

MYANMAR  
Monastery  
attack kills  
at least 23

REUTERS

At least 23 people have been confirmed dead, including four children, after an attack on a monastery in a village in Myanmar's Sagaing region, witnesses said yesterday.

The monastery in the village of Lintalu was hit in the early hours of Friday morning, said Hlaing Bwa, head of the Sagaing District People's Administration, a pro-democracy group that administers parts of the central region.

He and a local resident described the attack as an airstrike by the State Administration Council, Myanmar's ruling military junta.

A spokesperson for the junta did not respond to requests for comment.

The monastery housed around 200 people displaced by nearby fighting between the army and pro-democracy forces, Hlaing Bwa told Reuters.

Armed men  
kill nine bus  
passengers in  
Pakistan

REUTERS, QUETTA

Authorities retrieved from Pakistan's mountains the bullet-ridden bodies of nine passengers kidnapped by armed men in a spate of bus attacks in the troubled southwestern province of Balochistan, officials said on Friday.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but Baloch separatists, agitating for a greater share of resources, have figured in similar past killings of those identified as hailing from the eastern province of Punjab.

Government official Naveed Alam said the bodies with bullet wounds were found in the mountains overnight, while a provincial government spokesman, Shahid Rind, said the passengers were seized from two buses on Thursday evening.

"We are identifying the bodies and reaching out to their families," he said, adding that the victims, working as labourers in the restive region, were returning home to Punjab.

Ethnic insurgents accuse Pakistan's government of stealing regional resources to fund expenditure elsewhere, mainly in the sprawling province of Punjab.

Security forces foiled three insurgent attacks on Thursdays before the kidnappings, Rind said, accusing neighbour and arch rival India of backing the militants.



A woman sitting amid debris looks on as Palestinians inspect destroyed tents at a makeshift displacement camp following a reported incursion a day earlier by Israeli tanks in the area in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US, China hold 'positive'  
talks amid tariff row  
Rubio meets Wang on the sidelines of Asean summit

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio yesterday said he had "positive and constructive" talks with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, as the two major powers vied to push their agendas in Asia at a time of tension over Washington's tariff offensive.

The top US diplomat was in Malaysia on his first Asia trip since taking office, seeking to stress the United States' commitment to the region at the East Asia Summit and Asean Regional Forum, where many countries were reeling from a raft of



bilateral meeting as positive and constructive yesterday. And Rubio said the odds of Trump meeting Chinese President Xi Jinping were high.

"We're two big, powerful countries, and there are always going to be issues that we disagree on. I think there's some areas of potential cooperation and I thought it was a very constructive, positive meeting, and a lot of work to do," he told reporters.

Rubio emphasised that his sitdown with Wang was not a negotiation, but rather about establishing a constructive baseline to continue talks.

Rubio's visit is part of an effort to renew US focus on the Indo-Pacific region and look beyond conflicts in the Middle East and Europe that have consumed much of the administration's attention since Trump's return to office in January.

But that has been overshadowed by this week's announcement of steep US tariffs on imports from many Asian countries and US allies, including 25% targeting Japan, South Korea and Malaysia, 32% for Indonesia, 36% for Thailand and

Cambodia and 40% on goods from Myanmar and Laos.

China, initially singled out with levies exceeding 100%, has until August 12 to reach a deal with Washington to avoid Trump's reinstating additional import curbs imposed during tit-for-tat tariff exchanges in April and May.

Analysts said Rubio would use the trip to press the case that the United States remains a better partner than China, Washington's main strategic rival. Rubio met his counterparts from Thailand, Cambodia, Vietnam and Indonesia on Friday.

Wang has rebuked the United States in Kuala Lumpur, saying no country should support or agree with its tariffs, according to remarks released by Beijing yesterday.

In a joint communique yesterday, Asean foreign ministers expressed concern over rising global trade tensions and the need to diversify trade, calling for a transparent and fair multilateral trading system.

