# INTERNATIONAL

#### China ends military drills around Taiwan

AFP, Beijing

China has ended two days of military drills around Taiwan that saw jets loaded with live munitions and warships practise seizing and isolating the self-ruled island.

The exercises simulated strikes targeting Taiwan's leaders as well as its ports and airports to "cut off the island's 'blood vessels'", Chinese military analysts told state media.

Beijing considers the democratic island part of its territory and has not ruled out using force to bring it under its control.

The war games kicked off Thursday morning, as aircraft and naval vessels surrounded Taiwan to conduct mock attacks against "important targets", state broadcaster CCTV said.

Codenamed "Joint Sword-2024A", exercises were launched three days after Taiwan's President Lai Ching-te took office and made an inauguration speech that China denounced as a "confession of independence".

Beijing's ministry spokesman Wu Qian said Friday that Lai was pushing Taiwan "into a perilous situation of war and danger".

"Every time 'Taiwan independence' provokes us, we will push our countermeasures one step further" until "complete reunification" is achieved, he said.

The origin of the dispute dates back to the Chinese Civil War, when nationalists fled to Taiwan following their defeat at the hands of the Communist Party in 1949.

A total of 111 Chinese aircraft and dozens of naval vessels took part in the drills over two days, according to Taiwan's defence ministry.

On Friday evening, China's army published images of the drills' "highlights", featuring missile-launching trucks, fighter jets taking off and naval officers looking through binoculars at



Palestinians mourn over the bodies of relatives killed in an Israeli strike ahead of their funeral at a clinic in Gaza City yesterday.

\$300B OF RUSSIAN FROZEN FUND

# Moscow fumes as G7 mulling to use assets

AGENCIES

G7 finance ministers cited "progress" in finding ways to use profits from frozen Russian assets to help Ukraine as they wrapped up a meeting Saturday, envisioning a concrete proposal to present to a leaders' summit next

A search for creative yet legally sound solutions was top of the agenda at the two-day Group of Seven meeting in Stresa, northern Italy, as Kyiv continues its urgent appeals for more funds from Western allies in its third year of war with Russia.

"We are making progress in our discussions on potential avenues to bring forward the extraordinary profits stemming from immobilised Russian sovereign assets to the benefit of Ukraine, consistent with international law and our respective legal systems," the ministers said in a final

G7 finance ministers reiterated in their final statement that Russian assets frozen by the Group of Seven nations "will remain immobilised until Russia pays for the damage it has caused to Ukraine".

But they went further, saying they were 'committed to further financial and economic sanctions... including continuing to target Italy and Canada - to back a loan that could two confirmed deaths.



Russia's energy revenue and future extractive capabilities".

The G7 is "ready to impose sanctions on individuals and entities that help Russia acquire advanced materials, technology, and equipment for its military industrial base," added the statement.

Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov said Moscow would reciprocate if the G7 went through with its threat. His government has already taken control of some Western businesses active in Russia.

Financing for Ukraine and meeting China's growing export strength were the main themes addressed in comments from finance ministers during the gathering.

The United States has been pushing its G7 partners - Japan, Germany, France, Britain, He said 24 people were injured along with the

provide Kyiv with as much as \$50 billion in the near term.

However, the cautious wording of the statement, containing no figures or details, reflects many legal and technical aspects which need hammering out before such a loan could be issued.

The issue will now be discussed by G7 leaders at a summit in southern Italy in mid-June. The G7 ministers also called out China's trade policies and industrial overcapacity, warning that the bloc could take measures to counter them.

The United States has led warnings that a surge of low-cost Chinese exports fuelled by Chinese government support in key sectors like solar and electric vehicles pose a risk to global markets.

Meanwhile, Russian strikes on a crowded DIY hardware store in the Ukrainian city of Kharkiv yesterday killed at least two people, wounded many more, and triggered a huge blaze that fire crews were battling to contain, regional officials said.

Oleh Syniehubov, Kharkiv regional governor, said via the Telegram messaging app that two guided bombs had hit the DIY hypermarket in a residential area of the city.

### **Pandemic talks** end without a deal

Negotiations on a landmark global agreement on handling future pandemics ended Friday without a deal -- though countries said they wanted to keep pushing for an accord.

Scarred by the devastation caused by Covid-19 which killed millions of people, shredded economies and crippled health systems countries have spent two years trying to hammer out binding commitments on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

The talks gathered momentum in the final weeks, but failed to meet a final deadline before next week's World Health Assembly -- the annual gathering of the World Health Organization's 194 member states.

'This is not a failure," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus insisted as the talks ended at the UN health agency's headquarters in Geneva. He urged countries to see it as a "good opportunity to re-energise".

The assembly, which runs from Monday until June 1, will take stock and decide what to do next.

The main disputes revolved around access to pathogens detected within countries, and to pandemic-fighting products such as vaccines derived from that knowledge. Other tricky topics were sustainable financing, pathogen surveillance, supply chains, and the equitable distribution of tests, treatments and jabs but also the means to produce them.

### Fire at gaming zone in Gujarat kills 16

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

At least 20 people, including children, were killed in a massive fire that raged in a gaming zone teeming with people enjoying a summer vacation outing in Gujarat's Rajkot city yesterday.

