

News in brief

37 Chinese warplanes cross into Taiwan's defence zone

More than 30 Chinese warplanes entered Taiwan's air

defence zone over the course of about six hours, the island's defence ministry said yesterday, a sharp ramp-up in single-day incursions by China's military.

China claims self-ruled Taiwan as its territory and has vowed to take it one day -- by force if necessary. In recent years, Beijing has intensified aerial incursions into the island's air defence identification zone -- nearly doubling the air sorties in 2022 compared to the year before. Taiwan's Ministry of National Defence spokesman Sun Li-fang announced yesterday that from 5 am local time (2100 GMT), "a total of 37 Chinese military aircrafts" entered Taiwan's southwestern ADIZ.

Pope Francis, 86, spent a restful night and was in good condition after a hernia

Pope in good condition after hernia operation: Vatican

operation, the Vatican said yesterday, as doctors cautioned his age and health issues could affect his recovery time. "Pope Francis passed a quiet night and managed to have a lengthy rest," the Vatican said. "He is in a generally good condition, is alert and is breathing without assistance," it said in a statement. The Argentine pontiff was "grateful" for those sending him well wishes and asked people to pray for him, it added.



200 train passengers evacuated from Austrian tunnel after fire

Some 200 passengers in Austria were evacuated after

the train they were riding caught fire in a tunnel, authorities said. Around 45 passengers suffered minor injuries in the incident, likely from smoke inhalation, local police said. The train headed to Hamburg and Amsterdam was passing through a tunnel close to the city of Innsbruck in the Austrian Alps on Wednesday evening, when its overhead wire snapped, a spokesman for the Austrian rail operator OeBB said. The train carrying passengers was also transporting automobiles and one or several of them caught fire from the damaged cable, the spokesman said.



CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Think morals are declining? So has everyone, ever, study says



People watch a performance during a pop up event in Times Square  
AFP | New York

Do you feel like society's morals have declined recently? You are far from alone, and may be suffering from a "psychological illusion," according to new research.

At every point over the last 70 years, people across the world have continuously believed that morality is declining, US psychologists found by looking at historical surveys.

But rather than morals steadily falling throughout history, the researchers suggested this perception is an illusion caused by rose-tinted memories of the past and a focus on the grim news of the present.

In a study in the journal *Nature*, the researchers quoted an observer as saying that "the process of our moral decline" has led to "the dark dawning of our modern day".

They then revealed that this While one might think that older people were more likely to believe the world has gone to hell, it turned out that young people do as well

"This feeling is always there, you can find quotes from any era of history where people are decrying the decline of people's interpersonal goodness"

ADAM MASTROIANNI, STUDY'S LEAD AUTHOR

is a quote from the Roman historian Livy written more than 2,000 years ago.

"This feeling is always there, you can find quotes from any era of history where people are decrying the decline of people's interpersonal goodness," Adam Mastroianni, a researcher at New York's Columbia University and the study's lead author, told AFP.

The researchers first looked at 177 opinion polls that included more than 220,000 people in the United States from 1949 to 2019.

In 84 percent of the polls, a majority reported that morality had declined -- and the rate remained steady regardless of the year.

Deadly shelling in flood-hit region as Ukrainian, Russian forces clash



Volunteers carry local residents on boats during an evacuation from a flooded area in Kherson  
AFP | London

Ukraine and Russia accused each other of shelling rescuers and evacuees in the flood-hit Kherson region yesterday as Moscow said its forces fought off a Ukrainian offensive in another part of the front line.

Emergency services were still racing to rescue people stranded by the flood-swollen waters of the Dnipro River, which have forced thousands to flee.

The destruction of a major Russian-held dam on the river on Tuesday unleashed a torrent of water that has left 600 square kilometres of the region under water.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky visited the area yesterday after floods inundated dozens of villages and parts of the regional capital, Kherson.

"I thank the rescuers and volunteers! I thank everyone involved in this work!" wrote Zelensky, who also visited survivors in hospital.

Shortly after the visit, Kyiv said a Russian strike in the centre of Kherson injured nine people including a police officer and two employees of the

**YOU KNOW WHAT**  
A total of 600 square kilometres (230 square miles) of the Kherson region is underwater, 68 percent of which is in Russian-controlled territory

state emergency service.

