

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

Russia, China should
'lead reform': Xi

AFP, Beijing

China and Russia need to "lead the correct direction of global governance reform", according to Chinese President Xi Jinping, who hailed the two countries' partnership at a meeting with a top Russian politician in Beijing yesterday, state media reported.

Beijing and Moscow have ramped up economic cooperation and diplomatic contacts in recent years, with exchanges only growing closer since Russia's invasion of Ukraine last year.

Yesterday, Xi met Valentina Matviyenko, the speaker of the Federation Council — the Russian parliament's upper house — at the Great Hall of the People, state broadcaster CCTV reported.

Xi said the development of relations between the two countries was "a strategic choice made by both countries based on the fundamental interests of their respective countries and peoples".

"Both sides also need to strengthen communication and collaboration within multilateral mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and the BRICS countries, lead the correct

direction of global governance reform, and safeguard the common interests of emerging market countries and developing countries," the statement continued.

Yesterday, Western leaders gathered in Lithuania's capital ahead of a summit expected to present unity on Ukraine's future membership of the Nato military alliance — a prospect Russia has reacted furiously to.

Beijing says it is a neutral party in the war, but its refusal to condemn the invasion has led many of Kyiv's allies to accuse it of favouring Russia.

Matviyenko yesterday said the strategic partnership between Beijing and Moscow "has reached the highest level in history and continues to develop steadily".

She said a March visit by Xi to Moscow, where he met his counterpart Vladimir Putin, had "injected strong impetus into the further development of Russia-China relations".

Xi said China was "willing to continue to work with Russia to develop a comprehensive strategic partnership of mutual assistance, deep integration, innovation, and inclusive cooperation in the new era".



US President Joe Biden meets with British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak at 10 Downing Street in London, Britain yesterday. Biden and Sunak discussed the United States' decision to send cluster munitions to Ukraine in their talks, Sunak's spokesperson said. PHOTO: REUTERS

Heavy rains,
flooding
pummel US
northeast
One killed in NY

AFP, New York

The northeastern United States was inundated yesterday with heavy rain and flooding across several states a day after storms and flash floods washed out highways and killed one person in New York state.

Parts of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts and Vermont were under flood warnings as of 6:00 am (1000 GMT) yesterday, with states in the region recording rapid rainfall and "life threatening" flash floods, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

Heavy rains in New York state on Sunday turned streets into raging waterways, washing out bridges, leaving roads impassable and leading Governor Kathy Hochul to declare states of emergency in two counties.

The Orange County Emergency Management office yesterday confirmed one fatality in Highland Falls, in New York's Hudson Valley, where "historic floods" caused significant damage. Local media said a woman was swept to her death in a flash flood in the valley as she tried to evacuate her damaged house with her dog.

Hochul said Sunday that up to eight inches (200 mm) of rain had created "life threatening conditions due to flash flooding."

On Sunday evening, more than 12,000 customers had lost electricity in the state, but by early yesterday that figure had dropped to 6,000.



Residents are rescued following a flood in their street in Tanushimuramachi in the city of Kurume, Fukuoka prefecture, Japan yesterday, after heavy rains hit wide areas of Kyushu island. Two persons were killed and hundreds of thousands were urged to evacuate their homes in southwestern Japan yesterday, as forecasters warned of the "heaviest rain ever" in the region. PHOTO: AFP

DEFENCE EQUIPMENT PURCHASE
US deals not enough to wean
India off Russian arms yet

REUTERS, New Delhi/Washington

India's multi-billion-dollar purchases of US arms are less about shifting its reliance on Russian defence equipment and moving towards the West - it's more about developing its own domestic weapons industry, security officials and analysts say.

India is the world's biggest arms importer but almost all of its major weapons purchases now include provisions for joint manufacture or technology transfer, irrespective of which country it is dealing with.

Also, Russia's war in Ukraine has disrupted some military supplies to India, reinforcing New Delhi's long-term desire to diversify imports or replace them with home-built hardware, Indian defence officials said.

India bought weapons worth over \$60 billion in the last 20 years, of which 65 percent or nearly \$39 billion were from Russia, according to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute data. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has said that India intends to order weapons from the domestic arms industry worth over \$100 billion over the next decade.

"It is a reality, that we have to reduce dependence on Russia," said a senior Indian defence officer working on future capabilities of the Indian military, who declined to be identified. "But that is part two. The part one is the effort to get out of the import business."

India announced significant purchases of US defence equipment during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Washington last month, including an over one billion dollar order for GE GE.N engines for fighter jets. A possible \$3 billion deal for MQ-9B SeaGuardian drones is also being discussed.

In line with New Delhi's desire for self-reliance in defence and Modi's flagship "Make in India" policy, the jet engine deal includes joint manufacturing in the future, while the assembly and maintenance of the SeaGuardians will likely be in India.

Eric Garcetti, the US ambassador to India, said Washington had earlier paid "lip service" but was now easing India's access to military technologies. He said the US was "leaning in with technology" sharing more with India than it had with some its closest allies.

