

French fibre optic cables hit by ‘sabotage’

AFP, Paris

Fibre-optic cables in several parts of France have been “sabotaged”, police said yesterday, three days after the rail system was hit by attacks that halted trains across the country.

Friday’s disruption on the rail network came as Paris celebrated the opening of the Olympic Games, and wrecked the travel plans of hundreds of thousands of people.

Police said the cables of several telecoms operators had been sabotaged in six areas of France overnight from Sunday into yesterday but Paris was not affected.

AFP confirmed with major carriers including Free and SFR that they had been affected, although no major disruptions had yet been reported.

“It’s vandalism,” said Nicolas Chatin, spokesman for SFR, one of France’s four biggest operators.



Palestinians gather to collect water amid shortages in Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. Aid worker Tamer Al-Burai said water in Deir was becoming more difficult to get as more and more displaced people arrived, both from Khan Younis to the south and Bureij to the north.

PHOTO: REUTERS

VENEZUELA POLLS
Nicolas Maduro declared winner
Opposition, regional neighbours reject result citing fraud

AFP, Caracas

Nicolas Maduro was declared the winner of Venezuela’s presidential election Sunday but the opposition and key regional neighbours immediately rejected the official results.

The opposition coalition itself claimed victory, after an election campaign tainted by claims of political intimidation and fears of fraud, and following predictions by pollsters that Maduro would lose but was unlikely to concede after more than a decade in power.

He won re-election with 51.2 percent of votes, while opposition candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia received 44.2 percent, according to the electoral council (CNE), which in its majority is loyal to the president.

Maduro, 61, addressed celebrating supporters at the presidential palace minutes after the announcement.

“I can say, before the people of Venezuela and the world, I am Nicolas Maduro Moros, the re-elected president of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela,” Maduro said.

“There will be peace, stability and justice. Peace and respect for the law.” But the opposition coalition insisted it had garnered 70 percent of the vote, rejecting the figures from the CNE.

“We want to say to all of Venezuela and the world that Venezuela has a new president-elect and it is (candidate) Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia,” opposition leader Maria Corina Machado told journalists, calling the official result “another fraud.” Costa Rican President Rodrigo Chaves also denounced the official result as “fraudulent,” while Chile’s president described it as “hard to believe.”

With 80 percent of the votes tallied, according to the CNE, Colombian Foreign Minister Luis Gilberto Murillo yesterday called for a total count and “independent audit” of ballots.



Quad decries dangerous South China Sea actions

Pledges to bolster maritime security in the region; Beijing says the bloc “artificially creating tension”

REUTERS, Tokyo

Foreign ministers from Australia, India, Japan and the United States said yesterday they were seriously concerned about intimidating and dangerous manoeuvres in the South China Sea and pledged to bolster maritime security in the region.

The joint statement came after talks between the so-called “Quad” countries in Tokyo, attended by Australia’s Penny Wong, India’s Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, Japan’s Yoko Kamikawa and Antony Blinken from the US.

In security talks between the US and Japan on Sunday, the two allies labelled China the “greatest strategic challenge” facing the region.

“We are seriously concerned about the situation in the East and South China Seas and reiterate our strong opposition to any unilateral actions that seek to change the status quo by force or coercion,” the ministers said in the statement, which did not directly mention China.

They also expressed serious concern about the militarisation of disputed features and coercive and intimidating manoeuvres in the South China Sea, including dangerous use of coast guard and maritime militia vessels.

Asked about the statement at a regular news briefing yesterday, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Lin Jian said the Quad was “artificially creating tension, inciting confrontation and containing the development of other countries”.

Chinese vessels have repeatedly clashed with Philippine ships seeking to resupply its troops on the disputed Second Thomas Shoal in recent months, although the two countries in July reached a provisional agreement that aims to ease tensions.

The Quad group said they were working



on a series of initiatives to maintain “the free and open maritime order” including helping partners improve domain awareness via satellite data, training and capacity building. They also announced a plan to set up a new maritime legal dialogue.

