

ASIA-PACIFIC SUMMIT

Xi, Biden to talk ‘global peace, development’: China

AFP, Beijing

Chinese leader Xi Jinping and US President Joe Biden will discuss “global peace and development” at a summit this week in San Francisco, Beijing said yesterday.

“The two heads of state will have in-depth communication on strategic, general and directional issues concerning China-US relations, as well as major issues concerning global peace and development,” foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a regular briefing.

“China is not afraid of competition, but we oppose defining the China-US relationship in terms of competition,” she added.

Biden and Xi will hold their first meeting in nearly a year this week on the sidelines of the APEC summit in California.

The two leaders will discuss a range of bilateral, regional and global issues as well as ways to “responsibly manage competition,” White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said.

The Xi-Biden summit follows a series of meetings in recent months between high-level officials in Beijing, Washington and elsewhere, but will be the leaders’ first encounter since November 2022 in Bali.

Wednesday’s meeting will aim to “stabilize” relations that have since plunged into deep freeze, a senior US official said,

cautioning not to expect major outcomes.

Mao yesterday urged the United States to “earnestly respect China’s reasonable concerns and legitimate development rights, rather than only emphasising its own concerns while harming China’s interests”.

“China does not seek to change the United States, and the United States should also not seek to shape or change China,” she added.

Meanwhile, hundreds of demonstrators, from anti-capitalists to pro-Palestinian advocates, gathered in San Francisco on Sunday on the eve of the APEC summit to protest against the world bloc.

The protestors marched through the US city demanding participants in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation forum put people and planet above business.

“APEC is a form of neoliberal colonial government,” Nik Evasco told AFP. “We’re here to make sure they put people and planet front and center of the issues they are negotiating.”

“They are framing negotiations around trying to build a green economy, but what actually happens is exploiting... precious resources essential to develop clean solutions in order to make profits for corporate CEOs here in the US,” said Evasco.



This picture taken yesterday from a position along the border with the Gaza Strip in southern Israel shows a smoke plume billowing during Israeli bombardment on the Palestinian enclave amid ongoing battles with Hamas.

PHOTO: AFP

Myanmar junta under attack on new fronts

Say rebels; thousands flee to India

REUTERS

Ethnic minority insurgent groups attacked security posts in Myanmar yesterday, residents, rebels and an official said, as fighting erupted on two new fronts, and thousands of people crossed into neighbouring India seeking safety.

Myanmar’s military junta is facing its biggest test since taking power in a 2021 coup after three ethnic minority forces launched a coordinated offensive in late October, capturing some towns and military posts.

The military-installed president last week said Myanmar, a country the size of France, was at risk of breaking apart because of an ineffective response to the rebellion. The generals say they are fighting “terrorists”.

One of the three allied insurgent groups, the Arakan Army (AA), which is fighting for greater autonomy in Rakhine State in western Myanmar, seized posts in the Rathedaung and Minbya areas, about 200 km (124 miles) apart, AA spokesman Khine Thu Kha said.

“We have conquered some posts and fighting is continuing in some other places,” he said.

A resident of Rathedaung said gunfire was heard before dawn yesterday followed by hours of artillery bombardment, with the military seen blocking entrances to the area and reinforcing administrative buildings.

‘The whole world has let us down’

Gaza’s displaced residents tell of fear, abandonment

REUTERS, Gaza

On foot, by horse-drawn cart and clinging to the sides of overcrowded trucks, Palestinians fled southwards through Gaza to escape Israeli air strikes, telling of their fear, despair and bitter sense of abandonment.

“Nowhere is safe in Gaza. My son was injured and there was not a single hospital I could take him to so he could get stitches,” said displaced Palestinian Ahmed al-Kahlout. “There is no water, there isn’t even salt water we can wash our hands with.”

He had been forced to leave his home to search for basic necessities for his family while “there are bodies filling Gaza’s streets”.

There are still people hoping the conflict will be solved soon, he said.

“But only God knows if it’ll be solved. The whole world has let us down, the progressive world that boasts about human rights has let us down.”

Also heading south, a Palestinian woman, Mariam al-Borno, said death, displacement and hunger had forced her and her children to leave home “to flee for our lives.”

“We saw death with our own eyes. Throughout it all we were afraid.”

People at a United Nations Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) school in Beit Lahia, where they had sought shelter, were looking at a crater left by an explosion.

“Even at UNRWA shelters we can’t find safety,” said one man.

“I’m just searching for a safe place, nothing more, to save myself and my children,” he said.

Outside Gaza’s largest hospital, Al Shifa, entertainer Alaa Miqdad gathered displaced children and put on a clown show.

“Despite the pain we are living in and the hurt, we will smile through the pain,” he said.



But Ismail al-Najjar, whose family’s residential compound in Khan Younis in the south was hit by an air strike, was less sanguine.

“I was coming with my horse, I stopped the horse, the aircraft came and fired something ... there was bombardment everywhere.”

