

# Greece calls Turkey's seismic survey in Mediterranean illegal



Turkish seismic research vessel Oruc Reis sails through Mediterranean after leaving a port in Antalya, Turkey

● **The two countries are at odds due to overlapping claims for hydrocarbon resources in the region**

● **Egypt and Greece signed an accord last Thursday designating an exclusive economic zone between the two nations**

Reuters | Istanbul/Athens

Turkey dispatched a vessel to conduct a seismic survey in a disputed area in the eastern Mediterranean, a move which Greece said was illegal and is likely to heighten tensions between the two NATO allies. The advisory issued by the Turkish navy said the Oruc Reis vessel would operate in the

area over the next two weeks.

The two countries are at odds due to overlapping claims for hydrocarbon resources in the region. A similar advisory, or Navtex, last month prompted a dispute that was calmed after the intervention of German Chancellor Angela Merkel, leading Turkey to agree a pause in operations.

But President Tayyip Erdogan said on Friday Turkey had resumed energy exploration work in the region as Greece had not kept its promises on the issue.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis chaired a meeting of the government council for defence issues on Monday which examined "ways of reaction to the Turkish provocation", the conservative premier's office said.

After the meeting, Greece's foreign affairs ministry issued a statement urging Turkey to "immediately cease its illegal activities



**Seismic surveys are part of preparatory work for potential hydrocarbon exploration. Turkey and Greece are also at odds over issues such as overflights in the Aegean Sea and ethnically divided Cyprus.**

ties which undermine peace and security in the region".

Earlier, Minister of State George Gerapetritis told Greek state TV Athens was in full "political and operational readiness". He reiterated that Greece stood ready to engage in a constructive dialogue with Turkey on their differences.

The NAVTEX, issued by the Turkish navy's office of navigation, covered an area of sea south of Turkey's Antalya and west of Cyprus. It will be in effect between Aug. 10-23.

The Oruc Reis vessel has already reached the location where it will operate after

leaving the area where it was anchored off Antalya, Turkish Energy Minister Fatih Donmez said on Twitter.

Erdogan's announcement of the new exploration work came after Egypt and Greece signed an accord last Thursday designating an exclusive economic zone between the two nations in the east Mediterranean.

Diplomats in Greece said that agreement nullified an accord reached last year between Turkey and the internationally recognised government of Libya, but Erdogan said Turkey would maintain its agreement with Libya "decisively".

# Yemen's UNESCO-listed Old Sanaa houses collapse in heavy rains

Reuters | Sanaa

Houses in Yemen's UNESCO-listed Old City of Sanaa are collapsing under heavy rains, as months of floods and storms assail a country already reeling from war, food shortages and disease.

The distinctive brown and white mud brick houses of Sanaa's historic neighbourhoods, which date from before the 11th century, have long been under threat from conflict and neglect.

Muhammad Ali al-Talhi's house partially collapsed on Friday as heavy rain battered Sanaa, leaving the six women and six children of his family homeless.

"Everything we had is buried," he said surrounded by ancient debris and mud, appealing for help to find shelter.

Aqeel Saleh Nassar, deputy head of the Historic Cities Preservation Authority, said citizens today do not maintain these old buildings as in the past, leading to cracks and weakness.

Around 5,000 of the towering buildings in the old city have leaky roofs and 107 have partially collapsed roofs, he said. The authority has been working with UNESCO and other funds to preserve some.

This year's exceptionally



Workers demolish a building damaged by rain in the UNESCO World Heritage site of the old city of Sanaa, Yemen

heavy rains, which began mid-April and last into early September, have added to what the United Nations describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis.

Five years of war have killed more than 100,000 people, and left 80% of the population reliant on aid and millions on the brink of famine.

On top of the new corona-

virus, which is believed to be spreading largely undetected, heavy rains spread diseases like cholera, dengue fever and malaria.

The Iran-aligned Houthi authorities who have controlled Sanaa since ousting the internationally recognised Saudi-backed Yemeni government in late 2014, appealed this week

to UNESCO to save the city's heritage.

They said around 111 houses had partly or completely collapsed in recent weeks.

Sanaa resident Adel San'ani on Saturday told Reuters he saw five houses severely damaged this weekend.

"The families have no shelter. A local bank launched a campaign to distribute plastic sheeting to act as roofs," he said.

# China sends fighter jets as US health chief visits Taiwan



US Secretary of Health and Human Services Alex Azar walks off the plane as he arrives at Taipei Songshan Airport, Taiwan

Reuters | Taipei

Chinese air force jets briefly crossed the mid-line of the Taiwan Strait yesterday and were tracked by Taiwanese missiles, Taiwan's government said, as US health chief Alex Azar visited the island to offer President Donald Trump's support.

Azar arrived in Taiwan on Sunday, the highest-level US official to visit in four decades.

China, which claims the island as its own, condemned the visit which comes after a period of sharply deteriorating relations between China and the United States.

China, which had promised unspecified retaliation to the trip, flew J-11 and J-10 fighter aircraft briefly onto Taiwan's side of the sensitive and narrow strait that separates it from its giant neighbour, at around 9 am (0100 GMT), shortly before Azar met Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, Taiwan's air force said.

The aircraft were tracked by land-based Taiwanese anti-aircraft missiles and were "driven out" by patrolling Taiwanese aircraft, the air force said in a statement released by the defence ministry.

China's defence ministry did not immediately comment.

A senior Taiwan official familiar with the government's security planning told Reuters that China was obviously "targeting" Azar's visit with a "very risky" move given the Chinese jets were in range of Taiwan's missiles.

The incursion was only the third time since 2016 that Taiwan has said Chinese jets had crossed the strait's median line.

The Trump administration has made strengthening its support for the democratic island a priority, amid deteriorating relations between Washington and Beijing, and has boosted arms sales.

"It's a true honour to be here to convey a message of strong support and friendship from President Trump to Taiwan," Azar told Tsai in the Presidential Office, standing in front of two Taiwanese flags.

Washington broke off official ties with Taipei in 1979 in favour of Beijing.

# Tirumala temple reports huge coronavirus outbreak as cases surge



A health worker checks the temperature of a man at a school in Mumbai, India

Reuters | Mumbai/New Delhi

A well-known Hindu temple in India has seen more than 700 cases of the novel coronavirus among its staff in the past two months, a temple official said on Monday, as cases in the country surged past 2.2 million.

India reported a near-record 62,064 new cases of the virus in the past 24 hours, according to federal health data released on Monday, taking its total number of cases to more than 2.2 million.

The Lord Venkateswara temple in the town of Tirumala in south India, one of the biggest and most wealthy

Hindu shrines in the world, said two of its staff and one former employee had died of COVID-19 since June 11, when it reopened to the public after a government lockdown.

In all, 743 temple employees had been infected by the virus, it said.

"We are providing the best medication to those infected.

We are taking utmost precaution, social distancing norms are followed, devotees and others are wearing masks," said the chairman of the temple's trust organisation, Y. V. Subba Reddy.

The trust employs about 22,500 workers including 300 priests and controls 10 temples.