

Top US, China officials hold 'candid' talks

AFP, Beijing

The top Chinese and US security advisers have held lengthy talks, with both sides describing them as "candid" following days of acrimonious exchanges over Taiwan and other flashpoint issues.

Readouts of the meeting in Luxembourg on Monday were toned down compared with last week, when China's defence minister warned his country would not "hesitate to start a war" over Taiwan, while the US defense secretary blasted Beijing's "provocative, destabilising" military activity.

But US security advisor Jake Sullivan and top diplomat Yang Jiechi did not indicate any compromise on their core points of disagreement, especially Taiwan.

Sullivan "underscored the importance of keeping open lines of communication to manage competition between our two countries", according to the White House.

Yang also agreed on maintaining dialogue, Xinhua said, but made clear that Beijing was not going to shift its red lines.

"For some time... the US side has been insisting on further containing and suppressing China in an all-round way," he said, according to Xinhua. But "China firmly opposes using competition to define bilateral ties."

The Xinhua readout said Yang "also stated China's solemn position on issues concerning Xinjiang, Hong Kong, Tibet, the South China Sea, as well as human rights and religion".



A woman plays with her daughter while waiting with fellow Venezuelan migrants at a bus station in Monterrey, Mexico as she tries to cross the border to Del Rio, Texas, US, on Monday. PHOTO: REUTERS

UK defends Rwanda deportation policy

AFP, London

The UK government yesterday defended its controversial policy to send asylum seekers to Rwanda, even as the entire senior leadership of the Church of England branded it shameful and immoral. Foreign Secretary Liz Truss insisted the first flight to Kigali would take off later yesterday no matter how many people were on board, after 23 of the 31 migrants had their tickets cancelled. But she said the policy was vital to smash the business model of human-trafficking gangs exploiting vulnerable migrants. "Our policy is completely legal. It's completely moral," she added, accusing critics of having no alternative plan.

XINJIANG 'ABUSES' Countries blame China

AFP, Geneva

Dozens of countries yesterday voiced concern at alleged abuses in China's Xinjiang region, and demanded that the UN rights chief publish a long-delayed report on the rights situation there. Delivering a joint statement on behalf of 47 countries, the Netherlands ambassador to the UN Human Rights Council Paul Bekkers pointed to a number of "credible reports" - vehemently denied by Beijing - indicating that more than one million Uyghurs and other minorities have been arbitrarily detained in the region. The countries, he said, "repeat our call on China to urgently address these concerns," and to "end the arbitrary detention of Uyghurs and other minorities".

Prayers for Sahu

AFP, Raipur

Indian emergency workers were scrambling yesterday to rescue a 10-year-old boy with hearing and speech impairments who has been trapped down a narrow well for four days. Rahul Sahu fell down the 24 metres waterhole on Friday while playing in the backyard of his house in Chhattisgarh. Earth movers and cranes are helping dig a tunnel next to the well, which is only a couple of feet wide, with army soldiers and members of India's disaster response agency lending their assistance. Sahu was "responding well" to rescuers and a camera is monitoring his condition and movements, Janjgir district police chief Vijay Agrawal told AFP. An oxygen pipe is feeding Sahu fresh air.

MICROSCOPIC AIR POLLUTION

Life expectancy cut by 2 yrs

AFP, Paris

Microscopic air pollution caused mostly by burning fossil fuels shortens lives worldwide by more than two years, researchers reported yesterday.

Across South Asia, the average person would live five years longer if levels of fine particulate matter met World Health Organization standards, according to a report from the University of Chicago's Energy Policy Institute.

In the Indian states of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, home to 300 million, crippling lung and heart disease caused by so-called PM2.5 pollution reduces life expectancy by eight years, and in the capital city of New Delhi by a decade.

PM2.5 pollution - 2.5 microns across or less, roughly the diameter of a human hair

- penetrates deep into the lungs and enters the bloodstream.

In 2013, the United Nations classified it as a cancer-causing agent.

The WHO says PM2.5 density in the air should not top 15 microgrammes per cubic metre in any 24-hour period, or 5 mcg/m3 averaged across an entire year.

Faced with mounting evidence of damaging health impacts, the WHO tightened these standards last year, the first change since establishing air quality guidance in 2005.

"Clean air pays back in additional years of life for people across the world," lead research Crista Hasenkopf and colleagues said in the Air Quality Life Index report.

"Permanently reducing global air pollution to meet the WHO's guidelines would add 2.2 years onto average life expectancy."

Almost all populated regions in the world exceed WHO guidelines, but nowhere more so than in Asia: by 15-fold in Bangladesh, 10-fold in India, and nine-fold in Nepal and Pakistan.

Central and West Africa, along with much of Southeast Asia and parts of central America, also face pollution levels - and shortened lives - well above the global average.

One country that has seen major improvements is China.

PM2.5 pollution fell in the nation of 1.4 billion people by almost 40 percent between 2013 and 2020, adding two years to life expectancy.

Compared to other causes of premature death, the impact of PM2.5 pollution is comparable to smoking tobacco, more than three times that of alcohol use, and six times that of HIV/AIDS, the report said.



Shrimp hatchery wastes

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pipes, said, "We treat the effluent with bleaching agents to kill off the bacteria and use a settlement pond to separate the solid waste from the water."

Mohammed Alamgir, of Quality Shrimp Project, said his project is closed for the season. "But when operational, the effluent is treated in a settlement tank before being released into the sea."

Harunur Rashid, the owner of Marigold hatchery, also said, "We keep our water in a tank for 24 hours before releasing it into the

ocean. This water is good for our shrimp, so it must be good for the fish in the ocean."

But a deluge of shrimp excrement is hardly what a tourist wants on their body or in their mouth when taking a dip in the sea.

Rafiq, president of the association, said, "The entire coast cannot be a tourist zone. We restrict ourselves to Kolatoli and Sonapara. We stay away from ecologically critical and tourist areas like Sugandha and Laboni point."

The waters of the Bay of Bengal, however, has some of the strongest

currents of all the seas, and hardly remains confined to Kolatoli and Sonapara. The waters ultimately carry the sludge and scum up the length of the coast running alongside Cox's Bazar.

Nazmul Huda, deputy director of Cox's Bazar's department of environment, said he has not noticed any such pollution in the sea.

But environmental activist Nazimuddin has. Secretary general of a social work organisation called Amra Cox's Bazar Bashi, he said, "This water is deterring tourists from enjoying Cox's Bazar."

Urgent UN appeal to Myanmar junta to halt executions

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief said yesterday Myanmar's junta has likely committed crimes against humanity and urged authorities to stop planned executions, including of prominent democracy activists.

Myanmar's military seized power on February 1 last year, ousting the civilian government and arresting its de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi. The junta has since waged a bloody crackdown on dissent.

Public Procurement Act-2006 & Regulations-2008 notice. Includes details of procurement for various services and goods, with a table of items and their specifications.

Intex South Asia 9th Edition exhibition advertisement. Includes dates (June 16-17-18, 2022), location (Hall IV, ICCB, Dhaka), and a list of guests and sponsors.