

News in brief

China says newest aircraft carrier sailed through Taiwan Strait



◆ China said yesterday that its third and newest aircraft carrier, the Fujian, recently sailed through the sensitive Taiwan Strait to carry out “scientific research trials and training missions” in the South China Sea. Beijing has ploughed billions of dollars into modernising its military in recent years, a trend that has unnerved some governments in East Asia despite China insisting its aims are peaceful. China has two carriers in operation -- the Liaoning and Shandong -- with the Fujian currently undergoing sea trials. China’s navy said yesterday that undertaking cross-regional trials “is a normal part of the aircraft carrier’s construction process”.

◆ Russia and its key ally Belarus began major joint military drills early yesterday, putting NATO on edge days after Poland accused Moscow of escalating tensions by firing attack drones through its airspace. The “Zapad” exercises come as Russian forces grind across the sprawling front line in Ukraine and escalate aerial attacks on Ukrainian cities. The Russian defence ministry posted a video showing heavy military equipment -- including armoured vehicles, helicopters and navy ships -- taking part in the drills.

Russia, Belarus start military drills as West watches warily



Death toll from Indonesia flooding rises to 23



◆ The death toll from the flooding that struck two Indonesian islands, including tourist hotspot Bali, rose to 23 yesterday, officials said, with five other people still missing. Torrential rain late Tuesday triggered floods and landslides across Bali, the National Disaster Mitigation Agency (BNPB) said, adding four more people have been found dead and two others are unaccounted for. The additional deaths come on top of 14 already reported on Bali and five on the island of Flores.

CURIOSER & CURIOSER

Japan centenarians reach record high at nearly 100,000



Elderly people work out with wooden dumb-bells in the grounds of a temple in Tokyo to celebrate Japan’s Respect for the Aged Day (file photo)

AFP | Tokyo

The number of people aged 100 or older in Japan has hit a record high of nearly 100,000, with almost 90 per cent of them women, ministry data showed yesterday. The figures underscore the demographic crisis gripping the world’s fourth-biggest economy as its population ages and shrinks. As of September 1, Japan had 99,763 centenarians, up 4,644 year-on-year, with 88 per cent of them women, the health ministry said in a statement. Japan’s oldest person is 114-year-old Shigeko Kagawa in the Nara region near Kyoto. She remained active past 80 years old as an obstetrician-gynecologist and a general doctor, according to the ministry. “Walking extensively during house calls built strong legs, which are the source of my current vitality,” Kagawa was cited as saying in the statement. She still has good eyesight so she spends the day watching

TV, reading newspapers and doing calligraphy. The world’s oldest person is British woman Ethel Catterham, who turned 116 in August, months after the title passed to her following the death of Brazilian nun Inah Canabarro Lucas. Japan is facing a steadily worsening population crisis, as its expanding elderly population leads to soaring medical and welfare costs, with a shrinking labour force to pay for it. Official data last month showed that the population of Japanese nationals fell by a record amount -- more than 900,000 people -- in 2024. Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has called the situation a “quiet emergency”, pledging family-friendly measures such as more flexible working hours and free day care to try and reverse the trend. However, the government’s efforts to slow the decline and ageing of its population have yet to yield meaningful results.

Nepal ex-chief justice Karki becomes PM after protests

Former chief justice becomes transitional leader after deadly anti-corruption protests

● Karki sworn in as PM

● First woman to lead Nepal

● Youth movement demanded Karki’s appointment

AFP | Kathmandu

Nepal’s former chief justice Sushila Karki was sworn yesterday to lead the transition as the country’s next prime minister after deadly anti-corruption protests ousted the government. The 73-year-old Karki, Nepal’s first woman chief justice, was sworn into office by President Ram Chandra Paudel, after the previous prime minister quit Tuesday as parliament was set ablaze. “Congratulations! We wish you success, wish the country success,” Paudel said to Karki after the small ceremony in the presidential palace, attended by diplomats and some former leaders. The Himalayan nation of 30 million people was plunged into chaos this week after security forces tried to crush rallies by young anti-corruption protesters. At least 51 people were killed in the worst violence since the end of a civil war and the abolition of the monarchy in 2008. The military took back control of the streets on Wednesday, enforcing a curfew. “It is a moment of victory... finally the power vacuum has ended,” said Amrita Ban, a Gen



Army personnel stand guard outside Nepal’s President House during a curfew imposed to restore law and order in Kathmandu

The appointment of the judge, known for her independence, comes after two days of intense negotiations by army chief General Ashok Raj Sigdel and Paudel, including with representatives from “Gen Z”, the loose umbrella title of the youth protest movement. Thousands of young activists had used the online app Discord to debate the next steps -- and name Karki as their choice of next leader. Karki, dressed in a red sari dress, took the oath but did not make a further speech. She smiled and bowed with her hands pressed together repeatedly in traditional greetings. “We did it”, key youth protest



Karki, Nepal’s first woman chief justice, was chosen by Gen Z activists on Discord, who rallied online to name her their preferred leader during the nation’s worst unrest since the monarchy’s abolition

Z protester. “We did it”, key youth protest

group Hami Nepal posted on Instagram, calling for unity. “Honour the lives of those who sacrificed themselves for this moment”. Presidential press advisor Kiran Pokharel said that “a council of ministers will be formed after, and other processes will be taken from there”. Protests fed into longstanding economic woes in Nepal, where a fifth of people aged 15-24 are unemployed, according to the World Bank, with GDP per capita standing at just \$1,447. At least 21 protesters were among those killed, mainly on Monday during the police crackdown on demonstrations against corruption and poor governance that was sparked by a ban on social media.

Brazil’s Bolsonaro given 27-year term for coup plotting

AFP | Brasilia

Brazil’s Supreme Court on Thursday sentenced fire-brand ex-president Jair Bolsonaro to 27 years in prison for coup plotting at the end of a landmark trial that divided the nation and drew US fury. The sentence could see the 70-year-old far-right leader spend the rest of his days in jail. Judges voted 4-1 to convict Bolsonaro of plotting to overthrow Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva following his October 2022 election defeat by the left-winger. Prosecutors said the plan failed only due to a lack of support from military top brass. Bolsonaro’s defense team called the sentence “incredibly excessive” and announced he would appeal, “including at the international level.” Washington was quick to respond to the conviction of the man dubbed “the Trump of the tropics” on his election in 2019. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said the United States “will respond accordingly” to what he called a politically motivated



Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro gestures at the garage of his residence in Brasilia

“witch hunt.” Brazil’s foreign ministry hit back, saying it would not be intimidated by Rubio’s “threats.” A ‘good man’ Trump, who levied steep tariffs on Brazil as punishment over

Bolsonaro’s prosecution, labeled the verdict “very surprising.” He praised Bolsonaro as a “good president” and “good man” and said his legal woes were “very much like they tried to do with me.” While the Supreme Court had

already garnered the simple majority of three votes needed for his conviction at the fourth vote, it only became final after the last of the five judges issued his decision. “An armed criminal organization was formed by the defendants, who must be convicted based on the factual circumstances I consider proven,” said the fifth judge, Cristiano Zanin, Lula’s former lawyer. Bolsonaro’s seven co-accused, including former ministers and military chiefs, were also convicted. The former army captain, who served a single term from 2019 to 2022, claims he is the victim of political persecution. Speaking outside his father’s home in Brasilia, Bolsonaro’s lawmaker son Flavio Bolsonaro said the politician was “holding his head high in the face of this persecution, because history will show that we are on the right side.” He added that his father’s allies would act with “all their might” to secure Congress’s support for an amnesty bill.