

INTERNATIONAL

‘Impossible’ to isolate Russia

Putin hails Asia's growing global influence, says western sanctions not working

AGENCIES

President Vladimir Putin yesterday said it was “impossible” to isolate Russia and hailed Asia's growing global influence, as Moscow looks east in the face of unprecedented Western sanctions over Ukraine.

Washington and Brussels have pummelled Moscow with a barrage of economic and personal sanctions after Putin sent troops into Ukraine on February 24.

Facing deteriorating ties with Western capitals, Moscow is seeking to pivot the country towards the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

“No matter how much someone would like to isolate Russia, it is impossible to do this,” Putin told the Eastern Economic Forum in Russia's Pacific port city of Vladivostok.

- » Xi and Putin to meet in Uzbekistan next week
- » Putin says Ukraine grains going to EU, not developing nations
- » Putin warns ‘no gas, no oil’ to countries that cap prices
- » Ukraine backs UN peacekeeping force at nuclear plant



Russian President Vladimir Putin shakes hands with Myanmar junta leader Min Aung Hlaing on the sidelines of the 2022 Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, Russia Yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

He added that Russia is “coping with the technological, financial and economic aggression of the West”, insisting the economic situation in Russia is “stabilising”.

As Moscow seeks to instead bolster ties with Asia — especially key ally China — Putin welcomed the growing role of the Asia-Pacific region in global affairs.

“The role... of the countries of the Asia-Pacific region has significantly increased,” he said at the forum, adding that partnerships will create “colossal

new opportunities for our people”.

Putin yesterday met Myanmar junta chief Min Aung Hlaing, whose government is facing diplomatic isolation as well. Putin hailed Myanmar as a “long-standing and reliable partner”, while Min Aung Hlaing called the Russian president “a leader of the world”.

As the Ukraine war rages into its seventh month, with tens of thousands killed and millions displaced, the global cost of the crisis is unfolding. Countries are confronted with skyrocketing energy

prices and serious grain shortages.

Putin yesterday denied Russia was using energy as a weapon. He added that Moscow would stop delivering oil and gas supplies to countries that introduced price caps, as some Western countries are considering.

But Putin yesterday said most of the Ukrainian grain, which resumed to flow after a UN-brokered deal, had been shipped to EU countries, not developing nations.

Putin is expected next week to hold an in-person meeting with Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping. The two leaders will meet at a summit of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) held in Uzbekistan on September 15 and 16, a Russian diplomat said yesterday.

Meanwhile, Ukraine's nuclear operator yesterday said it would support the deployment of UN peacekeepers at the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia plant, a day after the UN atomic watchdog called for a security zone around the site.

The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) released a report Tuesday saying the situation at the nuclear power plant, Europe's largest, was “untenable”. The agency sent a team to the site last week.

Putin yesterday said there was “no military equipment” at the plant in southern Ukraine, adding that he “certainly trusts” the IAEA report.



China quake death toll rises to 74

REUTERS, Beijing

China has reopened roads leading to the epicentre of Monday's 6.8 magnitude earthquake in the southwestern province of Sichuan and traffic has resumed, state media reported yesterday, while the death toll has risen to 74. In addition, a total of 259 people were injured in the disaster and 26 remained missing as of Tuesday night, the People's Daily reported. The strongest earthquake to hit the province since 2017 destroyed numerous buildings and caused severe damage to power and water infrastructure as well as telecommunications. Rescuers had rushed to reach stranded people, restore utilities and send emergency relief, while 11,000 people were evacuated on Tuesday from Luding county, where the quake was centred.

Cyberattack: Albania cuts ties with Iran

AFP, Tirana

Albania broke diplomatic ties with Iran yesterday, Prime Minister Edi Rama said in a statement, as the leader accused Iran of launching a massive cyberattack against the country this summer. The prime minister accused Iran of directing a cyberattack against Albanian institutions on July 15 in a bid to “paralyse public services and hack data and electronic communications from the government systems”. Rama said the said attack failed its purpose. Albania and Iran have been bitter foes for years, stemming from Tirana's hosting of the Iranian opposition group the People's Mujahedeen of Iran (MEK) on its soil.

18 more die in Pakistan flood

REUTERS, Sehwan

Parts of Pakistan seemed “like a sea”, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said yesterday, after visiting some of the flood-hit areas that cover as much as a third of the South Asian nation, where 18 more deaths took the toll from days of rain to 1,343. As many as 33 million of a population of 220 million have been affected in a disaster blamed on climate change that has left hundreds of thousands homeless and caused losses of at least \$10 billion. National disaster officials said eight children were among the dead in the last 24 hours. The floods were brought by record monsoon rains and glacier melt in Pakistan's northern mountains.

NEW UK PM'S CABINET

No white men in top positions

REUTERS, London

The new British Prime Minister Liz Truss has selected a cabinet where for the first time a white man will not hold one of the country's four most important ministerial positions.