However, the moves so far will not be sufficient to end New Delhi's reliance on Russia while stringent US rules governing the sharing of military technology limit future possibilities for now.

"Nobody gives you everything. They keep you at least a screwdriver away from having it fully," said a second senior official from India's defence ministry. Arzan Tarapore, an Indian security expert at Stanford University, said the deals announced during Modi's visit "do not in themselves represent an Indian shift away from Russia."

"A big shift away from Russia will take multiple decades," he said. India still uses mostly Russian technology for traditional arms. Tarapore said that the biggest potential for US-India collaboration should be on new systems that India doesn't already have. India's main aim is to narrow the technological gap with better-armed arch-rival China, with which it has a tense

relationship, and which is also closely allied with Pakistan.

One problem for India is that Russia's war in Ukraine has severely dented Moscow's ability to deliver weapons and equipment.

India's air force recently informed a parliamentary panel that Russia would delay deliveries of spares for Sukhoi Su-30 MKI and MiG-29 jet fighter planes. A big-ticket item, believed to be the remaining two of the five Russian S-400 air defence systems India bought for nearly \$5.5 billion in 2018, has also been delayed, it said.

India has also been expecting to receive two nuclear-powered submarines from Russia over next few years, but these might also be delayed, defence officials said.

Such problems have reinforced India's resolve to become less dependent on Russia, but it does not want to rely on any one nation for its weapons purchases, they said.

It is buying French fighter jets, Israeli drones, American jet engines and potentially German submarines. Over time these purchases will reduce the share of Russian military technology used by India, but this would take at least two decades, Indian officials said.

Bill Greenwalt, a former senior Pentagon official for industrial policy, said the days of US and Russian domination of the global defence market and being able to control defence technology was coming to end, but what would replace it was "still a work in progress."

29 killed in India
monsoon floods

AFP, New Delhi

Days of intense monsoon rains across northern India have left at least 29 people dead, rendering many areas inaccessible with bridges smashed and roads blocked, officials said yesterday. Television footage showed flash floods and landslides triggered by torrential rain, washing away vehicles, demolishing buildings and ripping down bridges in the hilly state of Himachal Pradesh. "In the last two days, the death toll due to monsoon rains has risen to 29 in Himachal Pradesh," said an official of the state. Nine more deaths were reported in Rajasthan, UP, Uttarakhand and Kashmir, taking the toll of those killed since Saturday from a previously reported 15 to at least 29.

Putin held talks
with Wagner chief

REUTERS, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin held Kremlin talks with Wagner mercenary leader Yevgeny Prigozhin days after denouncing an armed mutiny he had led as treasonous, Putin's spokesman said yesterday, as Russia's top general resurfaced for the first time. The meeting with Prigozhin, according to Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov, was held on June 29, five days after the aborted mutiny, which is widely regarded to have posed the most serious challenge to Putin since he assumed the presidency on the last day of 1999. Much of what happened on June 24 and how the authorities are handling its aftermath remains unclear. Peskov said Wagner commanders had reaffirmed their loyalty to Putin at the Kremlin meeting.

OCCUPIED WEST BANK
Israeli forces kill
Palestinian man

AFP, Ramallah

Israeli forces yesterday shot a gunman who the army said fired on soldiers in the occupied West Bank, with the Palestinian health ministry reporting the alleged assailant was killed. The gunman got out of his vehicle then "hurled a grenade, and fired shots at the soldiers" near Deir Nidham village, northwest of Ramallah, the Israeli military said. "The soldiers responded with live fire and neutralised the assailant," the statement added. The Palestinian health ministry announced the death of Bilal Qadah, 33, "near the village of Deir Nidham", without giving further details. The incident adds to a surge in violence in the West Bank, which has been occupied by Israeli forces since the 1967 Six-Day War.

Sudan refuses to
attend peace talks

AFP, Addis Ababa

Sudan's government yesterday refused to participate in a regional meeting to resolve the crisis in the conflict-racked nation, accusing Kenya, which chaired the talks, of favouring rival forces. Around 3,000 people have been killed since mid-April when fighting erupted between Sudan's rival generals, while nearly three million have been forced to flee their homes. The east African regional bloc IGAD had invited the foes — Sudan's army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, commander of RSF — to a meeting in Ethiopia's capital yesterday. Neither attended the talks personally in Addis Ababa, although RSF sent a representative to the "quartet" meeting.

2022 SUMMER

Heat killed
61,000 in
Europe: study

AFP, Paris

More than 61,000 people died due to the heat during Europe's record-breaking summer last year, a study said yesterday which called for more to be done to protect against even deadlier heatwaves expected in the coming years.

The world's fastest warming continent experienced its hottest summer on record in 2022, as countries were hit by blistering heatwaves, crop-withering droughts and devastating wildfires.

The EU's statistics agency Eurostat had reported an unusually high number of excess deaths over the summer, but the amount directly linked to the heat had not been previously quantified.

A team of researchers looked at data on temperature and mortality from 2015 to 2022 for 823 regions across European countries. The researchers used models to predict the deaths attributable to temperature for each region in every week of 2022's summer.