

US sanctions undermine confidence in dollar

Says Putin in China

AGENCIES

President Vladimir Putin yesterday said that US sanctions policy was undermining confidence in the dollar and that Russia and China would find a way to stop the threat of measures against Chinese banks from disrupting their burgeoning trade.

Washington has hit Russia with waves of Ukraine-related sanctions and threatened secondary sanctions on foreign banks aiding transactions with Moscow. That has prompted some Chinese banks to limit dealings with Russian companies.

In televised comments during a visit to China, Putin said such sanctions were illegitimate unless approved by the UN Security Council. He said they were also counter-productive for the United States and demonstrated its “stupidity”.

“They are completely devoid of common sense,” Putin told reporters.

He said the United States was “sawing the branch they are sitting on” because its actions were undermining confidence in the dollar and causing countries to reduce the share of dollars in their reserves.

Putin said a solution was possible to the difficulties in Russian-Chinese payment settlements but did not say what it would entail.

Putin arrived Thursday on his first trip abroad since his March re-election, meeting President Xi Jinping for talks in which the leaders framed their nations’ ties as a stabilising force in a chaotic world.

China and Russia’s strategic partnership has only grown closer since the invasion of Ukraine, and Beijing has rebuffed Western claims that it is aiding Moscow’s war effort.

China has also offered a critical lifeline to Russia’s isolated economy, with trade booming since the invasion and hitting \$240 billion in 2023, according to Chinese customs figures.

Speaking at the opening ceremony of a Russia-China trade expo yesterday, Putin hailed energy ties between the two countries.

“Russia is ready and able to continuously power the Chinese economy, businesses, cities and towns with affordable and environmentally clean energy,” he said.



This handout photograph, taken and released by Ukrainian Emergency Service yesterday, shows rescuers evacuating civilians from Russian shelling in Kharkiv region, Ukraine.

PHOTO: AFP

UKRAINE’S KHARKIV REGION

Russia carving out buffer zone

Says Putin; Kyiv launches a wave of drones at Russia, Crimea

AGENCIES

President Vladimir Putin said yesterday that Russian forces advancing in Ukraine’s northeast were carving out a buffer zone to protect Russia from attacks and said the West was “sick in the head” if it thought it could dictate terms to Moscow.

Speaking to reporters on a state visit to China after discussing Ukraine during talks with Xi Jinping, Putin said that Russian troops were advancing to plan after repeated deadly Ukrainian strikes on the Belgorod region of Russia, reports Reuters.

“As for what is happening in the Kharkiv direction. This is their (Ukraine’s) fault because they shelled and continue, unfortunately, to shell residential neighbourhoods in the border areas, including Belgorod,” Putin said.

“Civilians are dying there. It’s obvious. They are shooting directly at the city centre, at residential areas. And I said publicly that if this continues, we will be forced to create a security zone, a buffer

zone. That is what we are doing.”

When asked if Russian forces planned to take control of nearby Kharkiv, Ukraine’s second-biggest city, Putin said: “As for Kharkiv, there are no such plans as of today.”

Meanwhile, Ukraine launched a wave of drones at Russia and annexed Crimea

Russian military neutralised or downed more than 100 Ukrainian drones in the south of the country.

overnight, killing two people including a child and setting an oil refinery ablaze, officials said yesterday.

The attack was Ukraine’s largest aerial offensive in weeks and comes as Russian forces advance along the frontline, making their biggest territorial gains in 18 months

as Kyiv struggles with ammunition and manpower shortages, reports AFP.

The Russian military said it had neutralised or downed more than 100 Ukrainian drones in the south of the country, annexed Crimea and Black Sea.

“Fifty-one UAVs were destroyed and intercepted over Crimea, 44 over the Krasnodar region, six over the Belgorod region and one over the Kursk region”, it said, adding naval forces destroyed six drone boats. One drone struck a family driving near the border in Belgorod region, killing a mother and her four-year-old son, region’s governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

“The child was in a critical condition. Doctors did everything possible to save him. (But) to much grief, the four-year-old died in hospital,” he said.

The father was injured but “is in shock” and refused medical help, while the driver of the car was treated for shrapnel wounds to his hands, he added.

Another drone attack caused a brief fire at a gas station in the border village of Bessonovka, he said.

Firearms, ammo, explosives seized

FROM PAGE 12

providing the training,” CTTC officials added.

The CTTC chief further said that they got information about Sharqiya’s training, source of arms and ammunition, and financing from Shamin Mahfuz, the mastermind and head of the banned militant outfit, who was arrested in June last year.

They also gathered information from Shamin Mahfuz’s close aide Md Yashin and arms supplier Kabir, who were arrested on January 8 of the same year, he added.

Rahim is accused in at least 12 cases filed on various charges, including possessing illegal weapons, robbery, kidnapping, and destruction of forest land with Naikhongchhari and Ramu police stations, he added.