“It is not just destruction; it is an earthquake ... I ask God to take vengeance on the killers of children,” he said.

Meanwhile, flags flew at half-mast at United Nations compounds across the globe yesterday, as staff observed a minute’s silence in memory of colleagues killed in Gaza during the Israel-Hamas conflict.

The blue and white UN flag was lowered at 9:30 am local time at offices in Bangkok, Tokyo and Beijing, a day after the world body reported “a significant number of deaths and injuries” in strikes on a facility in Gaza.

In Geneva, the second-largest UN headquarters after New York, the UN flag flew at half-mast and none of the other flags of the 193 member countries were hoisted along the main alley of the compound. Staff were also invited to hold a “private” minute of silence, spokesman Rolando Gomez said.

Events were also held in Kathmandu and Kabul, where the UN Secretary-General’s Special Representative for Afghanistan Roza Otunbayeva led about 250 people in observing the minute’s silence.

The UN agency for supporting Palestinians (UNRWA) announced on Friday that more than 100 of its employees had died in the Gaza Strip since the start of the war.

Established in 1949 following the first Arab-Israeli war, UNRWA provides public services including schools, healthcare and aid. Many of UNRWA’s 5,000 staff working in Gaza are Palestinian refugees themselves.

Russian forces kill 34 fighters in Syria’s Idlib

REUTERS

Russian forces have killed 34 fighters and wounded more than 60 in air strikes on targets in Syria’s Idlib governorate, Russia’s Interfax reported late on Sunday, citing deputy head of Russian Reconciliation Center for Syria.

“The Russian Aerospace Forces carried out air strikes in the province of Idlib on targets of illegal armed groups involved in shelling the positions of Syrian government troops,” Interfax cited Rear Admiral Vadim Kulit as saying of the Saturday attack.

Kulit said that in 24 hours, positions of Syrian government troops were attacked seven times.

The Syrian army has blamed rebels, who it says are Islamist jihadists, for attacks on government-held areas in Idlib and Aleppo provinces and denies indiscriminate shelling of civilian areas under rebel control.

Opposition officials say both Moscow and Damascus are taking advantage of the world’s preoccupation with Gaza conflict to escalate pounding of a region where more than three million inhabitants refuse to live under the rule of Bashar al-Assad.

Earlier, a source told Reuters that the United States has carried out two air strikes against Iran-aligned groups in Syria.

UK PM brings back Cameron as FM

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak brought back former leader David Cameron as foreign minister yesterday in a reshuffle triggered by his firing of interior minister Suella Braverman after her criticism of the police threatened his authority. It was the latest reset for a prime minister whose party is badly lagging Labour Party before an election expected next year, and the return of Cameron to government suggested Sunak wanted to bring in more experienced hands rather than appease the right of his party. Under fire from members of Conservative Party to eject Braverman, Sunak seemed to have brought forward a long-planned reshuffle to bring in allies and remove ministers he felt were not performing.

ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR
Internal State Dept memo blasts Biden

THE DAILY BEAST ONLINE

An internal US State Department dissent memo accused President Joe Biden of “spreading misinformation” about Israel’s war against Hamas, according to Axios. The blistering document also alleged that Israel is committing “war crimes” in its attacks on Gaza, and urged the US to demand a ceasefire. The five-page memo was reportedly organized by a junior diplomat who claimed on social media that Biden was “complicit in genocide” through his support of Israel.

India declares as unlawful 9 groups in Manipur state

REUTERS, New Delhi

India’s home (interior) ministry yesterday declared nine groups in the troubled northeastern state of Manipur as unlawful for a period of five years, saying they were engaging in activities prejudicial to the sovereignty and integrity of India, according to a government notification posted on X by news agency ANI. Ethnic clashes erupted in the northeastern state on May 3 as members of the majority Meitei ethnic group and minority Kuki tribals fought over sharing government benefits and quotas in jobs and education. Sporadic violence has continued since the peak of the clashes, despite tens of thousands of extra security personnel being deployed in the state ruled by BJP.

China, Pakistan navies hold drills

REUTERS, Beijing

The Chinese and Pakistani navies are holding weeklong drills in the Arabian Sea days after the Russian Pacific Fleet and Myanmar practised repelling attacks in their first maritime exercise, while India and the United States pledged security cooperation. At a naval base in Karachi on Saturday, the Chinese and Pakistani navies kicked off the exercise in the waters and airspace of the northern Arabian Sea in drills that include anti-submarine operations. The exercise will end on November 17. During the exercise, China and Pakistan will conduct joint maritime patrols for the first time, the People’s Liberation Army Daily reported yesterday.



A group of girls plant tree seedlings in an urban forest during the nationwide tree planting public holiday in Nairobi, Kenya yesterday. The Kenyan government had declared a special holiday yesterday, during which the public across Kenya planted trees as a contribution to the national efforts to save the country from the effects of climate change.

PHOTO: AFP