

Climate envoy Kerry voices hope for more US-China co-op

AFP, Singapore

United States climate envoy John Kerry yesterday voiced hope that Beijing and Washington would work together more closely on the climate emergency after they struck a pact to accelerate action against greenhouse gas emissions.

Speaking at a forum in Singapore, the former secretary of state emphasised cooperation -- even as the rivals spar over other flashpoint issues such as Taiwan.

"I hope that our working together will increase the sharing of data, increase the sharing of options and begin to engage us in a very important dialogue with the top leadership of both of our countries," Kerry said at the Bloomberg New Economy Forum.

Tigers lose

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Mushfiqur Rahim -- the three most experienced batters -- Bangladesh made as poor a start as everyone would have feared. Saif Hassan, making his debut, and Najmul Hossain Shanto, back again in the side, failed to validate their inclusions as the hosts struggled to 15 for three against the bowling of Mohammad Wasim and Hasan Ali before being reduced to 40 for four halfway through the innings when skipper Mahmudullah went for an 11-ball six.

However, Afif Hossain gave the hosts some belief with a 34-ball 36 before Nurul Hasan's 22-ball 28 and Mahedi Hasan's unbeaten 30 off 20 balls -- the three smashing a brace of sixes each -- gave the Bangladesh bowlers a total to work with.

And the bowlers did work with a lot of heart, reducing the revered Pakistani batting line-up to 24 for four in six overs with the prized scalps of Babar Azam (7), Mohammad Rizwan (11) and Shoaib Malik (0). Pakistan, like their hosts, crawled to 40 for four at the half-way stage, but Fakhar Zaman and Khushdil Shah ground out the tough phase of the innings and started taking the bowling to the cleaners as conditions started to become a little easier.

Even as both left-handers departed for 34 runs each, Shadab Khan (21 not out) and Mohammad Nawaz (18 not out) imposed themselves on the wayward bowling and guided Pakistan to a well-deserved victory with an unbroken partnership of 36 off just 15 deliveries.

The winning runs came off the second ball of the final over of the innings bowled by leg-spinner Aminul Islam, who was only brought into action when Pakistan were a stroke away from victory.

Joypurhat rape

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a complaint lodged with Khetlal Police Station by the girl and her family.

However, the accused remained absconding. The victim's family claimed that they were being threatened by the accused.

Nirendranath Mandal, officer-in-charge of Khetlal Police Station, said that efforts are on to arrest the accused in the sexual harassment case.

"Another case will be filed against the accused if evidence of abetment to suicide is found during the investigation, he said.

'A bit hypocritical'

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"Of course the climate crisis isn't caused by private jets but it is a bit hypocritical ... that world leaders (who) live very close by, for instance Boris Johnson, arrived in Glasgow by private jet while trying to solve the climate crisis," Thunberg told AFP.

"That doesn't send the right message," said the 18-year-old who travelled by train from Stockholm to the conference aimed at limiting global temperature rises to less than 1.5C.

Johnson flew in and out of the conference aboard a chartered Airbus plane.

He jetted in to the conference from Rome where he was attending a G20 meeting. Critics have noted that he also flew home to London, rather than take a four-and-a-half hour train ride from Glasgow.

Johnson later returned to the conference by train.

The summit wound up last week with nearly 200 nations signing a global deal to try to halt runaway global warming after two weeks of painful negotiations, but it fell short of what scientists say is needed to contain dangerous rises.

Among other things, India and China weakened the final summit decision text in the final straight, insisting language was changed from "phase out" coal to "phase down".

Thunberg has previously dismissed the climate conference deal as "blah, blah, blah".

"I think it's strange that some people are setting it up as a victory because what standards does that set for future COPs? How do we learn from this COP if we don't admit that it was actually a failure," she said.

"Instead of them returning with improved ambitions every five years they are going to do it every year... That doesn't really mean much unless that actually leads to anything."



A girl holds a sign reading "Climate change more hopeless than my math class", as Global Climate Strike activists of the movement Fridays for Future protest during the coalition negotiation, in Berlin, Germany yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Thousands protest dried-up river in Iran's Isfahan

AFP, Tehran

Thousands of protesters converged on Isfahan in central Iran yesterday to voice their anger after the city's lifeblood river dried up due to drought and diversion.