The CTTC chief said Shamin Mahfuz, the chief of the group who was arrested earlier, had given money to Rahim and Kabir to provide firearms.

When the law enforcers began a crackdown in the CHT in September 2022, members of the militant outfit and arms suppliers, including Rahim, went into hiding.

Most of the top leaders and activists of the militant group have been arrested by the Rapid Action Battalion and other police units since the crackdown started.

Rahim first arrived in Dhaka and started staying in Gazipur after changing his whereabouts multiple times, CTTC officials said.

Teenage girl

FROM PAGE 12

threatened her parents that they would be killed if they disclose the abuse to others.

Contacted, local Ward Councillor Momenul Haque said the victim’s house is near the bank of a river and the area is a haven for drug traders and druggies. They might be involved in the incident.

OC Ahsan Ullah said as the victim could not identify the accused as she is a newcomer to the area. But police were trying to identify and arrest the accused.

The victim will be sent to a hospital for medical tests and treatment, he added.

N Korea fires ballistic missiles, denies Russia arms transfers

AFP, Seoul

North Korea fired multiple suspected short-range ballistic missiles yesterday, Seoul said, hours after leader Kim Jong Un’s powerful sister denied widespread allegations that Pyongyang is shipping weapons to Russia.

The launches are the latest in a string of ever more sophisticated tests by North Korea, which has fired off cruise missiles, tactical rockets and hypersonic weapons in recent months, in what the nuclear-armed country says is a drive to upgrade its defences.

Seoul and Washington have accused North Korea of sending arms to Russia, which would violate raft of UN sanctions on both countries, with experts saying the recent spate of testing may be of weapons destined for use on battlefields in Ukraine.

Seoul’s military said yesterday it had detected the launch of what it described as “several flying objects presumed to be short-range ballistic missiles” from North Korea’s eastern Wonsan area into waters off its coast.

The missiles travelled around 300 kilometres (186 miles), the Joint Chiefs of Staff said, adding that the military had “strengthened vigilance and surveillance in preparation for additional launches” and was sharing information with allies Washington and Tokyo.

The launches came just hours after Kim’s sister Kim Yo Jong accused

US sanctions

FROM PAGE 12

which is independent and separate from the White House and the State Department. They work independently,” Salman F Rahman added.

“The issue is moving through a process,” Salman said after his discussion over dinner with US Assistant Secretary of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu who was on a three-day visit to Dhaka last week.

Seoul and Washington of “misleading the public opinion” on the issue with their repeated accusations that Pyongyang is sending weapons to Moscow for use in Ukraine.

They also came as Russian leader Vladimir Putin was in China yesterday, the final day of a visit aiming to promote crucial trade with Beijing — North Korea’s most important ally — and win greater support for his war effort in Ukraine.

The tests also came a day after advanced South Korean and US stealth fighters, including Washington’s F-22 Raptors, staged joint air combat drills.

Such exercises typically infuriate Pyongyang, which views them as rehearsals for invasion.

3 workers

FROM PAGE 12

The deaths have pushed the victims’ families into deep trouble.

Altafur’s wife Afroza Akter said her husband spent around Tk 6 lakh to go to Saudi Arabia over 10 years ago, but failed. A major portion of the money was borrowed from relatives.

The couple then moved to Dhaka from Jamalpur and Altafur started working as a mason. To support him, Afroza started working as domestic help.

“We were working hard for a better future... But the hopes have been destroyed,” Afroza told The Daily Star.

To minimise their living costs in Dhaka, the couple has kept their two children — Bonya, 15, a class-seven student, and Ananda, 13, a fifth grader, — with their grandparents in their village home.

“Over the last couple of years, he could repay a portion of the money that he borrowed. How will I support my family now?” she said.

The wife of Antar, of Mymensingh, is a four-month pregnant, said his cousin Uzzal Hossain.

Dhaka getting hotter

FROM PAGE 1

climate-sensitive. Hollow bricks do not retain heat while solid ones make dwellings hotter due to their high heat conductivity, the professor pointed out.

He further said local climate is impacted by different elements in a city. For example, the speed of wind that takes away heat is seriously lowered by buildings of various heights. Heat gets trapped and causes temperatures to rise.

According to Bangladesh Forest Department, 14 percent area of the country and only 9 percent of Dhaka city are covered in trees.

But according to Global Forest Watch, a mere 5.9 percent of the city is green.

In April, Bangladesh experienced the longest heatwave ever, and a mild to moderate heatwave is sweeping the country now.

Data from Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) shows that the average maximum temperature throughout April was 36.2 degrees Celsius. With an average rainfall of just 1mm, the month was

also the driest in 43 years.

“Responding to climate change is an unprecedented challenge for cities, especially in Bangladesh where extreme heat is becoming more common,” Anna said.

“Extreme heat has a disproportionate impact on vulnerable people including the elderly and the young. Just last month, we saw another real-world example of this with the closure of schools.”

Last month, the government kept the primary and secondary schools, colleges, and madrasas closed for days as certain regions saw temperatures of 40C or more.

