

News in brief

Japan seizes Chinese fishing vessel, arrests captain

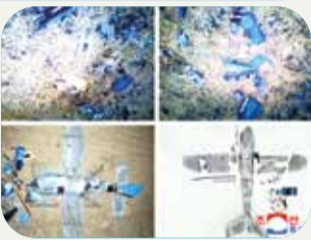


Japan seized a Chinese fishing boat and arrested its skipper, authorities said yesterday, an incident that could deepen a spat between the Asian giants. The episode on Thursday off southern Japan came three months after Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi suggested that Japan would intervene militarily if Beijing sought to take Taiwan by force. "The vessel's captain was ordered to stop for an inspection by a fisheries inspector, but the vessel failed to comply and fled," Japan's fisheries agency said.

North Korea yesterday threatened a "terrible response"

North Korea warns of 'terrible response' if South sends more drones

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung has sought to repair ties with North Korea since taking office last year, criticising his predecessor for allegedly sending drones to scatter propaganda over Pyongyang. But North Korea claims it shot down a surveillance drone just last month, an incident which threatens to blight Lee's efforts to patch things up.



Beijing vows 'measures' after CIA Chinese-language recruitment ad



Beijing will take "all necessary measures" against foreign espionage activities, the foreign ministry said yesterday, after the US spy agency issued a recruitment video targeting Chinese military personnel. The CIA's Chinese-language video, published on the agency's YouTube channel on Thursday, appears to target disaffected officers and appeals for information on China's leaders and armed forces. China's foreign ministry condemned what it called "anti-China forces" and vowed action to protect national security.

SPOTLIGHT

Archaeologists find 10,000-year-old rock art site in Egypt's Sinai



Rock wall bearing numerous carved inscriptions and symbols at the Umm Irak Plateau

AFP | Cairo

Archaeologists have discovered a 10,000-year-old site with rock art in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, the country's ministry of tourism and antiquities said Thursday.

The previously unknown site located at the Umm Irak Plateau has a 100-metre-long rock formation whose diverse carvings trace the evolution of human artistic expression from prehistoric times to the Islamic era.

The Supreme Council of Antiquities "has uncovered one of the most important new archaeological sites, of exceptional historical and artistic value", the ministry said in a statement.

Its chronological diversity makes it "an open-air natural museum", according to council secretary general Hisham El-Leithy.

The natural rock shelter's ceiling features numerous drawings in red pigment of

animals and symbols, as well as inscriptions in Arabic and the Nabataean language.

Some engravings "reflect the lifestyles and economic activities of early human communities", the ministry said.

Inside, animal droppings, stone partitions and hearth remains confirm that the shelter was used as a refuge for a long time.

These "provide further evidence of the succession of civilisations that have inhabited this important part of Egypt over the millennia", Tourism and Antiquities Minister Sherif Fathi said.

He described the discovery as a "significant addition to the map of Egyptian antiquities".

The site is located in the south of the Sinai Peninsula, where Cairo is undertaking a vast megaproject aimed at drawing mass tourism to the mountain town of Saint Catherine, a UNESCO world heritage site and home to Bedouin who fear for their ancestral land.

Europe seeks new 'partnership' with US at security gathering

German leader urges a reset with the US at the Munich Security Conference

Friedrich Merz calls for "new transatlantic partnership"

European leaders seek to strengthen NATO commitments

Ukraine's war and defense spending top agenda

AFP | Washington

German leader Friedrich Merz called yesterday for "a new transatlantic partnership" between the United States and Europe, as he rallied officials at a top security conference under heavy pressure from US President Donald Trump.

European leaders were striving to shore up relations with Washington, insisting they were strengthening their defences in line with Trump's demands at what Merz and others described as a time of "upheaval".

This year's Munich Security Conference comes at a time of strained ties between Europe and the United States, after Trump threatened to take over Greenland and criticised European countries' record on immigration.

Russia's war against Ukraine, set to enter its fifth year this month, will be high on the agenda, alongside efforts by European NATO members to raise their defence budgets out of concern that Moscow could seek to expand into their territory.

European leaders at the gathering defended their security commitments and the NATO alliance, with EU chief Ursula von der Leyen saying the bloc was "ready to take more responsibility for our own security" -- after Trump called it into question and accused allies of not spending enough on defence.

"Being a part of NATO is not only Europe's competitive advantage. It's also the United States' competitive advantage. So let's repair and revive transatlantic trust together," Merz said.



German Chancellor Friedrich Merz (R) shakes hands with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio

"In the era of great power rivalry, even the United States will not be powerful enough to go it alone."

US-Europe relations

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who arrived yesterday, is due to speak at the annual gathering on Saturday, as is Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, organisers said.

Rubio is seen as a more conciliatory choice of envoy, a year after Vice President JD Vance used the same stage to attack European policies on immigration and free speech, shocking European allies.

"Rubio will not gratuitously offend the Europeans," analyst Ian Bremmer of Eurasia Group told a news conference.

"Rubio will be seen as broadly constructive, trying to provide less uncertainty and less unpredictability and less unreliability from the Americans, even though a lot of the message will be tough."

Rubio met his Chinese counterpart Wang Yi yesterday on the sidelines of the conference, an AFP journalist said, at a time of



In a stark shift from last year's aggressive tone, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is being described by analysts as a "conciliatory" figure compared to former Vice President JD Vance

heightened Washington-Beijing tensions.

Meanwhile relations between Europe and the United States, their traditional allies and guarantors of the continent's security for decades, are under pressure.

Since returning to the White House last year, Trump has frequently criticised European countries for not sharing enough of the burden on common defence.

Ties plunged further last

month when Trump stepped up threats to annex Greenland, an autonomous territory of NATO ally Denmark, forcing European nations to stand firm in protest.

Danish Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen and her Greenlandic counterpart Jens-Frederik Nielsen said they would discuss Greenland with Rubio yesterday on the sidelines of the conference.

Overall, more than 60 heads of state and government and around 100 foreign and defence ministers were to descend on the southern German city under high security, with about 5,000 police deployed for the event.

Merz and French President Emmanuel Macron were scheduled to meet with UK premier Keir Starmer and Zelensky yesterday afternoon for talks on Ukraine, with Rubio also set to attend.

Ukraine's foreign minister Andriy Sybiga said he met Wang Yi from China -- a close partner of Moscow -- at the conference and discussed ending the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Zelensky visited a drone factory near Munich with German Defence Minister Boris Pistorius.

Bangladesh nationalists celebrate landslide win

AFP | Dhaka

The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) celebrated a landslide victory yesterday in the first elections held since a deadly 2024 uprising, with leader Tarique Rahman to become prime minister.

Election Commission figures said the BNP alliance had won 212 seats, compared with 77 for the Jamaat-e-Islami alliance -- which said earlier it had "serious questions about the integrity of the results process".

Rahman said two days before polling he was "confident" that his party -- crushed during the autocratic 15-year rule of ousted



Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) chairman and election candidate Tarique Rahman (C) casts his ballot at a polling station

prime minister Sheikh Hasina South Asian nation of 170 million people.

Hasina's Awami League party was barred from taking part.

The US embassy congratulated Rahman and the BNP for a "historic victory", while neighbouring India praised Rahman's "decisive win" in a significant step after recent rocky relations with Bangladesh.

China and Pakistan, which both grew closer to Bangladesh since the uprising and the souring of ties with India, where Hasina has sheltered since her ouster, also congratulated the BNP.

The vote passed largely peacefully and the country has been reported to have been calm since polling day.