“We are charting a course for a more secure and open Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean region by bolstering maritime security,” Blinken said in remarks to reporters after the meeting.

“In practical terms what does this mean? It means strengthening the capacity of partners across the region to know what’s happening in their own waters,” he added.

He said the US would continue to work with its partners to ensure freedom of navigation and the unimpeded flow of lawful maritime commerce.

The US announced plans on Sunday for a major revamp of its military command in Japan. It was among several measures announced by the allies to address what they said was an “evolving security environment”, noting various threats from China including its muscular maritime activities.

“Uncertainty surrounding the international order as well as the international situation has been increasing with Russia continuing its aggression in Ukraine, attempts to unilaterally change the status quo by force in the East China Sea and South China Sea, and the launch of ballistic missiles by North Korea,” Japan’s Kamikawa said after the talks.

The Quad ministers also pledged to advance cooperation in cybersecurity to protect supply chains and critical infrastructure, including undersea cables.

After leaving Tokyo, Blinken and Austin will hold security talks with another Asian ally, the Philippines, as the Biden administration seeks to counter an increasingly bold China.

Biden unveils US top court reform plans

AFP, Washington

US President Joe Biden yesterday announced plans for urgent reforms to the conservative-dominated Supreme Court, in a bold but long-shot move as he seeks to make a mark in his last six months in power.

The 81-year-old Democrat is calling for a constitutional amendment to reverse the Supreme Court’s recent ruling backing Donald Trump’s claims of presidential immunity, according to the White House.

The Democrat is also calling for term limits for Supreme Court justices, who currently serve for life, following shock rulings such as the repeal of the nationwide right to abortion.

Biden, who was due to further unveil the plans in a speech in Austin, Texas later yesterday, will also seek an enforceable ethics code after a string of scandals. He had confirmed he would seek the reforms during an Oval Office address last week outlining his priorities after deciding to drop out of the 2024 election, though the plans have almost no hope of getting through a deeply divided Congress.

“This nation was founded on a simple yet profound principle: No one is above the law. Not the president of the United States. Not a justice on the Supreme Court of the United States. No one,” Biden said in an opinion piece published yesterday.

“What is happening now is not normal, and it undermines the public’s confidence in the court’s decisions, including those impacting personal freedoms. We now stand in a breach.”

Lanka President Ranil fails to get backing of largest party

REUTERS, Colombo

Sri Lanka’s President Ranil Wickremesinghe yesterday failed to secure the backing of the biggest political party in parliament for his re-election bid, posing a major challenge to his prospects in the Sept. 21 vote.

Nearly 17 million of Sri Lanka’s 22 million population is eligible to cast its ballots in the vote that is crucial to determine the future of reforms in the South Asian island nation weathering its worst financial crisis in decades.

Of the multiple candidates, Wickremesinghe, who took over the top job in July 2022 as the economy crumbled under a severe financial crisis triggered by a record shortfall of foreign exchange reserves, is seen as the most market- and reform-friendly option.

But with just one seat in parliament, he needs the support of the Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna (SLPP), which holds a parliamentary majority and counts former President Mahinda Rajapaksa and his brother as key members, to be a stronger contender.

“The politburo decided by a significant majority that Sri Lanka Podujana Peramuna will present a candidate under the SLPP party symbol,” SLPP General Secretary Salaga Kariyawasam told reporters after the party’s politburo meeting.

SOUTHERN RUSSIA
2 dead, 100 hurt after train, truck collide



REUTERS, Moscow

At least two people were killed and up to 100 people injured yesterday when a passenger train carrying 800 people collided with a Kamaz truck, derailing eight carriages, Russian media outlets reported.

Some of the carriages lay twisted and battered beside the railway track, they said.

The train had been travelling from Kazan in Tatarstan to Adler on the Black Sea when it derailed in the southern Volgograd region near the Kotelnikovo station about 1,200 km (750 miles) south of Moscow, the emergencies ministry said.

