

Top Ukraine minister to visit India

OUR CORRESPONDENT,
New Delhi

In the first official visit from Ukraine since the Russian invasion of that country more than a year ago, Ukrainian first Deputy Foreign Minister Emine Dzhaparova will undertake a four-day visit to India from tomorrow to exchange views on the current situation in Ukraine and bilateral relations.

Dzhaparova will meet Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture Meenakshi Lekhi, Secretary (West) in the Ministry of External Affairs Sanjay Verma and Deputy National Security Adviser Vikram Misri.

In his talks with Sanjay Verma, both sides are expected to exchange views on the current situation in Ukraine, global issues of mutual interest and bilateral relations, Indian MEA said yesterday.

“The visit will be an occasion to further mutual understanding and interests,” said MEA.



A man takes a photo of a woman under a frame in front of the Taiwan Strait which marks the closest point in the mainland to Taiwan, on Pingtan island, in China's southeast Fujian province, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

China-Taiwan relations

AFP, Taipei

As China launches three days of military drills around Taiwan, AFP looks at the history of relations between the self-ruled island and Beijing:

1949: SEPARATION

Mao Zedong's communists take power in Beijing in October 1949 after defeating Chiang Kai-shek's Kuomintang (KMT) nationalists in a civil war. The KMT flee to the island of Taiwan and form their own government in Taipei in December, cutting off contacts with mainland China. In 1950, Taiwan becomes an ally of the United States, which is at war with communist China in Korea. The United States deploys a fleet in the Taiwan Strait to protect its ally from possible attack.

1971: BEIJING GETS UN, US NODS

In October 1971, Beijing takes over China's seat at the United Nations, previously held by Taipei. In 1979, the United States cuts formal ties with Taiwan and establishes diplomatic relations with Beijing instead. The United States maintains trade and military ties with Taipei. It opposes both Taiwanese independence and any attempt by China to forcibly take the island.

1987-2004: RELATIONS IMPROVE

In late 1987, Taiwan residents are permitted to visit mainland China for the first time, allowing families to reunite. Taiwan lifts emergency rule in 1991, unilaterally ending a state of war with China. The first direct talks between the two sides are held in Singapore two years later.

2005-2015: THREATS AND TALKS

Beijing adopts a law in March 2005 authorising the use of force if Taiwan declares independence. In April, KMT chairman Lien Chan makes a landmark visit to Beijing for talks with Chinese leader Hu Jintao. In 2014 hold the first government-to-government talks since separation.

2016: HONEYMOON OVER

Tsai Ing-wen, from the traditionally pro-independence Democratic Progressive Party, wins presidential elections in January 2016. In June, China suspends all communications with Taiwan after the new government fails to acknowledge the “One China” policy.

2022-PRESENT: TENSIONS SPIKE

US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi lands in Taiwan on August 2 after days of speculation and stern warnings from Beijing. A furious China vows “punishment” and launches its largest-ever military exercises in the area, encircling Taiwan on August 4. Tsai makes two stops in the US on her way to and from Latin America, meeting House Speaker Kevin McCarthy on the return leg in California on April 5.

TAIWAN PRESIDENT’S MEETING WITH US SPEAKER

Angry China starts 3-day military drills

71 Chinese planes crossed Taiwan Strait median line

REUTERS, Fuzhou/Taipei

Seventy-one Chinese military aircraft crossed the sensitive median line of the Taiwan Strait yesterday as China began drills around Taiwan in anger at President Tsai Ing-wen's meeting with the speaker of the US House of Representatives.

The three-day drills, announced the day after Tsai returned from the United States, had been widely expected after Beijing condemned her Wednesday meeting with Speaker Kevin McCarthy in Los Angeles.

Beijing's announcement also came just hours after China hosted a visit by senior European leaders.

The People's Liberation Army said it had started the combat readiness patrols and “Joint Sword” exercises around Taiwan, having said earlier it would be holding them in the Taiwan Strait and to the north, south and east of Taiwan “as planned”. “This is a serious warning to the Taiwan independence separatist forces and external forces' collusion and provocation, and it is a necessary action to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity,” the Chinese army's Eastern Theatre Command said in a statement.

Taiwan's Defence Ministry said as of 4:00 pm (0800 GMT) on yesterday it spotted 71 Chinese

aircraft, including fighter jets and bombers, crossing the median line that normally serves as an unofficial barrier between the two sides, as well as nine Chinese ships.