Truss appointed Kwasi Kwarteng whose parents came from Ghana in the 1960s — as Britain's first Black finance minister while James Cleverly is the first Black foreign minister.

Cleverly, whose mother hails from Sierra Leone and whose father is white, has in the past spoken about being bullied as a mixed-race child and has said the party needs to do more to attract Black voters.

Suella Braverman, whose parents came to Britain from Kenya and Mauritius six decades ago, succeeds Priti Patel as the second ethnic minority home secretary, or interior minister, where she will be responsible for police and immigration.

The growing diversity is in part thanks to a push by the Conservative Party in recent years to put forward a more varied set of candidates for parliament.

British governments have until a few decades ago been made up of mostly white men. It took until 2002 for Britain to appoint its first ethnic minority cabinet minister when Paul Boateng was appointed chief secretary to the Treasury.



Rahul emulates Mahatma

Starts 3,500-km long-march to revive India's Congress Party

AFP, Sriperumbudur

Emulating Indian independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi was yesterday set to begin a “long march” seeking to halt the seemingly inexorable slow decline of his once-mighty Congress party.

The Grand Old Party, which governed for decades after India's 1947 independence from Britain, is a shadow of its former self, discredited and crushed under the electoral juggernaut of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

The BJP thrashed Congress at the last two elections, with Modi deriding Gandhi — descended not from the Mahatma but from India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru — as an out-of-touch pampered princeling and playboy.

Before setting off on the trek Gandhi prayed at a monument in Sriperumbudur in the southern state of Tamil Nadu where in 1991 his father Rajiv Gandhi was assassinated — like his grandmother Indira seven years earlier.

“I lost my father to the politics of hate and division. I will not lose my beloved country to it too,” Gandhi, 52, said on Twitter.

He then headed to the southernmost tip of India, before traversing the nation, covering 3,500 kilometres

(2,175 miles) across 150 days and ending in Kashmir — although it was unclear if he will actually walk all the way. The aim, he said, is to highlight rampant unemployment, soaring inflation and growing polarisation between majority Hindus and religious minorities like Muslims under Modi, 71.

Mahatma Gandhi famously trekked some 380 kilometres in 1930 to protest a salt tariff imposed by British rulers, in a seminal moment in the independence struggle.

Rahul Gandhi quit as party president after the 2019 election debacle and was replaced on an interim basis by his mother Sonia Gandhi, 75, widow of Rajiv.

If he returns as president, which remains unclear, he faces a huge battle to revive the party, in power in just two out of 28 states and in coalition in four others.

Analysts say Congress lacks Modi's common touch and is missing a counter-narrative to the BJP's politics which is infused with a heavy dose of “Hindutva” — an ideology that believes in making India an exclusive Hindu state.

The march “is not a gimmick. Rahul Gandhi sincerely believes in religious harmony. But the people are not interested. So, it will fail,” said political analyst Parsa Venkateshwar Rao Junior.



‘We daren’t

FROM PAGE 2

“Besides, measures would be taken to settle the land dispute.”

Recently, a delegation led by Sanjeeb Drong, general secretary of Bangladesh Indigenous People's Forum, visited the area and demanded immediate arrest of the killers.

On September 6, rights organisation Ain o Salish Kendra in a statement called for immediate arrest of all those involved in the recent attack.

The people of the Munda community say they have been living and farming on around eight bighas of land in Antakhali Mundapara for generations.

A day after the attack, Rashidul, a resident of Srifalkati village, who was later made an accused, claimed the land had once been in his family's possession as his father bought it in the mid-20th century.

He denied the allegations of assault and said they were only trying to reclaim the land.

Thrilling

FROM PAGE 12

In a game dominated by bowlers, Pakistan fast bowler Haris Rauf led an inspired attack that limited Afghanistan to 129-6 after Pakistan elected to field first.

India play Afghanistan in Dubai on Thursday in a dead rubber, with Pakistan facing Sri Lanka on Friday in a preview of Sunday's final.

Ballot voting possible

FROM PAGE 12

commission. As a result, the country will once again see a “failed election”, which would push it into a state of crisis.

The statement was made as the EC on August 23 decided to use EVMs in up to 150 parliamentary seats in the next general elections though major opposition political parties, including the BNP, and main opposition in parliament Jatiya Party (Ershad) opposed it.

Ruling Awami League and several other parties were in favour of EVMs in the polls.

CEC Habibur Awal yesterday said, “I don't

see any political crisis regarding using EVMs in the elections. The crisis we are seeing in the political arena is not only about the use of EVMs, but it is a bigger crisis. We hope this crisis will end.”

If there is a political consensus, elections to all constituencies will be held using ballot papers. If all parties are joining the polls, that is a good initiative, he added.

