

US undermined aviation safety with sanctions

Says Russia after Raisi helicopter crash

REUTERS, Moscow

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, commenting on the helicopter crash that killed Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi, said yesterday that US sanctions had worsened aviation safety.

Iranian media reported that images from the site showed the US-made Bell 212 helicopter on which Raisi was travelling slammed into a mountain peak, although there was no official word on the cause of the crash.

Iran was a major buyer of Bell helicopters under the Shah before the 1979 Islamic revolution, though the exact origin of the aircraft that crashed was not clear. Decades of sanctions have made it hard for Iran to obtain parts or upgrade its aircraft.

"The Americans disown this, but the truth is that other countries against which the United States announced sanctions do not receive spare parts for American equipment, including aviation," Lavrov said about the crash.

"We are talking about deliberately causing damage to ordinary citizens who use these vehicles, and when spare parts are not supplied, this is directly related to a decrease in the level of safety."

Raisi's death has introduced "great uncertainty" in the succession, analysts said, stirring rivalries in the hardliners' camp over who will succeed Khamenei as the country's ultimate authority.



Doctors and staff of Kamal Adwan Hospital evacuate Palestinian patients following an Israeli strike in Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip yesterday. Residents and medical officials said Israeli tanks were besieging the Al-Awda Hospital in Jabalia for the third day, and opened fire against Kamal Adwan Hospital in nearby Beit Lahia town.

PHOTO: REUTERS

UN COURT Small island states win key climate case

AFP, Berlin

The UN maritime court yesterday ruled in favour of nine small island states who brought a case to seek increased protection of world's oceans from catastrophic climate change.

Finding that carbon emissions can be considered a sea pollutant, the court said countries have an obligation to take measures to mitigate their effects on oceans.

"Anthropogenic GHG emissions into the atmosphere constitute pollution of the marine environment" under the international treaty UNCLOS, the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) ruled in an expert opinion.

The case was brought in September by nine small countries disproportionately affected by climate change, including Antigua and Barbuda and Vanuatu.

PRO-GAZA PROTEST Students stage walkout from Yale graduation

REUTERS, New Haven

Scores of graduating students staged a walkout from Yale University's commencement exercises on Monday, protesting the Israeli offensive in Gaza, Yale's financial ties to weapons makers and its response to pro-Palestinian demonstrations on the Ivy League campus.

The walkout began as Yale President Peter Salovey started to announce the traditional college-by-college presentation of candidates for degrees on the grounds of Yale's Old Campus, filled with thousands of graduates in their caps and gowns.

At least 150 students seated near the front of the audience stood up together, turned their backs to the stage and paraded out of the ceremony through Phelps Gate, retracing their steps during the processional into the yard.

Many of the protesters carried small banners with such slogans as "Books not bombs" and "Divest from war." Some wore red-coloured gloves symbolizing bloodied hands.

Other signs read: "Drop the charges" and "Protect free speech" in reference to 45 people arrested in a police crackdown last month on demonstrations in and around the New Haven, Connecticut, campus.

Aid for Palestinians piles up in Egypt

Rafah crossing closed due to threat posed to aid work by Israel's military operation; US pier delivery falters

REUTERS, United Nations

Food and medicine for Palestinians in Gaza are piling up in Egypt because the Rafah crossing remains closed and there has been no aid delivered to a UN warehouse from a US-built pier for two days, UN officials warned on Monday.

Senior UN aid official Edem Wosornu said there were insufficient supplies and fuel to provide any meaningful level of support to the people of Gaza as they endure Israel's military onslaught against Hamas.

"We are running out of words to describe what is happening in Gaza. We have described it as a catastrophe, a nightmare, as hell on earth. It is all of these, and worse," she said.

She told the UN Security Council that the closure of Rafah crossing from Egypt had stopped the delivery of at least

900,000 forced to flee Rafah since the start of Israeli offensive: UN

82,000 metric tonnes of supplies, while access at Israel's Kerem Shalom crossing was limited due to "hostilities, challenging logistical conditions, and complex coordination procedures."

Egypt said on Monday that the crossing is closed due to the threat posed to aid work by Israel's military operation.

Aid access into southern Gaza has been disrupted since Israel stepped up military operations in

Rafah, a move that the UN says has forced 900,000 people to flee.

Israel's UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan told the Security Council that Israel had no other choice but to go after Hamas in Rafah and that the removal of civilians from an active war zone should be

quantities of aid, but now areas in the vicinity of this crossing are also under evacuation orders" by Israel.

Aid deliveries began arriving at a US-built pier on Friday as Israel comes under growing global pressure to allow more supplies into the besieged coastal enclave. The



supported and not condemned.

"They have moved to a designated humanitarian zone that is being filled with aid. And our hope is for many more civilians to leave Rafah and move out of harm's way," he said. "Temporary evacuation is reversible, but the loss of life is not."

However, Wosornu described the situation for Palestinians at the new sites as horrendous.

In northern Gaza, where the UN warns a famine is imminent, Wosornu said the Erez crossing had been closed since May 9 and the newly-opened Erez West crossing

"is now being used for limited

UN agreed to assist in coordinating aid distribution from the floating pier, but has remained adamant that deliveries by land are the best way to combat the crisis.

The UN said that 10 truckloads of food aid - transported from the pier site by UN contractors - were received on Friday at a World Food Programme warehouse in Deir El Balah in Gaza.

