

Taiwan won't back down to China threats

Says Taiwan VP on US trip

REUTERS, Taipei

Taiwan will not be afraid nor back down in the face of authoritarian threats, the island's vice president told supporters on a US visit that Beijing has condemned, while reiterating a willingness to talk to China.

William Lai, also frontrunner to be Taiwan's next president at January elections, is in the United States on what is officially a transit stop on his way to Paraguay for the inauguration of its new president. Paraguay is one of only 13 countries to maintain formal ties with the Chinese-claimed island.

Taiwan and the United States both say the stopovers, including one in San Francisco on the way back, are routine, but China has denounced them and called Lai a separatist "troublemaker".

ADANI PROBE

India regulator seeks more time

REUTERS

India's market regulator yesterday sought 15 more days to complete a probe into conglomerate Adani's dealings with some offshore entities, while shares in the group's firms slid after the surprise exit of a key business unit's auditor.

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), due to submit its report yesterday, said it has completed looking into 17 out of the 24 transactions it had taken up for investigation.

The regulator, in a filing to the Supreme Court(SC), said it made substantial progress in the investigations but due to pending probes on certain transactions, it would be in the 'interest of justice' to get more time to file the final report.

The group's listed companies lost more than \$100 billion in market value earlier this year after US-based Hindenburg Research raised several governance concerns. The group has denied wrongdoing.

Following this, the SC asked SEBI to look into the allegations made and submit its findings to a six-member panel formed in March, which included a retired judge and veteran bankers. Shares of Adani group companies slid 3 percent to 5 percent yesterday.



National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) personnel search for victims at the site of a landslide after a temple collapsed due to heavy rains in Shimla, India yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

SHIA SHRINE

Iran arrests 8 'foreigners' after shooting

AFP, Tehran

Iranian security forces have arrested eight foreign suspects after detaining a gunman in the killing of one person at a Shia Muslim shrine, state media reported yesterday.

The attack came less than a year after a mass shooting at the same holy site, the Shah Cheragh mausoleum in Shiraz, capital of Fars province in Iran's south.

"Eight people suspected of links with the terrorist attack... have been arrested," according to the judiciary's Mizan Online website, quoting Fars province chief justice Kazem Mousavi.

"All the people arrested are foreigners," Mousavi said, without elaborating.

FLOODS, LANDSLIDES IN NORTH INDIA

Death toll rises sharply to at least 50

Dozens more feared missing

AFP, Dehradun

At least 50 people were killed, nine of them in a temple collapse, and dozens more were feared missing after intense rains caused floods and landslides in north India, officials said yesterday.

Days of torrential downpours have washed away vehicles, demolished buildings and destroyed bridges in the northern Himalayan states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

Flooding and landslides are common and cause widespread devastation during India's treacherous monsoon season, but experts say climate change is increasing their frequency and severity.

In Himachal Pradesh, 42 people were killed in the past 24 hours, up from an earlier toll of 16, an official toll showed. That included at least nine killed in the collapse of a Hindu temple in the state capital, Shimla. At least 13 others were missing, it said.

"The local administration is diligently working to clear the debris in order to rescue individuals who may still be trapped," chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said in a statement.

At least eight others have been killed since Friday in neighbouring Uttarakhand state, officials said.

Images from hard-hit areas in Himachal Pradesh showed bodies being pulled out of thick piles of dark earth that had crushed buildings and smashed roofs.

Thousands of people have been stranded, with key roads, power lines and communication networks disrupted.

Railway lines were seen dangling in midair, with ground beneath them washed away.

Sukhu, who posted on social media a "disturbing" video of a raging torrent swamping roads, appealed to residents to stay indoors. Schools in the state had been shut, he said.

The President of India, Droupadi Murmu, offered her condolences to the families who have suffered in Himachal Pradesh.

MYANMAR LANDSLIDE

36 feared dead at jade mine

REUTERS

At least 36 people were feared dead at a jade mine in northern Myanmar after being swept into a lake by a huge landslide, a rescue worker and local journalist said yesterday.

The accident happened Sunday in the remote town of Hpakant, the centre of Myanmar's secretive jade industry, where scavengers risk their lives picking through unstable earth and rubble excavated by mining companies, searching for small pieces of the semi-precious stone.

More than 100 rescue workers were looking for survivors, a member of the rescue team said by phone, declining to be identified due to safety concerns. Eight people were injured and taken to hospital on Sunday.

"We haven't found a body yet, but we are still searching," he said.

Citing witnesses, Tar Lin Maung, a local journalist said the waste heap that collapsed on Sunday was about 150 metres (492 ft) high.

"There is no chance that they would survive in this muddy lake," Tar Lin Maung said.

Accidents are common in poorly regulated mines of Hpakant, which has seen some of Asia's worst mining disasters, including a landslide in 2020 that killed 170 people.

Myanmar produces about 90 percent of the world's jade, large quantities of which are sold in China.



Kakar sworn in as new Pakistan PM

REUTERS, Karachi

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, a little-known politician who is believed to be close to the military, was sworn in as Pakistan's caretaker prime minister yesterday to oversee national elections as the country navigates political and economic crises. Kakar, from the southwestern province of Balochistan, will name a cabinet and head a government until a new administration is elected. He was sworn in by President Arif Alvi yesterday in a ceremony at the Presidency. He resigned as a member of senate and from his party on Sunday. He was part of the Balochistan Awami Party, which is widely considered to be close to the country's powerful military. "Owing to the fundamental responsibility conferred upon me as the caretaker prime minister, I have decided to surrender my membership of the Balochistan Awami Party (BAP) and relinquish my Senate position. Prayers requested from everyone," Kakar, 52, said on Sunday. The military continues to have a huge role behind the scenes in Pakistan. It has ruled the country directly for more than three decades of its 76-year existence, and wields significant power in politics. Political analysts say that if the caretaker set-up stretches beyond its constitutional tenure, a prolonged period without an elected government would allow the military to consolidate control.



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S-400 DEFENCE SYSTEMS

Russia delivering order to India on schedule: official

REUTERS

Russia will deliver an order of S-400 anti-aircraft systems to India within the agreed timeframe, Interfax news agency quoted a senior Russian defence export official yesterday as saying.

India is the world's biggest arms importer and still mostly uses Russian technology for traditional arms, but officials in New Delhi have expressed concern that Russia's war in Ukraine could delay planned deliveries of weapons and equipment.

"The production of S-400 Triumf anti-aircraft missile systems is being carried out according to schedule," Interfax quoted Dmitry Shugayev, head of Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation, as saying.

"The delivery of the equipment of the S-400 Triumf system is expected to be completed within the agreed time frame," he said in comments made during an armed forces event.

India purchased the S-400 Triumf air defence system units in 2018 for \$5.4 billion. Three of the systems have been delivered and two more are still awaited.

The deliveries are scheduled to be completed by the end of 2024, according to Interfax.

The Indian Air Force said in March that the war in Ukraine was holding up vital defence supplies from Russia. New Delhi has been seeking in recent years to diversify imports or replace them with home-built hardware.

It is buying French fighter jets, Israeli drones and US jet engines.



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