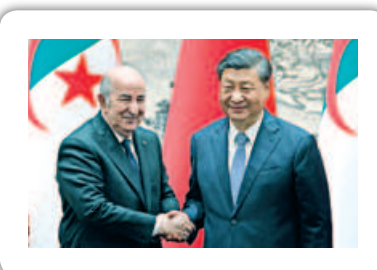


Xi hails 'old friend' Kissinger

AFP, Beijing
Chinese leader Xi Jinping hailed former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger as an "old friend" as the two met in Beijing yesterday.



Kissinger's visit to China this week has seen him call for a rapprochement between Washington and Beijing, which remain at loggerheads over a range of issues, from human rights to trade and national security.

The 100-year-old diplomat was central to the United States establishing ties with communist China in the 1970s and has maintained close contact with the country's leaders over the years.

"Chinese people value friendship, and we will never forget our old friend and your historic contribution to promoting the development of China-US relations and enhancing the friendship between the Chinese and American peoples," President Xi told Kissinger on Thursday, according to state media.

"This not only benefited the two countries, but also changed the world," Xi added.

"The world is currently experiencing changes not seen in a century, and the international order is undergoing enormous change," the Chinese leader said.

"China and the United States are once more at a crossroads, and both sides must once again make a choice."

Kissinger, in response, thanked Xi for hosting him at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse's building number five — where he met with then premier Zhou Enlai in 1971.

"The relations between our two countries will be central to the peace in the world and to the progress of our societies," the former diplomat said.

Kissinger secretly flew to Beijing in 1971 on a mission to establish relations with communist China.

The trip set the stage for a landmark visit by former US president Richard Nixon, who sought both to shake up the Cold War and enlist help in ending the Vietnam War.

Washington's overtures to an isolated Beijing contributed to China's rise to become a manufacturing powerhouse and the world's second-largest economy.



Rescuers work at a site of a building heavily damaged by a Russian missile attack, as Russia's attack on Ukraine continues, in central Odesa, Ukraine yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Landslide kills 16 in India Dozens missing

REUTERS, Irshalwadi
Rescue workers in India battled difficult terrain and bad weather yesterday as they searched for more than 100 people feared trapped in a landslide that killed at least 16 villagers after incessant rain soaked a mountain slope, officials said.

A wave of extreme heat, wildfires, torrential rain and flooding has wreaked havoc around the world in recent days, raising new fears about the pace of climate change.

The land collapsed in the middle of the night in the remote mountain hamlet of Irshalwadi, in the western state of Maharashtra, about 60 km (37 miles) from Mumbai, officials said.

Sixteen bodies had been recovered and more than 80 people had been rescued.

It was estimated that at least 225 people lived in the hamlet, the state's deputy chief minister, Devendra Fadnis, told the state assembly. More than 100 of them were feared trapped in the debris.

Rescue workers are having to trek in with their equipment for almost two hours to reach the landslide, some accompanied by sniffer dogs

'Shameful for any civil society'

Modi promises tough action as Manipur sexual assault videos trigger uproar in India

REUTERS, New Delhi
Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday condemned the alleged sexual assault of women in Manipur state as "shameful" and promised tough action in his first comments on ethnic clashes in the remote northeast which have killed at least 125 people.

The clashes began in early May and much of the violence was put down within days.

However, sporadic violence and killings resumed soon afterwards and the state of 3.2 million people, which shares a border with Myanmar, has remained tense since. Hundreds of people have been injured and more than 40,000 have fled their homes.

The violence began on May 3 after a court ordered the state government to consider extending special economic benefits and quotas in government jobs and education enjoyed by the tribal Kuki people to the majority Meitei population as well.

Modi, who had not made any public remarks about the trouble in a state ruled by his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), spoke a day after videos showing women being molested in Manipur surfaced and sparked national outrage.

The videos on social media purported to show two women paraded naked and assaulted on a street before what townspeople on the videos say was a gang rape.

Reuters could not immediately



verify the authenticity of the videos.