The massive protest, that drew in farmers and other people from across Isfahan province, was the biggest since demonstrations over the water crisis started on November 9.

"Thousands of people from Isfahan, farmers from the east and west of the province, have gathered in the dry Zayandeh Rood riverbed with one key demand: let the river run," a state television journalist in Isfahan reported, broadcasting live images of yesterday's rally.

"For years, there has been no will to resolve the problems of this important river," the journalist said.

Footage aired on the channel showed men and women in a crowd spanning the riverbed clapping in unison.

"Plundered for 20 years" and "the water must return", they chanted.

Others were seen holding up banners that read "East Isfahan has become desert" and "Our water is being held hostage", in pictures published by Iranian media outlets.

The city of Isfahan is Iran's third largest, with a population of around two million.

It is a tourist magnet due to its heritage sites, including a historic bridge that crosses the Zayandeh Rood river -- which has been dry since the year 2000 apart from brief periods.

Drought is seen as one of the causes, but farmers also blame the authorities' diversion of the river water to neighbouring Yazd province.

The Iranian government has promised to come to the aid of farmers and resolve the crisis.

"I have ordered the ministers of energy and agriculture to take immediate steps to deal with the issue," Iran's First Vice President

Mohammad Mokhber said on television.

Energy Minister Ali-Akbar Mehrabian apologised to farmers for being unable to provide water for their crops.

"We hope to fill these gaps in the coming months," he said.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi had already met with representatives from the provinces of Isfahan, Yazd and Semnan on November 11 and promised to resolve water issues.

Largely arid Iran has been suffering chronic dry spells for years.

In July, deadly protests broke out in the southwestern province of Khuzestan after drought led to widespread water shortages.

Iran is one of the most water-stressed countries in the world.

Water levels in the country's lakes and reservoirs have halved since last year due to the severe drought affecting the country and the wider region, a report from Iran's space agency said in October.

Clashes with Azerbaijan kill 6 troops this week: Armenia

AFP, Yerevan

Six Armenian troops were killed in border clashes with Azerbaijan near the contested Nagorno-Karabakh region earlier this week, officials in Yerevan said yesterday.

The clashes on Tuesday along the Caucasus neighbours' shared border were the worst since they went to war last year over Karabakh and sparked fears of another flare-up in their long-running territorial dispute.

"Six Armenian troops were killed

in action as a result of an attack by Azerbaijani armed forces," the Armenian defence ministry said in a brief statement.

It had earlier this week reported one death and said 13 Armenian soldiers were captured by Azerbaijani forces while 24 more servicemen were missing.

Azerbaijan said earlier this week that seven of its troops were killed and 10 more wounded after Armenia provoked clashes.

A ceasefire was reached Tuesday

evening following mediation by Russia's Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu and has held since.

Last year's six-week conflict, which claimed the lives of more than 6,500 people, ended in November in a Russia-mediated deal that saw Armenia cede swathes of territory it had controlled for decades.

Ethnic Armenian separatists in Nagorno-Karabakh broke away from Azerbaijan as the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, and an ensuing conflict claimed around 30,000 lives.

The seasonal

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of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR).

The risk of people contracting the virus increases during winter, as cold creates a positive environment for such virus cultivation.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms of Nipah virus infection are similar to those of influenzas, such as fever and muscle pain. In some cases, inflammation of the brain occurs, leading to disorientation or coma. Around half of the symptomatic cases are fatal.

PREVENTION

There is no vaccine available against the Nipah virus yet. So, as winter approaches, scientists every year issue cautions and recommend preventive measures for people to stay safe from the infection.

Some general measures to stay safe from the disease are:

1. Practice handwashing regularly with soap and water
2. Avoid contact with bats
3. Avoid areas where bats are known to roost
4. Avoid eating or drinking products that could be contaminated by bats, such as raw date palm sap, raw fruit, or fruit that is found on the ground
5. Avoid contact with the blood or body fluids of any person known to be infected with NiV

Yahya declined to discuss

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Farland had the impression that Yahya believes he is being boxed in by numerous pressures that are being exerted on him at home and abroad. For the first time he sensed "agitation" in Yahya. He thinks that Yahya had decided that his political plan is his only means of extricating himself from an untenable military and economic situation inflamed and fueled by India.