Moscow-installed authorities on the other bank of the Dnipro River, which is controlled by Russian forces, said two evacuees were killed by Ukrainian shelling.

The death toll from the flooding reached six as the Moscow-backed administration of Nova Kakhovka, where the dam is located, said five people had died and 41 admitted in hospital.

Ukrainian police said one man had died in a riverside village in the neighbouring Mykolaiv region, also affected by rising water levels.

Ukraine dam's reservoir can no longer cool nuclear plant: operator

AFP | Kyiv

The reservoir which had been created by the Kakhovka dam in southern Ukraine can no longer supply water to cool reactors at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant, the dam's operator said yesterday.

Ukrhydroenergo's chief executive Igor Syrota said the water level at the reservoir had gone "below the critical point of 12.7 meters (42 feet)."

This means it could no longer supply "the ponds at the Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station

to cool the plant", he said on Ukrainian television.

The dam sits on the Dnipro river, forming a reservoir that provides the cooling water for the Russian-occupied Zaporizhzhia nuclear power station, Europe's largest, some 150 kilo-

meters (90 miles) upstream.

International Atomic Energy Agency chief Rafael Grossi, who is due to visit the plant next week, said this week that the water could no longer be pumped if the level went below 12.7 meters.

11 killed in blast at funeral for assassinated Afghan governor

AFP | Kabul

At least 11 people were killed by a blast yesterday at a funeral service for an Afghan acting provincial governor whose assassination this week was claimed by Islamic State, the interior ministry said.

Security has improved dramatically since the Taliban stormed back to power in August 2021, ousting the US-backed government and ending their two-decade insurgency, but the Islamic State group remains a threat.

An interior ministry statement said the blast at the funeral for the acting governor of northeastern Badakhshan province also injured more than 30 people as "a great number of compatriots" gathered for a mosque service honouring Nisar



People run away after a bomb explosion during Fatiha prayers at the Nabawi mosque in the Hesa-e-Awal area of Fayzabad district, Badakhshan province

Ahmad Ahmadi. "The Ministry of Interior of the IEA condemns this brutality of the disgraced enemies," a statement said of the explosion in the provincial capital of Faizabad.

"I was standing outside the mosque to receive the guests coming, suddenly a terrible sound shook the mosque," said witness Naseer Ahmad.

"When I entered the mosque, I saw bloodied dead bodies lay-

ing on the ground," the 37-year-old said.

An AFP journalist near the scene of the blast said Taliban government security forces had set up checkpoints around the funeral site in the morning.

When the explosion rang out people fled into nearby streets, and shops closed in panic as security forces cordoned off the area.

The AFP reporter saw 10 bodies on stretchers at a local hospital.

IS claimed responsibility for Ahmadi's killing on Tuesday, when a suicide bomber drove a car filled with explosives into his vehicle.

The driver was also killed and six others were wounded in that attack, which also took place in Faizabad.

Four children in France k

Children fight for their lives af

Police detain man after attacks in lakeside playground that left children in critical condition

AFP | Paris

A man armed with a knife attacked a group of preschool children playing by a lake in the French Alps yesterday, wounding four as well as an adult and sending shockwaves through the country.

The suspect is a Syrian in his early 30s who was granted refugee status in Sweden in April, a police source told AFP.

Witnesses described the suspected knifeman running around in a frenzy, apparently attacking people at random, before he was shot by police near the banks of Lake Annecy.

"He wanted to attack everyone. I moved away and he lunged at an old man and woman and stabbed the old man," former professional footballer Anthony Le Tallec, who was running in the park, told the local Dauphine Libere newspaper.

Another witness, named Malo, told the BFM television channel that the culprit attacked the children before the old man and was "shouting, but it wasn't really comprehensible".

Two of the children -- believed



French police officers are investigating in t

"The nation is shocked. Our thoughts are with (the victims) as well as their families and the emergency services"

FRENCH PRESIDENT EMMANUEL MACRON

to be aged around three -- and an adult victim were in critical condition and fighting for their lives in hospital, a security source said.

A police source said checks on the man, who was arrested at the scene, were ongoing, but he was unknown to French security services.

Annecy is a scenic town in the French Alps close to the border with Switzerland popular with tourists and home to one of the world's top animation festivals,