China was using Tsai's US visit “as an excuse to carry out military exercises, which has seriously damaged regional peace, stability and security”, the ministry said in a statement.



“The military will respond with a calm, rational and serious attitude, and will stand guard and monitor in accordance with the principles of ‘not escalating nor disputes’ to defend national sovereignty and national security.”

Chinese state television released what it said was footage of the drills, set to stirring martial music and showing warships at sea and mobile missile launchers being readied, though did not show missiles being fired. It said fighter aircraft went up armed with live weapons.

There was no broader sense of alarm in Taiwan about the drills, where people are long accustomed to Chinese threats.

A senior Taiwan official familiar with security planning in the region told Reuters the aircraft involved in the morning missions had only crossed the median line briefly.

The situation was “as expected” and manageable, and Taiwan's government has rehearsed various scenarios for its response, the person said on condition of anonymity, as they were not authorised to speak to the media.

Writing on her Facebook page, Tsai said she was briefed about the security situation and that the military was at its post around the clock.

“Taiwan will stand with all democracy-loving partners in the world and jointly assume the responsibility of ensuring regional stability and prosperity,” she added.

Taiwanese officials had expected a less severe reaction to the McCarthy meeting, given it took place in the United States, but they had said they could not rule out the possibility of China staging more drills.

China's announcement came hours after French President Emmanuel Macron left China, where he met President Xi Jinping and other senior leaders.

UNDERWATER NUCLEAR DRONE
N Korea conducts another test

AFP, Seoul

North Korea claimed yesterday it had tested another underwater nuclear attack drone, its latest response to joint US South Korea military drills, though analysts have questioned whether Pyongyang has such a weapon.

In recent weeks, North Korea has tested what state media have described as an underwater nuclear-capable drone and also carried out the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile.

“A national defence science research institute in the DPRK carried out a test of underwater strategic weapon system from April 4 to 7,” the official Korean Central News Agency said.

“The underwater nuclear attack drone ‘Haeil 2’... cruised 1,000 km of simulated underwater distance.”

KCNA added that “the test warhead accurately detonated underwater. The test perfectly proved the reliability of the underwater strategic weapon system and its fatal attack ability.”

On March 23, North Korea claimed it tested an underwater nuclear attack drone able to unleash a “radioactive tsunami”, as it blamed US South Korea exercises for a deteriorating regional security situation.

Satellite imagery has also indicated a high level of activity at North Korea's main nuclear complex after leader Kim Jong Un ordered that production of weapons-grade nuclear material be ramped up.

Last year, North Korea declared itself an “irreversible” nuclear power, while Kim has told the North Korean military to intensify drills in preparation for a “real war”.

South Korea and the United States on Wednesday staged joint air drills, Seoul's military said.

US Navy sends guided-missile sub to Middle East

REUTERS

The US Navy yesterday said a nuclear-powered guided-missile submarine was operating in the Middle East in support of the Bahrain-based US Fifth Fleet. The USS Florida entered the region on Thursday and began transiting the Suez Canal on Friday, Commander Timothy Hawkins said in a statement. “It is capable of carrying up to 154 Tomahawk land-attack cruise missiles and is deployed to US 5th Fleet to help ensure regional maritime security and stability,” Hawkins said.

Iran installs cameras in public places to penalise unveiled women

REUTERS



Iranian authorities are installing cameras in public places and thoroughfares to identify and penalise unveiled women, the police announced yesterday.

After they have been identified, violators will receive “warning text messages as to the consequences”, police said in a statement.

The move is aimed at “preventing resistance against the hijab law,” said the statement, carried by the judiciary's Mizan news agency and other state media, adding that such resistance tarnishes the country's spiritual image and spreads insecurity.

Yesterday's police statement called on owners of businesses to “seriously monitor the observance of societal norms with their diligent inspections”. It urged citizens to confront unveiled women.

Gunmen kidnap 80 in Nigeria

REUTERS, Bauchi

Gunmen abducted at least 80 people, mostly women and children, in Nigeria's Zamfara state, a hotspot for kidnappings for ransom by armed gangs targeting remote villages, residents said yesterday.

Gangs of armed men have attacked hundreds of local communities across northwestern Nigeria in recent years, while Islamist militants continue to stage attacks in the northeast.

The latest kidnapping took place on Friday in Wanzamai village in Tsafe local government area in Zamfara, three residents said. Zamfara is one of the states most affected by kidnappings.

