

Putin, Xi to meet in Beijing in Oct

REUTERS, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin will meet China's Xi Jinping for talks in Beijing in October, Russia said yesterday, Putin's first known trip abroad since an arrest warrant was issued against him over the deportation of children from Ukraine.

Nikolai Patrushev, the secretary of Russia's Security Council, said Russia and China should deepen cooperation in the face of the West's attempt to contain them both. He was quoted by the Interfax news agency as saying that the talks in Beijing would be "thorough", at a meeting in Moscow with China's top diplomat, Wang Yi.

Putin will attend the third Belt and Road Forum after an invitation by Xi during a high-profile visit to Moscow in March.

Days before that visit, the ICC issued a warrant for Putin's arrest on suspicion of illegally deporting hundreds of children from Ukraine.



Migrants seeking asylum in the United States try to cross a razor wire fence deployed to inhibit the crossing of migrants into the United States, near a border wall on the banks of the Rio Bravo River, on the border between the US and Mexico, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico on Monday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Libya orders journos out of flood-hit city after protests

REUTERS

Officials in eastern Libya ordered journalists out of Derna yesterday, the morning after demonstrators staged a rally and torched the home of the ousted mayor in fury over the authorities' failure to protect the city from floods.

Hichem Abu Chkiouat, minister of civil aviation in the administration that runs eastern Libya, told Reuters by phone the decision to banish journalists from the city was unrelated to the protests there overnight.

"It is an attempt to create better conditions for the rescue teams to carry out the work more smoothly and effectively," he said. "The large number of journalists has become an impediment to the work of rescue teams."

Monday's mass demonstration was the first reported in the city since it was hit by the worst natural disaster in Libya's history a week earlier. Communications links to the city, which had functioned despite the flood, were shut down yesterday morning.

Thousands of people were confirmed killed and thousands more are still missing from the September 10 flood.

Russia using genocide 'lie' as pretext to destroy

Kyiv tells World Court; drone attacks on Ukraine kill two, Lviv warehouses set ablaze

REUTERS, The Hague

Ukraine told the UN's highest court in The Hague yesterday that Russia justified waging war against Ukraine by invoking "a terrible lie", namely that Moscow's invasion was to stop an alleged genocide.

"The international community adopted the Genocide Convention to protect; Russia invokes the Genocide convention to destroy," Ukraine's representative Anton Korinyevych told judges.

He called on the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to decide that it has jurisdiction to hear the case fully and eventually rule that Russia must pay reparations for invading under a false pretext.

"Can a state use false allegations of genocide as a pretext to destroy cities, bomb civilians and deport children from their homes? When the Genocide Convention is so cynically abused, is this court powerless? The answer to these questions must be 'no'," Korinyevych said.

On Monday, Russia urged the ICJ, also known as the World Court, to throw out the case, claiming Kyiv's legal arguments were "hopelessly flawed". Ukraine brought the case before the ICJ, also known as the World Court, days after the Russian invasion on February 24 last year.

Kyiv argues Russia is abusing international law by saying the invasion was justified to stop an alleged genocide in eastern Ukraine.

Ukraine says there was no risk of genocide in eastern Ukraine, where it had been fighting Russian-backed forces since 2014, and that the genocide treaty does not allow an invasion to stop an alleged genocide.

The hearings, set to run until September 27, will

not delve into the merits of the case, but will instead focused on legal arguments about jurisdiction. The convention defines genocide as crimes committed "with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such".

Meanwhile, Russia struck three industrial warehouses in a drone strike on the western Ukrainian city of Lviv early yesterday, causing a huge fire and killing at least one person, local officials said.

Russian forces also shelled the southern city of Kherson, killing a policeman and wounding two civilians on a trolleybus, the head of the city's military administration said.

"In the morning, a 49-year-old police sergeant was killed by Russian artillery fire in Kherson," Interior Minister Ihor Klymenko said.

In Lviv, fire fighters tackled a blaze after three industrial warehouses were hit in an attack at around 5:00 am, emergency services said.

Photos released by the State Emergency Service above the burning warehouses.

Lviv mayor Andriy Sadovyi said the body of a man who worked at one of the warehouses had been found under the rubble.

Sadovyi said the warehouses stored windows, household chemicals, and humanitarian aid.

"I want to emphasise that these are ordinary industrial warehouses. Nothing military was stored there," regional governor Maxim Kozitsky said on the Telegram messaging app.

He said Russian forces had launched 18 drones in the attack and that 15 had been shot down, including seven that were directly over the Lviv region.