"My heart is filled with pain, it is filled with anger," Modi said at the end of customary comments he makes before the start of each session of parliament. "The incident from Manipur that has come to the fore, it is shameful for any civil society."

"The law will take its strongest steps, with all its might. What happened to the daughters of Manipur can never be forgiven," he said, and urged chief ministers of all states to strengthen law enforcement.

Just as Modi concluded his statement, Manipur Chief Minister Biren Singh tweeted that state police have made the first arrest in the case.

"A thorough investigation is currently underway and we will ensure strict action is taken against all the perpetrators, including considering the possibility of capital punishment," said Singh, who has been accused by rights groups and some of his own BJP lawmakers of failing to tackle the violence.

Singh later told reporters that two people including the main suspect were arrested by the Manipur police. Authorities opened a case of gang rape and were interrogating more than three dozen men.

A preliminary probe showed that the assault on the two women took place on May 4, but videos of them being dragged, groped and paraded naked by armed men went viral on Wednesday, police said.

India's highest court said it was deeply disturbed by the images and asked the government to inform the court of the steps taken to apprehend the perpetrators and ensure such incidents were not repeated.

'More than 40 nations keen to join BRICS'

REUTERS, Johannesburg
More than 40 countries have expressed their interest in joining the BRICS group of nations, South Africa's top diplomat in charge of relations with the bloc said yesterday.

Anil Sooklal and officials from the department of foreign affairs were addressing journalists in the main commercial city of Johannesburg. BRICS summit is due to take place on Aug. 22-24.

The question of how far and fast to expand the club — centred around Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — is top of the agenda at the summit of nations seeking to offset the perceived hegemony of the US-led West in global affairs.

Aside from the 22 countries that had formally asked to join, Sooklal said there was "an equal number of countries that have informally expressed interest in becoming BRICS members ... (including) all the major global south countries."

South African officials want BRICS to become a champion of the developing world.

Two killed in Auckland shooting

AFP, Auckland
A gunman killed two people and wounded six others in central Auckland yesterday, hours before the New Zealand city hosted the opening match of the 2023 FIFA football World Cup.

A 24-year-old shooter tore through the waterfront construction site with a shotgun in the early morning, plunging the busy centre of New Zealand's largest city into lockdown.

Prime Minister Chris Hipkins said the gunman also died at the scene and there was no national security threat, so the marquee tournament could go ahead as planned.

Police believe the attack was not directly linked to the World Cup, nor was it politically or ideologically motivated.

Thailand to hold PM vote without Pita next week

REUTERS, Bangkok
Thailand's parliament will hold another vote for a prime minister next week which cannot include the leader of election winners Move Forward, a deputy speaker said yesterday, after rivals derailed his bid by blocking his re-nomination.

"A candidate can only be nominated once in each parliamentary session," Deputy House Speaker Pichet Chuamuangphan told Reuters yesterday.

Pita, 42, had faced resistance from conservative, royalist rivals determined to stop Move Forward from forming a government and pursuing its anti-establishment policy agenda.

'Priority' to stop Taiwan VP from visiting US

Says China
REUTERS, Beijing
It is China's "priority" to stop Taiwan's vice president and presidential frontrunner William Lai from visiting the United States next month, the country's ambassador in Washington said on Wednesday, as Beijing steps up its warnings against the trip.

Taiwan will hold presidential and parliamentary elections in January, with Lai, the ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) presidential candidate, the frontrunner in most opinion polls.

It'll be made up mostly of Islamist parties

FROM PAGE 2
ruling Awami League-led 14-party alliance. On the other hand, keeping the equation of votes in mind, the ruling party has also wooed some Islamist parties to join it.

The issue of expansion of the 14-party alliance came at the discussion at Wednesday's meeting between AL president Sheikh Hasina and the partners of the ruling alliance.

The issue was raised at the meeting by 14 party coordinator Amir Hossain Amu.

He informed the alliance partners that some of the political parties showed their interest in joining the AL-led alliance, but existing partners opposed the move, said sources.

Hasina, also the prime minister, then hinted at forging a new political alliance in support of the government.