CHINA DENOUNCES INDIA IN UN China accused India of interfering in Pakistan's internal affairs and of obstructing efforts to restore peace in the subcontinent. Fu Hao, a Chinese representative, in a statement that surprised diplomats by its toughness, charged that subversive activities by India in East Pakistan had caused refugees to flee across the border. The Chinese delegate did not mention India by name but spoke of a "certain country" in his statement in the General Assembly's Social Committee, which had been discussing humanitarian assistance to the Pakistani refugees.

China's support of Pakistan's political position and the attack

on India were unexpected to some delegates, who had felt that Peking's relations with India had been improving and that there was some doubt that China would give open backing to Pakistan in the deepening border conflict.

ON THE WAR FRONT

Mukti Bahini launched an attack on Raiganj base of Pakistan Army in Kurigram today. The Pakistan army launched a counterattack. Lt Samad provided cover fire so the Mukti Bahini soldiers could escape. He was martyred in the battle. The Bangladesh government conferred upon him the title -- "Bir Uttam".

Initially, freedom fighters failed to gain an upper hand against the Pakistani invaders. Later, they made a strong comeback, defeated the Pakistani army and freed Raiganj next day.

Mukti Bahini destroyed the newly-built railway bridge at Gochihata in Kishoreganj. A fierce battle broke out in the region.

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Deforestation hits 15yr

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The INPE report, dated October 27, showed deforestation rising in each of the last four cycles - a first for the data series since at least 2000.

"Notice the date on the INPE note. The government went to COP26 knowing the deforestation data and hid it," wrote Brazilian advocacy group the Climate Observatory on Twitter.

A source with knowledge of the matter confirmed that the government had the data in hand prior to the UN summit.

In the run-up to the summit, Brazil's government had touted preliminary monthly data pointing to a slight decline for the annual period as evidence it was getting deforestation under control. The more refined final data instead showed a dire picture.

"The numbers are still a challenge for us and we have to be more forceful in relation to these crimes," Environment Minister Joaquim Pereira Leite said at a news conference on Thursday.

He told reporters the data did not reflect recently stepped up enforcement against illegal deforestation, while conceding the government must do more to fight the destruction.

The data also casts doubt on Brazil's signing up to a global pledge with more than 100 other nations to eliminate deforestation worldwide by 2030, also announced during the summit.

Brazil, as home to the majority of the world's largest rainforest, was seen as crucial to that global pact. The Amazon's trees absorb vast amounts of carbon dioxide that would otherwise warm the planet.

But some scientists warn that if enough of the forest is destroyed, it could cross a tipping point, dry out and turn into savannah.

That would release huge amounts of carbon, virtually ensuring the world cannot hit the targets laid out to avoid the worst effects of climate change.

Yet Bolsonaro's moves to show the government is protecting the

forest have fallen short. He has regularly deployed the military to the Amazon since 2019 to aid in policing deforestation. But a Reuters investigation showed military missteps and incompetence failed to rein in the environmental damage.

Mauricio Voivodic, head of environmental group WWF in Brazil, said the numbers laid bare "the real Brazil that the Bolsonaro government tries to hide with imaginary discourses and greenwashing efforts abroad."

"What the reality shows," he said, "is that the Bolsonaro government has accelerated the course of the Amazon's destruction."

Biden to hold Africa summit to boost US ties: Blinken

AFP, Abuja

US President Joe Biden plans to hold a summit with African leaders to show US commitment to the continent, Secretary of State Antony Blinken announced yesterday.

"President Biden intends to host the US-Africa Leaders Summit to drive the kind of high-level diplomacy and engagement that can transform relationships and make effective cooperation possible," Blinken said in the Nigerian capital Abuja.

Blinken, who is on his first visit to sub-Saharan Africa as secretary of state, did not give a date for the summit.

The move comes as China steps up engagement with Africa including through a major meeting this month in Senegal, where Blinken headed later yesterday.

US allies France, Britain and Japan have also been holding regular summits with African leaders.




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IMPORTANT DEADLINES

- Application opens: November 21, 2021 (Sunday)
- Last date of application: December 20, 2021 (Monday)
- Written test: December 24, 2021 (Friday): 3:00 PM-4:00 PM
- Viva-voice: January 7 & 8, 2022 (Friday & Saturday)
- Class starts: February 04, 2022 (Friday)



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