The CEC said to them, whether the elections are held in a free and fair manner is important. “It is not an important factor if the elections are held using EVMs or ballot papers.”

BR again seeks locomotives

FROM PAGE 12

they have more powerful engines and were heavily overhauled before sending to Bangladesh,” he said, adding that the locomotives helped BR to improve its service, especially when cross-border transportation by rail.

Of the BR's 263 locomotives, 249 are currently operating and about 67 percent of the rail engines have crossed their 20-year economic lifespan, shows a BR document published in June.

Poor planning, lengthy procurement process, contractors' failure to deliver shipments as promised, and lately the Covid-19 pandemic have left the BR with 67 percent of its locomotives overaged,

according to experts and engineers.

As a result, the state-run transport agency is failing to live up to the expectations in terms of services and timing. At the same time, its operational costs are going up, they said.

The BR has long been struggling to run its services with outdated engines, but the situation deteriorated after more than 100 new trains were added to its fleet over the last decade. Train carriages and locomotives are procured separately.

As per BR documents, the agency will procure 140 locomotives — 100 metre gauge and 40 BG — under ongoing projects. Of those, 30 MG and 16 BG locomotives are already

Awal added that many are saying that EVMs are “weak” machines. But “strong” machines are not required. What is needed is whether the machines function properly.

He said they held many elections with EVMs, and the machines functioned properly.

The CEC once again said no manipulations are possible if elections are held with EVMs.

“Those who are complaining that fraudulence is possible via the EVMs should inform us in writing or verbally about how it is possible. No party has yet done that.”

in service. Another 24 BG locomotives were supposed to join the fleet by now but have been delayed, compelling the authorities to extend the deadline.

But the project to procure the largest batch of locomotives — 70 MG ones — has fallen into deep uncertainty as the South Korean contractor wants to pull out from the project after the government asked it to manage soft loans instead of non-concessional loans as agreed.

The project is on hold now and the implementing agency would be cancelling the contract soon, said a BR official informed on the discussions.

“In this situation, the 20 locomotives would be of great help,” he added.

French lawmakers visit Taiwan after China's war drill threats

AFP, Taipei

A group of French lawmakers landed in Taiwan yesterday, the first high-level European delegation since China conducted huge war drills to protest a visit to the island by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

The trip came as Taiwan held two days of live fire drills on a strategic island that lies between its coast and China.

The democracy exists under constant threat of an invasion by authoritarian China, which claims the self-ruled island as part of its territory to be seized one day.

Beijing lashes out at any diplomatic action that might lend Taiwan legitimacy, and has responded with growing anger to visits by Western officials and politicians.

The delegation of five French lawmakers is being led by Senator Cyril Pellevat, Taiwan's foreign ministry said, adding it was the fourth visit by French politicians in the past 12 months.

Last month China sent warships, missiles and fighter jets into the waters and skies around Taiwan in a show of opposition to Pelosi's presence — its largest and most aggressive exercises since the mid-1990s.

ACC can seek

FROM PAGE 12

wealth statements.

The order was issued following a petition filed by a garments trader who had been served three notices by the ACC, between 2010 and 2011, for wealth statements even though he had complied with the first two notices.

The apex court in the full text yesterday observed that “... there is no room to say that issuance of such notice by the commission or its authorised officer is harassing, malafide

and prejudiced to the concerned person[s]”.

The top court said section 19 of the Anti-Corruption Commission Act-2004 empowers the commission to do anything prescribed for carrying out its purpose.

“We have no hesitation to hold that this procedure of enquiry by the commission is very fair, transparent and accountable and this procedure is for the benefit of the person[s] against whom an enquiry is going on.”

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e-Tender Notice

e-Tenders have been invited in the National e-GP System Portal for procurement of the goods as stated below:

Sl #	Tender Reference	Tender ID	Description of goods & related service	Tender doc last selling date & time	Tender closing, opening date & time
1	ER/LT/e-Gp-66/2022	730290	Supply of Various Seamless & ERW Carbon Steel Pipe and Fittings.	20-09-2022 16:00 hrs	21-09-2022 12:30 hrs
2	ER/LT/e-Gp-67/2022	731623	Supply of Polyaluminum Chloride (PAC).	26-09-2022 16:00 hrs	27-09-2022 12:30 hrs
3	ER/LT/e-Gp-68/2022	731622	Supply of Half Leather Hand Gloves.	25-09-2022 16:00 hrs	26-09-2022 12:30 hrs

Procuring entity details: **Md. Tariq Hossain**, Manager (Purchase).
Phone: 880-02 3333 01261-70 (382) Email: managerlp@erl.com.bd

These are online tenders, where only e-Tenders will be accepted through National e-GP Portal <https://www.eprocure.gov.bd> and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System Portal have to be deposited online through any registered bank's branches.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

GD-1697