionally barred from seeking a second term as leader.

"The overwhelming... sentiment of the Filipinos is that I am not qualified and it would be a violation of the constitution to circumvent the law, the spirit of the constitution" to run for the vice presidency, Duterte, 76, said.

"Today I announce my retirement from politics."

Duterte made the surprise announcement at the venue where he was expected to register his candidacy. He did not specify when he would leave politics. His close aide, Senator Christopher Lawrence "Bong" Go, registered for the vice presidency instead.

The tough-talking leader has not yet announced his preferred successor, but many expect it will be his daughter, Sara, who has been the front runner in recent polls.

Yesterday, Sara registered to run for her third term as Davao mayor, state media reported. But she has until November 15 to make a late entry into the presidential race -- as her father did in 2015.

The election season kicked off Friday with candidates vying for thousands of posts from president to town councillor.



Either you or your near ones

Report says Afghan interpreters summoned by Taliban

AFP, The Hague

Afghan interpreters who worked for the Netherlands have been summoned to appear in court by the Taliban who have threatened their families, Dutch public television NOS reported on Friday.

The interpreters are in hiding but their family members will be held responsible if they fail to show up in court "and severely punished to teach other traitors a lesson," said a letter from the Taliban, which was aired by the broadcaster.

NOS said the recipient, who worked for the EU's policing agency Europol in Afghanistan, was accused of taking "dishonourable and forbidden money" from foreigners.

"We will take revenge. If we are not able to get hold of you, we will settle scores with your near ones," said another letter to an interpreter whom the Taliban accused of being responsible for the deaths of some of their fighters.

Just after taking power, the Taliban declared a general amnesty for Afghan government and military officials. But despite their pledges not to avenge themselves, a confidential United Nations report said the Taliban were tracking down people who worked with foreign forces.

Man marries rice cooker

AGENCIES

An Indonesian man named Khoirul Anam has created a stir on social media by 'marrying' his rice cooker. Khoirul Anam shared a series of pictures last week that show him dressed up in fancy wedding finery for the ceremony. The white-coloured rice cooker he 'married' was also decked up for the occasion - it appeared alongside Anam in a sheer white veil.

Photos that he shared on Facebook show them sitting side-by-side as the marriage was solemnised. One of the photos shows him kissing the cooker. In another, the appliance is placed next to him as he signs their marriage papers.

In a short caption accompanying the post, Anam said he decided to marry his rice cooker as it was "Fair, obedient, loving and good at cooking." The photos sparked much amusement on Facebook, collecting nearly 10,000 'likes' and over 1200 comments.

Bizarre as it may sound, the story only got stranger when, four days later, Anam 'divorced' the kitchen appliance, citing that it could only cook rice. The Indonesian man announced the divorce on Facebook.

Of course, the whole wedding and the subsequent divorce was nothing more than a social media stunt for entertainment. Local news websites report that Anam is a well-known celebrity in Indonesia who participates in outlandish stunts for the entertainment of his followers.