EGYPT SPY OPERATION French journalist arrested over report

AFP, Paris

France was accused of an "unacceptable" attack on press freedom yesterday after a journalist was arrested for reporting on leaked documents that claimed French intelligence was used to target civilians in Egypt.

Investigative website Disclose published a series of articles in November 2021 based on hundreds of secret documents.

It said they showed how information from a French counter-intelligence operation in Egypt, codenamed "Sirdi", was used by the Egyptian state for "a campaign of arbitrary killings" against smugglers operating along the Libyan border.

Yesterday, journalist Ariane Lavrilleux's home was searched and she was arrested for questioning by agents of the DGSI, France's domestic intelligence agency, Disclose announced on X (formerly Twitter).

It denounced an "unacceptable attack on the secrecy of sources" -- a view quickly backed by the Society of Journalists and Reporters Without Borders (RSF).

"We fear that the DGSI's actions will undermine the secrecy of the sources," RSF said.

Lavrilleux's arrest was confirmed to AFP by a source close to the case.

"I am appalled and worried about the escalation in attacks on the freedom to inform, and the coercive measures taken against the Disclose journalist," said Virginie Marquet, lawyer for Lavrilleux and Disclose.

"This search risks seriously undermining the confidentiality of journalists' sources," she said, adding that Lavrilleux had "only revealed information of public interest".



Miners and members of Bulgaria's trade unions attend a protest demanding for a clear and secure energy future of Bulgaria in front of Bulgarian Parliament in Sofia yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

INDIAN PARLIAMENT

Govt presents bill to reserve 3rd of seats for women

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government yesterday moved a bill to reserve one-third of seats in the lower house of parliament and state assemblies for women, reviving an old proposal that is expected to boost his party's standing among women.

The contentious legislative proposal has been hanging for decades due to opposition from some heartland political parties and needs the approval of both houses of parliament and a majority of state legislatures to become law.

Its revival comes months before general elections are due by May 2024 when Modi seeks a third term. Analysts say the chances of the bill getting passed in parliament have brightened as opposition to it has shrunk over the years.

It is the latest in a series of moves by the government that the ruling nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has projected as "pro-women"

"There have been many debates in the past regarding women's reservation...and I appeal to lawmakers to support the bill," Modi said in parliament during a five-day special session which began on Monday.

"We want more and more women to join the development process of the country," Modi said before his law minister presented the bill to lawmakers.

Women account for almost half of India's 950 million registered voters but make for only 15 percent of parliament and about 10 percent of state legislatures, pushing the world's largest democracy to the bottom of the global list on gender parity in legislatures.

MYANMAR RIVER

Dozens feared missing after boat sinks

AFP, Yangon

A boat carrying around a hundred passengers sank on a river in northern Myanmar yesterday morning, local media reported, with dozens feared missing. The vessel sank around 10:00 am (0330 GMT) on the Chindwin river in Mingin township in Sagaing region, local media reported. Media quoted a source close to the local transport minister as saying a search operation had begun and the number of missing people was being tallied. A pro-junta Telegram channel also reported a boat had sunk in Mingin township, without giving details. A junta spokesman has been asked for comment. Sagaing is a hotbed of resistance to the military's 2021 coup, with anti-coup fighters clashing regularly with junta troops.

Biden says 'I get it' on age issue

AFP, New York

Joe Biden, America's oldest ever president, said Monday he understood a focus on his age but that he was running for re-election because Donald Trump wanted to "destroy" US democracy. The 80 year-old usually avoids the age issue but addressed it during a fundraiser at a Broadway theatre in New York, saying his experience helped him deal with crises like Ukraine and Covid. "A lot of people seem focused on my age," Biden said. "I get it believe me, I know it more than anyone." He added: "I'm running because democracy is at stake, because in 2024 democracy is on the ballot once again. And let there be no question: Donald Trump and his MAGA Republicans are determined to destroy American democracy." The Democrat added that he would not "bow down" to "dictators" and accused Trump of doing so to Russian President Vladimir Putin.



Syria's Assad to visit China tomorrow

AFP, Damascus

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad will visit China from tomorrow, his office said, his first trip to the allied country since before the Syrian civil war broke out more than 12 years ago.

China will be the third non-Arab country Assad visits since before the conflict, which has killed more than 500,000 people, displaced millions and battered the country's infrastructure and industry.

"In response to an official invitation" from Chinese President Xi Jinping, Assad and his wife "will visit China starting Thursday", the presidency said in a statement.

"The visit includes a number of meetings and events" in Beijing and Hangzhou, the statement said, adding Assad would be accompanied by "a political and economic delegation".

Newspaper Al-Watan said Assad was expected to attend opening of Asian Games on September 23.