Musa Usman, whose 14-year-old son Ibrahim was among those abducted, said children and women from the village were clearing land for farming and collecting firewood when they were taken by gunmen and marched into a nearby forest.

“The children from different households went to collect firewood and few of them were going to farms in search of manual jobs when they were abducted,” Usman told Reuters by phone.

Zamfara police confirmed the incident in a statement but did not say how many people were abducted. The police were working with the military and community security guards to rescue the victims, he said.

Haruna Noma, another parent, said some of those taken were from two nearby villages of Kucheri and Danwuri who had gone to Wanzamai to clear land to farm.

‘The House in decline’

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President Abdul Hamid in his Friday's speech in parliament also said that the need may arise to invite external experts to examine, evaluate and analyse laws, Menon added.

“Today the character of our parliament is changing continuously. Parliament is having a new face due to commercialisation of politics and elections.”

He said it is necessary to review the constitution and reform parliament.

JP MP Anisul Islam Mahmud said, “If we want to make the Jatiya Sangsad the focal point

for all activities, people's sufferings must be discussed there.

“If this discussion is not held, parliament will not be the centre for all activities. Rather, the talks held outside parliament would become the focal point, the writings of the newspapers would get priority.”

He said it is not only the opposition parties' responsibility to speak for the people.

Another JP MP named Shameem Haider Patwari said that numerous laws have been passed in parliament over the last 50 years.

“But we need to evaluate to what extent we have been able to make the government accountable. How much can we force the government to make a right decision cancelling a wrong one?” he said.

JSD President Hasanul Haque Inu demanded formation of a parliamentary committee to review the constitution to remove the issues contradictory to the fundamental principles of the constitution, to remove the confusion about the small ethnic groups, and to empower lawmakers by amending article 70.

Inu highly praised

Bangabandhu and the PM, and blasted the BNP.

Information and Broadcasting Minister Hasan Mahmud said it is not the responsibility of the government to bring any party to an election.

“The Election Commission can carry out the responsibility of seeing who will take part in an election or not. It's not the responsibility of the government,” he said.

AL MP Tanvir Shakil said many local and foreign conspiracies are afoot.

“Today our great Liberation War and independence have been insulted. A conspiracy

ransacked around 9:00pm on Friday night.

Abdur Rahman Faraji, president of Rangabali upazila BNP, said that Jubo League and Chhatra League activists attacked party office at night to thwart this programme.

In Jashore, at least 10 BNP leaders and activists

has been hatched against the government through insulting the Independence Day and exploiting a child.

“I would like to ask the civil society and their newspapers where the spirit of freedom was when the Indemnity Ordinance was promulgated. Where was freedom when the grenade attack was carried out on August 21? You didn't talk about freedom then,” Tanvir said.

Quoting Harold Laski, an English political theorist, AL MP Shajahan Khan said freedom of speech and freedom of the press are correlated.

“How much freedom a country enjoys depends on its social and economic conditions. Freedom of speech and freedom of the press is more advanced in a country which is more educated and more aware of civil rights, economically developed,” he said.

Shajahan said it is unfair to expect too much freedom of speech in a country that is backward in terms of education, social awareness and financial system.

“If this freedom is given in a backward country, it will be like handing a cooking spud to a child,” he added.

was launched under the leadership of Savar Sadar Union Parishad AL President Sohel Rana and General Secretary Majharul Islam Rubel.

Sohel and Rubel could not be contacted over the phone despite repeated attempts.

were injured after an attack by Jubo League workers in Sharsha upazila. In Savar's Kalma area, at least 15 opposition leaders and workers were attacked by over 300 AL activists while attending the sit-in.

Golam Mostafa, general secretary of Savar thana BNP, said the attack

Foiled by attacks, arrests in many places

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Rahim Newaz, member secretary of Natore BNP, said, “Sadar Upazila BNP General Secretary Abul Bepari and Tebaria Union BNP General Secretary Masud Akand were seriously injured in the attack.”

Jubo League and

Chhatra League activists allegedly attacked Abul in front of Alaipur NESCO office when he was coming towards the party office to attend the meeting.

Police later rescued him with serious injuries and he was sent to Rajshahi Medical College Hospital for treatment, Abul's

family said.

Meanwhile, Natore AL General Secretary Shariful Islam Ramzan denied the allegations of attacks on BNP leaders and said the opposition has become “disorganised”.

In Patuakhali, BNP's office at Patuakhali's Rangabali upazila was