

Thailand's opposition party names new leader

REUTERS, Bangkok

Thailand's opposition Move Forward named a new leader yesterday after Pita Limjaroenrat, who led the party to a stunning election victory in May, was thwarted in his efforts to become premier.

Chaithawat Tulathon, a former political magazine editor, will head Move Forward, which won the most seats in parliament on a wave of youth and urban support over its anti-establishment policies. The progressive party will lead the opposition after conservative lawmakers and an unelected senate blocked its attempts to form a government.

Pita stepped down as party leader earlier this month amid a host of legal and legislative challenges that many see as part of a pattern by the pro-military and royalist establishment to diminish a new generation of leaders.



Migrants cross the Rio Bravo river with the intention of turning themselves in to the US Border Patrol agents to request asylum, as seen from Ciudad Juarez, Mexico on Friday,

PHOTO: REUTERS

6 killed in Taiwan golf ball factory fire

AFP, Taipei

A fire at a golf ball factory in Taiwan killed at least six people, three of them firefighters who died in an explosion, authorities said yesterday.

The fire, which began Friday evening and raged all night, injured more than 100 people, most of them workers, the Pingtung county government told local media.

One firefighter and three other people are missing.

Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen visited the scene last morning and expressed condolences to the victims' families. She said an investigation into the cause of the tragedy is underway.

"I want to thank everyone for their hard work and please stay safe," Tsai told emergency response personnel.

She also stopped at the morgue to pay respects to the victims and visited the injured at a hospital.

An official with the Pingtung Fire Department told local media that chemical peroxide stored inside the factory could have been the cause of the one large and several smaller explosions.

Several people were trapped inside due to the blasts, which caused a section of the factory roof to collapse.

India hits back after Pak PM raises J&K issue

AGENCIES

India reiterated that matters pertaining to Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are "purely internal" and Pakistan cannot comment on its domestic matters.

The strong remarks came a day after Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwarul Haq Kakar raised the Kashmir bogey at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, according to NDTV.

"Pakistan has become a habitual offender when it comes to misusing this August forum to peddle baseless and malicious propaganda against India," Petal Gahlot, first secretary for second committee of general assembly, said yesterday. It does so to deflect the world's attention away from its own "abysmal record" on human rights, she added.

Pakistan's caretaker Prime Minister Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar on Friday raised the issue of Jammu and Kashmir in his address to the UN General Assembly, saying that Kashmir is the key to peace between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Addressing the General Debate of the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, Kakar said Pakistan desires peaceful and productive relations with all its neighbours, including India, reports Hindustan Times.

"Kashmir is the key to peace between Pakistan and India," he said.

"Development depends on peace. Pakistan is situated in the least economically integrated region in the world. Pakistan believes that regions develop together therefore [the country] desires peaceful and productive

relations with all neighbours, including India," he said.

Kakar said that the UN Security Council must secure the implementation of its resolutions on Kashmir and said the UN Military Observer Group for India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) should be "reinforced".

"Global powers should convince New Delhi to accept Pakistan's offer of mutual restraint on strategic and conventional weapons," he said.

On the other hand, India yesterday said that



Pakistan must shut down its "infrastructure of terrorism" immediately. It listed three steps for its neighbour to ensure peace in South Asia.

"We reiterate that the union territories of Jammu and Kashmir are an integral part of India. Matters pertaining to the Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are purely internal to India. Pakistan has no locus standi to comment on our domestic matters," Gahlot asserted in response.

India tore into Pakistan for having the "world's worst human rights records", especially those of the minority and women. "Pakistan would do well to put its own house in order before venturing to point a finger at the world's largest democracy," Gahlot said.

She sought to remind Pakistan its "glaring example of systemic violence against minorities" - the incident in August in which several churches and Christian houses were burnt down in Faisalabad district.

An estimated 1,000 women from minority communities are kidnapped, forcefully converted and married off in Pakistan every year, Gahlot said cited a report by Pakistan's own Human Rights Commission.

India also slammed Pakistan for providing a safe haven to terrorists and called on its government to take action against the perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attack.

"Pakistan has been the home and patron to the largest number of internationally prescribed terrorist entities and individuals in the world," she said. "Instead of engaging in technical sophistry, we call upon Pakistan to take credible and verifiable action against the perpetrators of the Mumbai terror attacks whose victims await justice even after 15 years."

India also listed three steps that Pakistan must take to ensure peace in South Asia: "First, stop cross-border terrorism and shut down its infrastructure of terrorism immediately. Second, vacate Indian territories under its illegal and forcible occupation. And third, stop the grave and persistent human rights violations against the minorities in Pakistan," said Gahlot.

