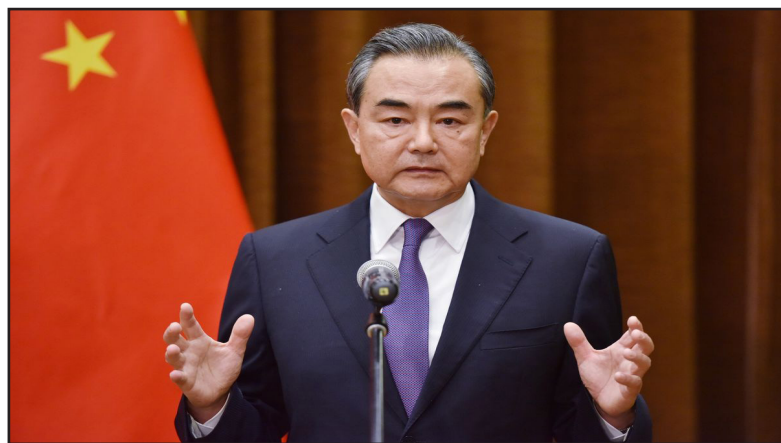


China: U.S. Indo-Pacific Strategy Doomed to Fail



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi says the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy is causing more and more concern in the world, especially among the countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

BEIJING (CGTN) – The U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy is causing more and more vigilance and concern in the world, especially among the countries in the Asia-Pacific region, Chinese State Councilor and Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Sunday.

He made the remarks during a joint press conference with Pakistani Foreign Minister Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari in Guangzhou City, South China's Guangdong Province.

The White House announced U.S. President Joe Biden will announce the launch of a new regional initiative, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF), during his visit in Japan.

The strategy seeks to erase the cooperation architecture that has worked well in the region, as well as the achievements and momentum of peaceful development created by the concerted efforts of all countries in the region over the past decades, he said.

Noting that the trend of the times in the Asia-Pacific region is to advance regional integration and build an Asia-Pacific community with a shared future, he stated the region has maintained overall peace and stability, with GDP growth reaching 6.3 percent in 2021 against the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Indo-Pacific Strategy concocted

by the U.S. is called "freedom and openness", but is keen on forming cliques; it claims to "change China's surrounding environment" in an attempt to contain China, he continued.

Facts will prove that the so-called Indo-Pacific strategy is in essence a strategy to create division, to incite confrontation and to undermine peace, he added.

He stressed that like other countries in the region, China welcomes initiatives that are conducive to strengthening regional cooperation, but opposes attempts to create division and confrontation.

Which category does the U.S. Indo-Pacific Economic Framework fall into, he asked.

Conducive initiatives should promote free trade and not engage in disguised protectionism, he said, noting that Asia is a region with high acceptance of globalization and free trade and has gained outstanding achievements.

In line with WTO rules, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement (RCEP) has been launched, a regional cooperation platform with ASEAN at the center has been set up, and all these have greatly promoted regional trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, he said.

Conducive initiatives should contribute to world economic recovery and not undermine industrial chain stability; they should promote openness and cooperation instead of creating geopolitical confrontation, he added.

Four Killed, Nearly Million Homes Without Power After Storms Hit Canada



A dust cloud swirls in Toronto on Saturday in this screengrab obtained from a social media video.

ONTARIO (Al Jazeera) – Four people are dead and nearly one million homes are without power after severe storms pummeled the eastern Canadian provinces of Ontario and Quebec.

Ontario police said three people died and several more were injured because of the strong thunderstorm. Images posted on social media from across the province showed debris-strewn streets and toppled trees that damaged homes and cars.

One man was killed when a tree fell on the trailer he was staying in on Saturday. Meanwhile, according to Peel Regional Police, a woman in her 70s was killed after being struck by a tree in the city of Brampton.

"Woman was transported to local hospital where she succumbed to her injuries," the organization posted on Twitter.

The storm was severe enough for Environment Canada to issue broadcast-intrusive emergency alerts that went out to television and radio stations and mobile phones.

In the federal capital Ottawa, another person was killed by the storm, but local police declined to give further details.

The fourth victim was a woman in her 50s. She drowned when her boat capsized in the Ottawa River, which separates

Ottawa and Quebec, during the storm, national broadcaster CBC reported citing local police.

Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson said staff were "assessing the damage and threats on the ground".

"We have a full complement of city and hydro crews out clearing roads and restoring power. This was a massive storm and we ask for your patience," he tweeted.

In the city of Kitchener, Ontario, wind gusts of up to 132 km/h were recorded, according to Environment Canada, while in Toronto and Ottawa wind gusts of up to 120km/h were observed.

Over 900,000 homes in the two provinces were without power Saturday night, according to online counts from local providers Hydro One and Hydro-Quebec.

"We anticipate it will take several days to restore power after today's destructive storm," Hydro One said.

Environment Canada meteorologist Daniel Liota said while wind gusts of such speeds are not so rare in isolated microbursts, the storm was unusual in that it covered such a large geographic area.