Without mentioning the United States, they said unilateral tariffs were "counterproductive and risk exacerbating global economic fragmentation".

“  
We’re  
sending  
weapons to  
Nato... Nato  
is going to be  
giving those  
weapons (to  
Ukraine),  
and Nato is  
paying for  
those, 100  
percent.  
DONALD TRUMP  
Us president

Police free 1,194 in  
global trafficking  
raids: Europol

AFP, The Hague

Police rescued 1,194 potential human trafficking victims and arrested 158 suspects in coordinated raids across 43 countries last month, the European Union's law enforcement agency said yesterday.

Operation "Global Chain", which deployed 15,000 officers, targeted human traffickers and smugglers in Europe, Africa, Asia and the Americas, Europol said in a statement.

Victims came from 64 countries, mostly Romania, Ukraine, Colombia, China, and Hungary.

"Many of the victims had been trafficked across borders, and even continents, demonstrating the global nature of human trafficking schemes," the statement said.

"Investigations show that the vast majority of victims of sexual exploitation are female and adult, while the exploitation of underage victims is mostly connected to forced begging and forced criminal activity such as pickpocketing."

In one of the cases, Austrian police arrested seven suspected human traffickers and rescued eight women during a coordinated cross-border operation targeting a Romanian crime group.

The suspects -- six Romanians and one Hungarian -- were part of a family-run network operating across several EU countries, investigators said.

Victims were allegedly recruited using the so-called "lover-boy method", in which traffickers pose as romantic partners before coercing women into prostitution.

Pak father kills  
daughter over  
TikTok account

AFP, Rawalpindi

Pakistan police yesterday said a father shot dead his daughter after she refused to delete her account on popular video-sharing app TikTok.

In the Muslim-majority country, women can be subjected to violence by family members for not following strict rules on how to behave in public, including in online spaces.

"The girl's father had asked her to delete her TikTok account. On refusal, he killed her," a police spokesperson told AFP. Investigators said the father killed his 16-year-old daughter on Tuesday "for honour". He was subsequently arrested.

The victim's family initially tried to "portray the murder as a suicide" according to police in the city of Rawalpindi, where the attack happened.

Trump to supply arms to  
Ukraine via Nato

Plans major statement on Russia amid frustration with Putin

REUTERS, Washington/Kyiv/Rome

US President Donald Trump said on Thursday the United States would supply weapons to Ukraine via Nato and that he would make a "major statement" on Russia on Monday.

In recent days, Trump has expressed frustration with Russian President Vladimir Putin over the lack of progress towards ending the war sparked by Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

"I think I'll have a major statement to make on Russia on Monday," Trump told NBC News, declining to elaborate.

Trump also told NBC News about what he called a new deal between the US, Nato allies and Ukraine over weapons shipment from the United States.

"We're sending weapons to Nato, and Nato is paying for those weapons, 100%. So what we're doing



is the weapons that are going out are going to Nato, and then Nato is going to be giving those weapons (to Ukraine), and Nato is paying for those weapons," Trump said.

"We send weapons to Nato, and Nato is going to reimburse the full cost of those weapons," he added.

For the first time since returning to office, Trump will send weapons to Kyiv under a presidential power frequently used by his predecessor, two sources familiar with the decision said on Thursday.

Trump on Tuesday said the

US would send more weapons to Ukraine to help the country defend itself against intensifying Russian advances.

The package could include defensive Patriot missiles and offensive medium-range rockets, but a decision on the exact equipment has not been made, the sources said.

On the ground, Ukrainian drone and shelling attacks killed three people in Russia yesterday, while Russian bombardments on east Ukraine forced the evacuation of a maternity centre in Kharkiv.

Russian air defence systems intercepted 155 Ukrainian drones overnight, Moscow said, an attack that comes after Russia pounded Ukraine in successive nightly attacks targeting the capital Kyiv.

The UN has said Russia's intensifying attacks pushed the number of Ukrainian civilians killed and wounded to a three-year high in the month of June.

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