Recycling plastic not enough Warns UN environment chief

AFP, United Nations

With the production of plastic on the rise worldwide and creating ever more pollution, the UN environment chief warned that humanity cannot just recycle its way out of the mess, and she called for a total rethink about the way we use plastics.

"There are different sort of onramps to the highway to solutions. But I think everybody recognises that the status quo is just not an option," said Inger Andersen, director of the UN Environment Program, in an interview Thursday with AFP on the sidelines of the General Assembly in New York.

First, Andersen said the aim was to get rid of as many single-use plastics as possible, "eliminating what's frankly not necessary: that thing that is wrapped in plastic that's completely mindless, that is maybe even wrapped by nature itself." Then, "there is thinking about the product itself. Does the product need to be liquid? Can we rethink the product... can it be powder, can it be compressed, can it be concentrated?" she said, saying that when entering a supermarket, she goes straight to the soap aisle to see if solid versions are available. "We also have to reduce the overall supply of new raw polymer," she said, noting that this was one option in the draft text of the treaty.

For sure, "we have to recycle as much as we can. But as we look at it now, plastic uses is increasing," Andersen told AFP.

"So what is clear is that we cannot recycle our way out of this mess." Annual production of plastics has more than doubled in the past 20 years, to reach 460 million tons. It could triple by 2060 if nothing changes.

Sunak may ban cigarettes in UK Report says

REUTERS

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is considering introducing measures that would ban the next generation from ever being able to buy cigarettes, The Guardian reported on Friday, citing government sources. Sunak is looking at anti-smoking measures similar to laws New Zealand announced last year, which include a ban on selling tobacco to anyone born on or after Jan. 1, 2009, the report said. "We want to encourage more people to quit and meet our ambition to be smokefree by 2030, which is why we have already taken steps to reduce smoking rates," a British government spokesperson said in an emailed response to Reuters.

Former Italian President Napolitano dies at 98

AFP, Rome



Italian politicians paid tribute Friday to former president Giorgio Napolitano, a veteran of several governments, who died at the age of 98. Renowned for his moderation and statesmanship, Napolitano was regarded as a guarantor of stability in a time of chronic turbulence in Italian politics. The former Communist Party leader served as head of state in a number of governments between 2006 and 2015. Prime Minister Georgia Meloni offered her cabinet's "deepest condolences" to Napolitano's family.

Pope urges Europe to not treat migrants as invaders

AFP, Marseille

Pope Francis yesterday urged European governments to welcome migrants instead of viewing them as invaders, striding into in a hugely sensitive political debate again inflamed by mass arrivals on the second day of his visit to France's Mediterranean port of Marseille.

The pontiff made the comments hours before he leads a mass in Marseille's main stadium -- usually the venue for rugby or football matches -- in a gigantic event due to be attended by French President Emmanuel Macron.

"Those who risk their lives at sea do not invade, they look for welcome," Francis said in a speech closing a conference of bishops and young people from around the Mediterranean.

Migration is "a reality of our times, a process that involves three continents around the Mediterranean and that must be governed with wise foresight, including a European response," the pontiff added.

Noting the risk to the lives of migrants if they are not taken to safety, he warned against turning "the Mediterranean, the mare nostrum, from the cradle of civilisation into the mare mortuum, the graveyard of dignity."

Francis' 35-minute speech drew a standing ovation from his audience, but his position on migration was unlikely to please Macron and Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin, who were both present and plan tougher measures to control arrivals.

The pope's forceful interventions come as the migration debate has been stoked by mass arrivals on the Italian island of Lampedusa last week.



This picture taken by Taiwan's Central News Agency (CNA) yesterday shows smoke billowing from a factory after a fire in Pingtung, southern Taiwan.

PHOTO: AFP

27 Syrian migrants rescued in Lebanon

AFP, Beirut

The Lebanese military yesterday rescued 27 Syrian migrants from drowning after their rubber boat capsized off the country's northern coast, the armed forces said.

The navy, with support from the civil defence, "was able to rescue 27 illegal migrants aboard a rubber boat that was sinking off the Chekka coast", an army statement said.

A military official, who requested anonymity as he was not allowed to speak to the press, told AFP the migrants were all Syrian.

Migrants seeking to reach Europe from Lebanon generally head for the east Mediterranean island of Cyprus 175 kilometres (110 miles) away.

Yesterday, security forces said they arrested a Lebanese people smuggler and 42 Syrians as he was in a vehicle "filled with a large number of Syrians".