"It was a big deal. It's your upper echelon of thunderstorms," the Canadian Press quoted him as saying.

News in Brief

WASHINGTON (The Hill) – Three quarters of Black Americans say they are worried that they or someone they love will be physically attacked because of their race, according to a new poll. A new Washington Post-Ipsos poll found that 75 percent of Black Americans polled are worried that they or someone they care about will be physically harmed because they are Black, a development that comes one week after a fatal shooting in a predominantly Black neighborhood in Buffalo, N.Y. Seventy percent of Black Americans polled said they believed half or more white Americans hold white supremacist beliefs compared to 19 percent who believed fewer than half white Americans do. Two-thirds of those polled said white supremacy is a bigger problem today compared to five years ago. In comparison, 28 percent said the size of the problem is the same, while five percent said it was a smaller problem today. Respondents were also asked about their feelings following the Buffalo shooting, in which a suspect, who is white, allegedly shot and killed 10 people and injured three others. Eleven of the 13 victims were Black, and the suspect allegedly espoused the racist "great replacement theory."

SUNAMGANJ (AFP) – Northeast Bangladesh's worst floods in nearly 20 years began receding on Sunday, but rescue workers were struggling to help millions marooned by extreme weather across the region that has killed around 60 people. Floods are a regular menace to millions of people in low-lying Bangladesh and neighboring northeast India, but many experts say that climate change is increasing the frequency, ferocity and unpredictability. In the past week after heavy rains in India, floodwater breached a major embankment in Bangladesh's Sylhet region, affecting around two million people, swamping dozens of villages and killing at least 10. Arifuzman Bhuiyan, head of the state-run Flood Forecasting and Warning Centre, told AFP that the floods had hit some 70 percent of Sylhet district and about 60 percent of neighboring Sunamganj. "It is one of the worst floods in the region," he told AFP. But he said the situation would improve further in the next few days after heavy rains stopped. Police said that a scuffle broke out in the rural town of Companyganj on Saturday as authorities stepped up relief operations for the roughly two million people hit.

WASHINGTON (TASS) – General Mark Milley, chairman of a US Joint Chiefs of Staff, says the risk of a serious conflict between great powers is increasing. "We are facing, right now, two global powers: China and Russia, each with significant military capabilities, and both fully intend to change the current rules-based order," he told a class of the U.S. Military Academy in West Point at a graduation ceremony, TASS reported. The United States is entering a world that's becoming more unstable. The world you are being commissioned into has the potential for serious international conflict between great powers, he continued. "And that potential is increasing, not decreasing," he added. On February 24 Russian President Vladimir Putin announced a special military operation in response to a request for help by the heads of the Donbass republics. He stressed that Moscow had no plans of occupying Ukrainian territories, but aims to demilitarize and de-Nazify the country. The U.S. and its allies retaliated by imposing sweeping sanctions on Russia and boosted arms supplies to Kiev.

BEIJING (AFP) – Shanghai partially restarted public transport Sunday, signaling a gradual reopening after nearly two months sealed off from the outside world. China's largest city has been almost entirely locked down since April, when it became the epicenter of the country's worst coronavirus outbreak since the early days of the pandemic. Unlike other major economies, Beijing has dug in its heels on a zero-COVID approach of stamping out clusters as they emerge, though this has become increasingly difficult with the infectious Omicron variant. But as new infections have slowed Shanghai has cautiously eased restrictions, with some factories resuming operations and residents in lower-risk areas allowed to venture outdoors. Four of the city's 20 subway lines will restart on Sunday along with some road transport, officials announced this week, forming a "basic network covering all central urban areas." Those who take public transport will have to show a negative COVID test within 48 hours and have a "normal temperature", they added on Saturday. But despite broader attempts to ease curbs, the central Jing'an district returned to a lockdown on Sunday, according to an official notice.

SOUTH BEND (The New York Post) – Two people were killed and three others severely hurt in a shooting in the U.S. state of Indiana on Saturday, police said. Cops responded at 3:20 p.m. to a house on Rosemar Court in Goshen, about 40 minutes east of South Bend. One man was pronounced dead at Goshen Hospital, another was declared dead at the scene, authorities said in a Facebook post. Two women were airlifted to a trauma hospital in Fort Wayne, while a third was brought to a trauma hospital in South Bend, cops said. The shooting is believed to be "targeted, not gang-related, and there does not appear to be any further threat of danger to the community at this time," police said. None of the victims have been publicly identified. Goshen is a city of about 200,000 in the north central part of the state, about 25 miles southeast of South Bend, the home of University of Notre Dame.

PM-Elect Vows to Repair Australia's Image Overseas

SYDNEY (AFP) – Incoming Prime Minister Anthony Albanese vowed to end Australia's reputation globally and reset relations with the rest of the world Sunday, as he raced to form a government in time for a key Tokyo summit.

Fresh from an electoral victory that ended a decade of conservative rule, Albanese signaled an era of fairer, greener and less pugilistic politics for Australia.