Rescue operations are underway at the affected TRP game zone for more than four hours after the blaze erupted at a fibre dome constructed for gaming activities at around 4:30

pm, officials said. "Extremely distressed by the fire mishap in Rajkot. My thoughts

are with all those who have lost their loved ones. Prayers for the injured. The local administration working to provide all possible assistance to those affected," Prime Minister Narendra Modi

According to officials, the structure collapsed due to the huge fire which broke out when several persons, including children, were playing games.

"The fire caused the collapse of the structure. So far, we have received a figure of 16 deaths," said Rajkot Collector Prabhav Joshi. Rajkot Police Commissioner Raju Bhargav told

media persons that the cause of the blaze would be investigated and a message had been issued to all the gaming zones in the city to close operations.





Indian National Congress (INC) party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi leave a polling station after casting their vote in New Delhi yesterday; Former Chief Minister of Jammu and Kashmir, and Peoples Democratic Party (PDP) president Mehbooba Mufti sits during a protest near a police station before casting her ballot in Anantnag yesterday.

## Vote against dictatorship

Says Kejriwal as India votes in sixth phase of polls

AFP, New Delhi

Two top rivals of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi who accuse his government of targeting them in unjustified criminal probes cast their votes in New Delhi yesterday as the country's six-week election resumed.

Hindu nationalist Modi, 73, remains broadly popular after a decade in office and his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is widely expected to win a third term next month after a poll hit by high summer temperatures.

But accusations that the BJP has sought to sideline its opponents via the justice system have sparked concerns from UN rights chief Volker Turk and rights groups over the election's fairness.

Rahul Gandhi, the most prominent leader of India's opposition Congress party, cast his ballot at a polling station in New Delhi, where temperatures were forecast to reach 43 degrees Celsius (109 degrees Fahrenheit).

A son, grandson and greatgrandson of former prime ministers, Gandhi paused after voting to take a selfie with his mother Sonia but did not speak to crowds of reporters.

The scion of a dynasty that dominated Indian politics for decades, he was convicted of criminal libel last year after a complaint by a member of Modi's party. His two-year prison sentence saw him disqualified from parliament until the verdict was

suspended by a higher court.
After voting, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, 55, leader of the opposition Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), urged citizens: "Please vote, use your right to vote, and vote against dictatorship."

Kejriwal was arrested in March in a long-running graft case and detained for several weeks before the Supreme Court granted him bail earlier this month and he returned to the campaign trail.

Investigators "had no proof and yet they jailed him", opposition voter Yogesh Kumar, 42, told AFP. "This is a blunt show of power."

Congress is spearheading an opposition alliance of more than two dozen parties competing jointly against Modi, including the

Kejriwal's organisation grew out of an anti-corruption movement a decade ago -- its name means Common Man's party -- and has been elected to office in the Delhi region and the state of Punjab, but has struggled to establish itself as a nationwide force.

In February, authorities froze several Congress bank accounts as part of a running dispute over income tax returns filed five years ago, a move Gandhi said had severely impacted the party's ability to contest the election.

Modi's political opponents and international rights campaigners have long sounded the alarm on India's shrinking democratic space.

#### S'PORE AIRLINES 43 still in Thai hospital for turbulence injuries

REUTERS, Bangkok

Fourty-three people who were on board a Singapore Airlines flight that hit severe turbulence remain hospitalised in Bangkok four days after the emergency, a hospital in the Thai capital said yesterday.

The 43 patients are in three different hospitals in Bangkok, Samitivej Srinakarin hospital said in a statement.

On Thursday, the Samitivej Srinakarin hospital director told reporters 22 patients had spinal cord injuries and six had brain and skull injuries, but none were lifethreatening.

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	De mon Philotophic	Information Technology	
	Agency	Bangladesh Satellite Company Limited	
_	Procuring Entity Name	Dr. Shahjahan Mahmood, Chairman and CEO	
	Procuring Entity Code	Not used at present	
i i	Procuring Entity District  Expression of Interest for Selection of	Dhaka Individual Consultant (International) (Lump-Sump)	
	Title of Service EOI Ref No	Procurement of Individual Consultancy Service for Satellife Health Report Test  14.39.0000.012.07.004.23-72(M)	
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	d) Excellent analytical and communications skills and e) At least 2 international publications in Tierl journe f) At least 1 patent in satellite sector.  Scope of Work  a) Collect detailed data and provide two operational b) In addition, two preliminary informal reports ("reports will be used internally within BSCL and "Other Details (if applicable) i) Short listing will be made in accordance with the 'R ii) E(OI as well as attached forms/supporting document iii) Two (2) signed copies of EOI along with 1 (one Service for Satellite Health Report Test' on top of the iy) E(OIs submitted by consultants will be screened an applicants may obtain further information from the off sy) The Terms of Reference will be found at https://bsc.	e of Work  Collect detailed data and provide two operational reports.  In addition, two preliminary informal reports ("Preliminary Reports") are to be submitted prior to releasing the "Operational Reports"; these preliminary reports will be used internally within BSCL and Technical Adviser, for finalizing the "Operational Reports".	
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