Anna noted, “Low-income households have limited capacity to adapt to extreme heat because they have limited resources and inadequate building design and poor access to water and electricity.”

“It is going to require bold action from policymakers, particularly when it comes to helping local communities adapt to this new reality.”

According to the health directorate, at least 15 people died

from heatstroke in April. However, the actual number could be higher as the directorate started keeping records from April 22, twenty days after the heatwave began searing the country.

Talking to this newspaper, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, minister of environment, said, “Over the years, Dhaka has witnessed a significant loss of green spaces and waterbodies. We must not only retain what we have, but also act now to increase these. Dhaka urgently needs to heal and also be made resilient to inevitable higher levels of warming in the future as this is the new normal.”

“The city has formidable challenges — growing population, high density thereof, vibrant growth of the economy and global warming. We need coordinated action involving a number of agencies and ministries. The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is taking the initiative to convene a meeting in this regard. Our ministry wants to invest in urban forestry leveraging satellite mapping.”

Slovak PM has new surgery

Deputy PM says his condition ‘still very serious’

AFP, Bratislava

Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico’s condition was “still very serious” two days after an attempted assassination, his deputy and close ally said yesterday, as police raided the suspect’s home.

Fico was hospitalised after the shooting on Wednesday, which happened as the 59-year-old leader was speaking to members of the public after a meeting in the central town of Handlova.

“He was operated on again, he had an almost two-hour-long operation,” deputy prime minister Robert Kalinak told reporters outside the hospital in Banska Bystrica. Fico had previously undergone a five-hour-long surgery, shortly after being airlifted from the scene of attack on Wednesday.

“His state is still very serious. I think it would take a couple of days to see the course of the development of his state,” Kalinak added yesterday.

The Banska Bystrica hospital director said Fico remained “conscious” despite being in a “serious” condition. Earlier yesterday, local media reported that Slovak police had searched the home of the man charged with the shooting.

Officers brought along the alleged gunman to the apartment he shared with his wife in the western town of Levice, TV footage showed.

SAFETY CONCERNS

Nepal latest to ban Indian spice brands

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal has become the latest jurisdiction to ban the import and sale of two popular Indian spice brands after reports that some of their products contained a cancer-causing pesticide, officials said yesterday.

Hong Kong and Singapore last month banned products from Everest and MDH — two brands popular in India and exported worldwide — after tests detected the presence of ethylene oxide, according to media reports.

Besides its use as a pesticide, ethylene oxide is used to sterilise medical equipment and as a sterilising agent in spices to prevent illnesses caused by salmonella and E. Coli bacteria.

Regular exposure to the colourless and odourless compound increases the “risk of cancers of the white blood cells”, according to the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Matina Joshi Vaidya, chief of Nepal’s Department of Food Technology and Quality Control, told AFP that the Himalayan country had also decided to halt the sale of the spice blends.

UN denounces ‘harassment’ of lawyers in Tunisia

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations yesterday denounced recent arrests of lawyers in Tunisia, saying the detentions, which have also included journalists and political commentators, undermined the rule of law in the North Africa country.

“Reported raids in the past week on the Tunisia Bar Association undermine the rule of law and violate international standards on the protection of the independence and function of lawyers,” Ravina Shamdasani, spokeswoman for the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), told reporters in Geneva.

“Such actions constitute forms of intimidation and harassment.”

“UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk urges the authorities to respect and safeguard freedoms of expression, association and peaceful assembly”, she said.

Veggies too pricey to afford for many

FROM PAGE 1

However, the prices of almost all types of fish remained unchanged yesterday compared to a week ago. The prices of broiler and sonali chickens have dropped by Tk 10-30 a kg.

Shafiqul Islam, a private firm employee who went to Shevrapara kitchen market yesterday to buy essentials, said the skyrocketing prices of essentials do not surprise him anymore.

“In the absence of market monitoring by the government, prices of commodities can be increased by anyone with any excuse,” he said.

Helal Uddin, a green chilli wholesaler at Karwan Bazar, said they brought green chillies from Dinajpur, Thakurgaon, and Pabna.

“The prices of green chillies have increased by Tk 50 a kg in those districts over the last two days. So, we have no option but to hike the prices,” he said.

The trader said there is a shortage in supply of vegetables.

Akib Islam, proprietor of Rakib Vegetables at Ibrahimpur kitchen market, said their sales have halved as customers cut their purchases due to high prices of vegetables.

“Many customers think we make hefty profits by increasing the prices. But the fact is we buy fresh vegetables at high prices and that’s why we need to sell those at high prices,” he said.

Ghulam Rahman, president of the Consumers Association of Bangladesh, said when the price of a commodity soars in the country, the prices of other essentials also go up.

“Traders make lame excuses for hiking the prices,” he said.

The CAB chief said the government should have a proper plan to control the market. If this cannot be done, the prices of essentials will continue to go beyond the reach of the ordinary people, he added.