Protesters kill soldier, injure 16 others: Pak army

REUTERS, Quetta

Pakistan’s army said protesters taking part in a march in the southwestern city of Gwadar attacked security forces deployed to guard them yesterday, killing one soldier and injuring 16 others.

A nationalist ethnic Baloch movement has been demonstrating for the last two days in the port city, blocking a highway to press their demands for the release of members of their movement they allege were detained by security forces.

The army said protesters assaulted military personnel who had been deployed to guard them, killing a soldier. “The unprovoked assaults by the violent protesters have resulted in injuries to sixteen soldiers, including an officer.”

There was no immediate reaction from the Baloch movement’s officials. Pakistan’s southwestern Balochistan province, where Gwadar is located, borders Iran and Afghanistan.

Iran seizes oil tanker in Gulf
Arrests nine crew

AFP, Tehran

Iran’s Revolutionary Guards have seized a Togo-flagged oil tanker in the Gulf and arrested its nine-person crew over alleged fuel smuggling, the military force said yesterday on its Sepahnews website.

“On Friday morning, an oil tanker named Pearl G, carrying the flag of the African country of Togo... was seized by judicial order,” said the Guards’ statement.

The vessel is “owned by an Iraqi resident of Dubai, United Arab Emirates”, and it was carrying 700,000 litres of fuel, the statement added.

The Guards’ naval forces captured it near the Arash oil field, a disputed rig between Iran and Kuwait “while loading smuggled fuel from Iranian barges”, it said.

“This oil tanker along with its nine crew members who are of Indian nationality have been transferred to Imam Khomeini harbour and are under surveillance.”

6 protest organisers still in DB custody

FROM PAGE 2

taken into, tortured or forced to issue statements,” Harun said, adding that the six organisers withdrew their protest as all their demands have already been met.

On Sunday night, Nahid Islam, one of the key organisers, along with five other coordinators, made the announcement via video message, which was distributed to media outlets from the DB office.

He was seen reading a statement, minutes after a photo posted by Harun on Facebook that showed them having food with Harun in a room apparently at the DB office.

Yesterday, two Supreme Court lawyers filed a writ petition with the High Court, seeking orders for the immediate release of the six. During the hearing on the petition, the HC expressed displeasure over the photo of the six organisers eating at the DB office and said, “Don’t mock the nation.”

“We waited for eleven hours at the DB office as we were told that Nahid and others will be released. But at midnight, DB officers said they will make decision about them [organisers] as per the court [High Court] order tomorrow [today] as a writ petition in this regard was pending,” a guardian of an organiser told The Daily Star around 12:15am today, wishing anonymity.

“If we had been informed of the matter earlier, then we wouldn’t have waited for this long time here. It is harassment.”

This newspaper could not get DB’s comments regarding the matter.

সংশোধিত বিজ্ঞপ্তি

Bangladesh Election Commission
Election Commission Secretariat
Identification System for Enhancing Access to Services (IDEA) Project (2nd Phase)
Nirbachan Bhavan (Floor-8), Agargaon, Dhaka-1207

Memo No. 17.14.0000.240.07.171.2024-2333 Date: 29 July, 2024

Package Title	Purchase and Upgradation of Network Equipment for Data Centre and Personalization Centre
Invitation Number	17.14.0000.240.07.171.2024/1916
Issued on	13 June, 2024
Tender Package No.	GD-41.1

Addendum-02 of Invitation for Tenders (IFT)

SL No. of IFT	Existing Invitation for Tenders (IFT)	Amendments (Contents to be read as) Invitation for Tenders (IFT)
15. Tender Last Selling Date and Time	30 July, 2024 Time: 05:00pm	18 August, 2024 Time: 3:00pm
16. Tender Closing Date and Time	31 July, 2024 Time: 11:00am	19 August, 2024 Time: 11:00am
17. Tender Opening Date and Time	31 July, 2024 Time: 11:30am	19 August, 2024 Time: 11:30am

Abul Hasnat Mohammad Sayem
Brigadier General
Project Director
IDEA Project (2nd Phase)
Election Commission Secretariat

GD-85