"I want to change the country," the 59-year-old centre-left leader said. "I want to change the way that politics operates in this country."

It is still unclear whether Albanese's Labor Party will win enough parliamentary seats to form an outright

majority, or whether he will have to turn to independents or smaller parties for support.

The center-left leader said the upcoming Quad summit in Tokyo is "an absolute priority" for Australia and an opportunity "to send a message to the world."

The Quad or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is a strategic security dialogue between Australia, India, Japan, and the United States that is maintained by talks between member countries. It is widely viewed as a response to increased Chinese economic and military power. The Chinese government has responded to the Quadrilateral dialogue by issuing formal diplomatic protests to its members, calling it "Asian NATO."

He went on to say that partners overseas can expect wholesale changes "particularly with regard to climate change and our engagement with the world on those issues."

Prime Minister Scott Morrison has said he takes responsibility "for the wins and the losses" and will stand down as leader of the Liberal Party. His defeat ended eight years and nine months in power for Morrison's conservative coalition.

Albanese seeks to unite the country. He has also vowed to adopt more ambitious emissions reduction targets and make the country a renewable energy superpower.

Albanese and key ministers are expected to be sworn in on Monday.

WHO Expects More Cases of Monkeypox to Emerge Globally

LONDON (Reuters) – The World Health Organization said it expects to identify more cases of monkeypox as it expands surveillance in countries where the disease is not typically found.

As of Saturday, 92 confirmed cases and 28 suspected cases of monkeypox have been reported from 12 member states that are not endemic for the virus, the UN agency said, adding it will provide further guidance and recommendations in coming days for countries on how to mitigate the spread of monkeypox.

"Available information suggests that human-to-human transmission is occurring among people in close physical contact with cases who are symptomatic," the agency added.

Monkeypox is an infectious disease specialist, told Reuters.

Heymann said an international committee of experts met via video conference to look at what needed to be studied about the outbreak and communicated to the public, including whether there is any asymptomatic spread, who are at most risk, and the various routes of transmission.

He said the meeting was convened "because of the urgency of the situation." The committee is not the group that would suggest



A child affected by monkeypox, sits on his father's legs while receiving treatment at the center of the International medical NGO Doctors Without Borders, in Zomea Kaka, in the Lobaya region, the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

declaring a public health emergency of international concern, WHO's highest form of alert, which applies to the COVID-19 pandemic.

He said close contact was the key transmission route, as lesions typical of the disease are very infectious. For example, parents caring for sick children are at risk, as are health workers, which is why some countries have started inoculating teams treating monkeypox patients using vaccines for smallpox, a related virus.

UK direct humanitarian aid to foreign countries was £744mn last year, compared with £1.53bn in 2020, a cut of 51%, according to the most recent provisional UK aid figures. UK official development assistance was nearly £11.5bn last year, compared with £14.48bn in 2020, a fall of 21%.

Separate figures published in the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) annual report last year revealed direct UK aid and planned aid to Ethiopia fell from £241mn in 2020/21 to £108mn in 2021/22, a cut of 55%; aid to Kenya fell from £67mn to £41mn, a cut of 39%; and aid to Somalia fell from £121mn to £71mn, a cut of 41%.

One of the largest global humanitarian crises is in Yemen, devastated by eight years of Saudi-led war. About 24 million people need help, including nearly 13 million children. UK aid to Yemen fell from £221mn 2020/21 to £82mn in 2021/22, a cut of 63%.

Sam Nadel, Oxfam's head of government relations, said, "The government is cutting aid at a time we have war in Ukraine, the COVID pandemic and millions of people in Africa on the brink of starvation. It's the most horrific timing. It's also shortsighted because aid helps tackle global challenges, which helps the UK in the long term."

Ministers have announced £220mn in humanitarian and development aid for Ukraine, putting more pressure on the reduced UK aid budget.

Britain Slashes Humanitarian Aid by 51% Despite Global Food Crisis

LONDON (The Guardian) – British Ministers have been accused of choosing the "worst moment in history" to slash the foreign aid budget, as provisional figures showed that UK overseas humanitarian funding was cut by more than half last year.

MPs and charity campaigners say the aid budget urgently needs to be increased to cope with the Ukraine conflict and the risk of famine in Africa. Up to 23 million people face acute hunger in Ethiopia, Kenya and Somalia due to drought.

The UN has warned the Ukraine crisis risks tipping 1.7 billion people – one-fifth of the global population – into poverty, destitution and hunger. The government said last week it now intends to boost humanitarian aid by giving less money to international organizations and focusing on direct aid from the UK.

Sarah Champion MP, Labour chair of the Commons international development committee, said, "It would be hard to consider a worse moment in history for the government to be cutting its foreign aid budget."

"We are the only member of the rich country G7 grouping to be doing so. It is having a damaging effect on our international standing – and the survival chances of some of the poorest people on the planet."

Chancellor Rishi Sunak announced a controversial reduction of aid spending from 0.7% to 0.5% of gross national income in November 2020.

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