But on Saturday, only five truckloads made it to the warehouse after 11 others were cleaned out by Palestinians during the journey through an area that a UN official said has been hard to access with humanitarian aid.

India EC bars BJP candidate from campaign

HINDUSTAN TIMES ONLINE

The Election Commission (EC) of India has "strongly censured" retired Calcutta High Court judge and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Lok Sabha candidate from West Bengal's Tamruk constituency, Abhijit Gangopadhyay, and barred him from all campaigning for 24 hours after his crass remarks about chief minister Mamata Banerjee.

The 24-hour bar on his campaigning began at 5:00pm yesterday.

"[T]he Commission painfully notes the fact that such abominable words have come from someone of Shri Abhijit Gangopadhyay's educational and professional background and hence does not remotely deserve any benefit of doubt. And whereas, by Shri Abhijit Gangopadhyay's words, he has brought damage and disrepute to the state of West Bengal that has a distinguished tradition of respect for women," the polls body noted in its order.

On May 15, Gangopadhyay, at a public meeting in Haldia, had said in Bengali, "Mamata Banerjee, how much are you being sold for? Your rate is 10 lakhs, why? Because you're getting your make up done by Keya Seth? Mamata Banerjee, is she even a woman? I keep wondering sometimes."

40 killed in Nigeria gunmen attack

AFP, Jos

Gunmen on motorbikes stormed a mining community in central Nigeria, killing up to 40 people and torching homes, residents said, in the latest violence to hit a region troubled by resource disputes and intercommunal strife.

The attack late on Monday took place in Plateau state, where in December nearly 200 people were killed in raids on mostly Christian villages.

Armed men invaded Zurak mining community in Wase district in the evening, shooting sporadically at residents and torching houses, Plateau state commissioner for information Musa Ibrahim Ashoms told AFP by telephone.

He initially gave an estimate of around 40 killed, but later said only nine had so far been confirmed dead after speaking to local officials as the situation was still unclear.

1 dead, 30 hurt as S'pore flight hits turbulence

AFP, Bangkok

One person died and 30 were injured yesterday when a Singapore Airlines flight from London hit severe turbulence and was forced to make an emergency landing in Bangkok.

Flight tracking data suggested the plane dropped more than 1,800 metres (6,000 feet) in just five minutes over the Andaman Sea, west of Thailand, causing multiple head injuries to those on board.

It is the latest drama involving a Boeing plane, after a fuselage panel blew out of an Alaska Airlines 737 MAX in January as well as two fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019.

Singapore Airlines said flight SQ321 took off from London's Heathrow airport and "encountered severe turbulence en route".

Dhaka, Canberra

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their coastguard to Bangladesh to talk to the head of Bangladesh Coastguard in order to bring about a fruitful cooperation.

The home minister told journalists at the secretariat that Wong emphasised on enhancing the sharing of intelligence for the development of both the countries.

Wong said, "We share a region, an ocean and a future. We are determined to do all we can with you and other partners in the region to ensure a region that is peaceful, stable and prosperous."

About big power competition in the Indo-pacific region, she said Australia is a middle power, not super power, and believes in partnership, collaboration and engagement.

"So, we will collaborate with the countries in the Indian ocean through IORA [Indian Ocean Rim Association], work with partners of the ASEAN, with which it has strategic partnership, and we have a growing relationship with Bangladesh.

"We are a democracy and care about the issues [democracy, human rights, governance and gender equality] you spoke about. We want to do what we can to facilitate development, [so] that the people are safe, prosperous and the conditions for peace are there."

About the Rohingya crisis, Wong said Australia will continue to work with

Bangladesh on addressing it.

"This is a critically important issue to our region. Sustainable repatriation of the Rohingyas is the solution," she said, adding that it is important to hold accountable the perpetrators who committed the crimes against the ethnic minority.

She also said Australia will provide additional funding to Bangladesh for technical education and additional economic assistance for economic reforms to support the LDC graduation.

Wong added that Australia and Bangladesh are also working on practical solutions to climate change, including transforming economy to clean energy economy.

Foreign Minister Hasan Mahmud said the bilateral trade between the two countries saw a significant rise, currently at \$4 billion, and Australia will continue to provide duty-free access of Bangladeshi products to the Australian market even after the LDC graduation.

"We sought Australian investments to our IT sector and special economic zones."

"We also spoke about skilled migration and a joint programme for Bangladeshi and Australian universities," he said, adding that more than 100,000 Bangladeshis are already in Australia and are making significant contribution to its society.

Washington

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The minister said Bangladesh has adopted a "zero tolerance" policy against corruption and it will continue to work with the United States on this issue.

Hasan said the two countries are working together on combating terrorism and human trafficking, among other issues.

The US state department yesterday announced the public designation of Gen (ret) Aziz due to what it says was his involvement in "significant corruption".

This action renders Aziz and his immediate family members generally ineligible for entering the US.

Aziz served as Bangladesh's chief of army staff from June 2018 to June 2021.

Meanwhile, Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan declined to comment on the US sanctions against the former army chief.

Speaking to reporters after a cabinet meeting at the Secretariat yesterday, the minister said, "I have no comment on this. I don't know why this ban has been imposed."

The US in May last year announced a new visa policy stating that it would impose visa restrictions on Bangladeshis, who undermine the democratic election process, and their immediate family members.

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