

China coal mine blast kills at least 82

247 workers were underground at the time of the blast

AFP | Beijing, China

A gas explosion at a coal mine in northern China has killed at least 82 people, state media reported on Saturday, the country's biggest mining disaster in 17 years.

A total of 247 workers were underground at the time of the blast, which occurred at 7:29 pm (1129 GMT) on Friday at the Liushenyu coal mine in Shanxi province, according to state news agency Xinhua.

At least 82 people had died and 123 others were sent to hospital for treatment, four of whom were in critical or severe condition, state broadcaster CCTV said. Of those sent for treatment, 33



A general view of rescue team members and emergency vehicles arriving at the Liushenyu coal mine after a gas explosion in Changzhi, in northern China's Shanxi province

had returned home as of 2:00 pm on Saturday, it added.

A total of 755 emergency and medical personnel were dispatched to the site, with rescue efforts still ongoing Saturday afternoon, CCTV said.

Friday's explosion was the worst mining disaster in China since 2009, when 108 people were killed in a mine blast in northeast Heilongjiang province.

Sulphur smell

Survivor and injured miner Wang Yong told CCTV there was a "puff of smoke" and he smelled sulphur.

He recalled seeing people choked by the smoke before he fainted. "I lay down for about

an hour and woke up by myself. I called the people next to me and got out of the mine together," Wang said, according to CCTV.

Helmeted rescuers were carrying stretchers at the site, with ambulances visible in the background, video by CCTV showed.

President Xi Jinping urged "all-out efforts" to treat the injured and called for thorough investigations into the incident, according to Xinhua.

China's government launched an "uncompromising" investigation into the explosion, vowing to severely punish those responsible, and ordered a nationwide crackdown on illegal mining activities, Xinhua said Saturday evening.

X

TOP 3 TWEETS

01



According to international humanitarian law, parties to conflict must distinguish between civilians & combatants at all times. Attacks against civilians & civilian objects are prohibited. No more disregard for the law. No more disregard for humanity.

@antonioguterres

02



My deepest condolences to @ifrc family for the loss of their three volunteers in the #DRC. They paid the ultimate price on the line of duty. IFRC colleagues and all humanitarian and health workers are essential in the #Ebola response. Early identification of cases and timely treatment save lives and are key to bringing this outbreak under control. Safe and dignified burials are also critical to stop Ebola transmission. Enhanced awareness are essential to protect all the responders and populations.

@DrTedros

03



Happy to receive the US Secretary of State, Mr. Marco Rubio. We discussed sustained progress in the India-US Comprehensive Global Strategic Partnership and issues related to regional and global peace and security. India and the United States will continue to work closely for the global good.

@narendramodi

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

Endgame nears

Iran signals convergence of views with US, says gaps remain

● Since a fragile ceasefire took effect on April 8, the two sides have held a round of talks and exchanged proposals aimed at ending the conflict.

AFP | Tehran, Iran

Iran said on Saturday it was finalising a 14-point framework for a deal with the United

“Within a reasonable period of 30 to 60 days, the details of these points will be discussed and a final agreement will ultimately be concluded. We are currently in the process of finalising these memoranda of understanding”

IRANIAN FOREIGN MINISTRY SPOKESMAN ESMAEL BAQAEI

States, signalling what officials described as growing convergence between the two sides after weeks of indirect negotiations.

“The issue of the Strait of Hormuz is among the subjects addressed in this 14-point memorandum of understanding,” said foreign ministry spokesman Esmail Baqaei.

Taiwan says China deployed more than 100 vessels in regional waters

AFP | Taipei, Taiwan

Taipei - Taiwan security officials said Saturday that China has deployed more than 100 navy, coast guard and other vessels in regional waters stretching from the Yellow Sea to the South China Sea and Western Pacific.

The deployment began before US President Donald Trump's meeting with his Chi-

nese counterpart Xi Jinping in Beijing and increased to more than 100 after the summit ended, a security official told AFP on the condition of anonymity.

Trump has caused jitters in Taipei after suggesting US arms sales to Taiwan could be used as a bargaining chip with China, which claims the island is part of its territory and has threatened to seize it by force.

Rubio invites India PM Modi to White House: US ambassador

New Delhi, India

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit the White House in the "near future", US ambassador to India Sergio Gor said on Saturday.

"Secretary Marco Rubio

extended an invite on behalf of President Donald Trump, for Prime Minister Modi to visit the White House in the near future!" Gor said in a social media post after Rubio met Modi in New Delhi during his first visit to India.

Hajj pilgrim numbers surpass 2025 arrivals despite Middle East war

AFP | Mecca, Saudi Arabia

Over 1.5 million pilgrims have arrived in Saudi Arabia from outside the kingdom for the upcoming hajj, according to a Saudi official, exceeding the number of international visitors last year despite the war in the Middle East.

Major Gulf airlines in the UAE, Qatar, and Bahrain have worked to quickly restore much of their operational capacity after weeks



1.5m

Over 1.5 million pilgrims have arrived in Saudi Arabia from outside the kingdom for the upcoming hajj

of airspace closures and flight cancellations.

Despite the complications, pilgrims have continued to flock to Saudi Arabia to participate in this year's hajj.

"The total number of pilgrims arriving from abroad has reached 1,518,153," Saleh Al-Murabba, the commander of Saudi

Arabia's Hajj Passport Forces, told a press conference late Friday.

These figures are expected to rise further over the next two days.

Last year, the total number of pilgrims at the hajj reached 1,673,320, including 1,506,576 from outside Saudi Arabia.