

526

Possible date of the Antioch earthquake in the Byzantine Empire (present-day Syria), which kills 200,000 people

1498

Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama arrives in Calicut, India, becoming the first European to reach India by sea



1609

William Shakespeare's Sonnets are first published in London, perhaps illicitly, by publisher Thomas Thorpe

1862

US President Abraham Lincoln signs into law the Homestead Act to provide cheap land for the settlement of the American West (80 million acres by 1900)

Putin lands in China for trip that aims to show unshakeable ties after Trump pomp



AFP | Beijing, China

Russian President Vladimir Putin arrived in Beijing late yesterday for talks with his Chinese counterpart and “long-time good friend” Xi Jinping, intending to show their ties are unshakeable days after a visit by Donald Trump.

The confirmation of Putin's trip came just hours after Trump wrapped up his visit on Friday, the first to China by a US president in nearly a decade and one aimed at stabilising their turbu-

lent relations.

Putin arrived at Beijing Capital International Airport around 11:15 p.m. (1515 GMT) on Tuesday, where he was greeted by Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi and a military band.

It was a near-mirror image of Trump's arrival days earlier, with both leaders stepping out of their planes onto a red carpet as Chinese youths chanted “welcome, welcome” -- this time, waving Russian flags instead of American.

Putin and Xi are set to dis-

cuss how to strengthen Russia and China's strategic partnership and “exchange views on key international and regional issues”, according to a Kremlin statement.

Their ties have deepened since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, with Putin visiting Beijing every year since as his country is cut off diplomatically on the world stage.

Among topics Xi and Putin could discuss is the construction of the major “Power of Siberia 2” natural gas pipeline from Russia

to China through Mongolia -- a land alternative to crude imported by sea from the Middle East -- which Moscow is keen to get underway.

Setting a warm tone for the visit, Xi and Putin exchanged “congratulatory letters” on Sunday to mark 30 years of their countries' strategic partnership.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun lauded “the enduring friendship between China and Russia” on Tuesday.

And in a video message to

the Chinese people released on Tuesday, Putin said relations have reached “a truly unprecedented level”, and that “trade between Russia and China continues to grow”.

“The close strategic relationship between Russia and China plays a major, stabilising role globally. Without allying against anyone, we seek peace and universal prosperity,” Putin said, without mentioning any third country. The two leaders are also expected to sign a joint declaration after their talks.

Iran threatens to open new fronts

AFP | Tehran

Iran's army warned yesterday it would “open new fronts” against the United States if it resumes attacks, after President Donald Trump said he had held off launching a new offensive in hopes of striking a deal.

The warning came amid a shaky ceasefire in place since

April 8, with Washington and Tehran exchanging proposals in an effort to end the Middle East war, which began on February 28.

On Tuesday, Iran's army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia warned “to open new fronts against” the United States if it resumes attacks on the Islamic republic.

He added that Iran's military had used the ceasefire as an opportunity “to strengthen its combat capabilities”, without elaborating.

Qatar, which suffered Tehran's retaliatory strikes following US-Israeli assaults during the war, emphasised that more time was needed for the ongoing Pakistani-mediated efforts to

push for Iran-US talks.

“We are supportive of the diplomatic effort by Pakistan that has shown seriousness in bringing parties together and finding a solution, and we do believe it needs more time,” Qatari foreign ministry spokesman Majed al-Ansari said at a press conference.

Since the ceasefire took hold on April 8, Tehran and Washington have held a single round of talks which failed to culminate in a deal.

Top commander says ‘thinking’ about NATO role in Hormuz

AFP | Brussels, Belgium

NATO's top commander said yesterday he was “thinking” about how the alliance could help in the Strait of Hormuz, but no formal planning had begun yet.

“Am I thinking about it? Absolutely. But there's no planning yet until the political decision is taken,” US General Alexus Grynke, NATO's Supreme Allied



Commander Europe, told journalists.

US President Donald Trump has blasted Washington's European allies in NATO for their response to his war on Iran -- which has seen the crucial waterway closed.

European countries spearheaded by Britain and France have been scrambling to put together a possible plan for how they could

help keep the strait open if the war ends.

So far US-led alliance NATO has steered clear of seeking any direct involvement in the conflict -- despite pressure from Trump.

“Each nation is considering their response, with many, including Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and the United Kingdom, sailing ships to the region,” Grynke said.

“We all agree it's in our interest to ensure freedom of navi-

gation in international waters.”

European diplomats at NATO have played down of the prospect of the alliance playing a major role in the strait given internal divisions.

But they say it could be involved in some way in any eventual operations led by France or Britain if they materialise.

The closure of the Strait of Hormuz has had a major impact on global energy prices and is already taking a toll on economies in Europe.

Fertiliser aid

Brussels will provide “exceptional support” to farmers affected by soaring fertiliser costs caused by the Iran war, the European Union's agriculture commissioner Christophe Hansen told the European Parliament.

He said the EU would seek to boost an agriculture crisis reserve fund by “a substantial amount”.

Oil prices over \$100

Oil prices eased Tuesday but remained above \$100 a barrel while stocks wavered as investors tracked a potential deal between the US and Iran to end the war that has sent energy prices soaring.

G7 vows cooperation

G7 finance ministers vowed multilateral cooperation to address challenges to economic stability due to the war, after talks in Paris which underscored tensions between the US and its allies.

“We have had frank, sometimes difficult, direct discussions to find long-term and short-term solutions to major global economic challenges in order to guarantee economic stability,” said French Finance Minister Roland Lescure.

TOP
4
TWEETS

01



I thank the Government & people of Japan for their warm welcome. Across the years & across the issues, the UN has benefitted enormously from Japan's generosity & commitment to multilateralism. I am proud to celebrate the 70-year partnership between Japan & the @UN.

@antoniouterres

02



This outbreak, alongside the hantavirus one, shows why international threats need an international response, why the world needs the International Health Regulations, and why it needs @WHO.

@DrTedros

03



Concluding a very fruitful visit to Norway. Held productive talks with Prime Minister Jonas Gahr Store and participated in the India-Nordic Summit, where important decisions were taken to deepen cooperation in many areas. I thank the people of Norway, PM Store and the Government of Norway for their warmth and friendship.

@narendramodi

04



Our Union is built by all its citizens. The European Order of Merit honours individuals whose outstanding contributions to the European project deserve recognition. Congratulations to this year's recipients and thank you for all you have done.

@vonderleyen

Disclaimer: (Views expressed by columnists are personal and need not necessarily reflect our editorial stance)