Contacted, Amir Hossain Amu told the Daily Star that a decision has been made to forge a new alliance with the parties which have already shown interest to join the 14-party alliance and those who will show interest in the future.

"We will coordinate the move," he added.

Pragatishil National Awami Party led by Parosh Bhashani, grandson of Maulana Abdul Hamid Khan Bhashani, Syed Bahadur Shah-led Islamic Front Bangladesh and recently registered Bangladesh Supreme Party have already expressed their interest to be the part of AL-led alliance.

AL also had talks with Kader Siddique-led Krishak Sramik Janata League to bring the party under its banner.

On the other hand, Mostafa Amir Faisal Mujaddedi-led Zaker Party and Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh will be included in the alliance, said sources. Those two parties are already a part of the AL-led grand alliance.

Alliance with the main opposition Jatiya Party depends on BNP's decision of joining the polls, said AL sources.

The 14-party alliance was formed in 2005, comprising 11 left-leaning parties including Awami League, Jatiya Samajtantrik Dal (JSD) and National

Awami Party (NAP). Tarikat Federation and Jatiya Party (JP-Manju) joined hands with the alliance ahead of the 2008 national polls.

Just before the 2008 election, the Grand Alliance was formed with the Jatiya Party and Mostafa Amir Faisal Mujaddedi-led Zaker Party joining the AL-led camp.

Before the 2018 national polls, Bikalpa Dhara Bangladesh was brought into the Grand Alliance and its candidates contested the election with "Boat" — AL's party symbol.

Man killed

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narcotics cases, the SP added.

After police arrested Arif, his relatives and locals attacked law enforcers with lethal weapons, compelling police to fire eight shots in self-defence, the SP claimed.

Ayub, Ayub's nephew's wife Salma Akhtar, 26, and Ayub's grandson Emon, 10, were shot, said relatives of the deceased.

Ayub died of a gunshot wound to the chest on the way to Brahmanbaria General Hospital.

Emon, 10, was shot in the back and Salma in the chest, neck, and face. They were taken to Bijoyagar Upazila Health Complex and later to Brahmanbaria General Hospital.

In the afternoon, the victim Ayub's autopsy was completed at the mortuary of Brahmanbaria General Hospital.

Bijoyagar Police Station Officer-in-Charge (OC) Raju Ahmed said that the injured policemen were admitted to the upazila health complex. He however denied that the police shot Ayub.

He said police filed a case over the incident.

2 killed, hundreds arrested in Kenya protests

AFP, Nairobi
Two people were killed on Wednesday following anti-government protests in Kenya, a hospital official said, as the interior ministry announced the arrest of over 300 others in connection with the demonstrations.

Veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga has held several rounds of protests since March against the government.

Clashes between police and protesters led to two deaths in the opposition bastion of Kisumu, said George Rae, CEO of Jaramogi Oginga Odinga hospital.

PM to visit Rome from July 24-26

FROM PAGE 2
prime minister will address the official opening of the conference as the special guest speaker.

After the opening ceremony, the PM will participate in the plenary session titled "Food Systems and Climate Action".

In the evening, the

premier will attend the "Regional Envoys Conference" with Bangladesh ambassadors stationed in 15 European countries.

On July 25, Hasina is scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with her Italian counterpart Giorgia Meloni.

Besides, the executive

heads of Rome-based international organisations— Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Fund of Agricultural Development (IFAD) and World Food Program (WFP) will pay courtesy calls on Hasina.

FM Momen, Agriculture Minister Dr Muhammad

Abdur Razzaque, Food Minister Sadhan Chandra Majumder, members of parliament, and government high officials will join the "UNFSS-2" as the prime minister's entourage.

The premier will leave Rome for home on July 26.

UNFSS-2 is commencing with the aim

of reviewing the progress of the implementation of the recommendations adopted at the "United Nations Food Systems Summit" held on September 23, 2021.

During the 2021 UN Food Systems Summit, PM Hasina joined virtually and proposed five-point recommendations.