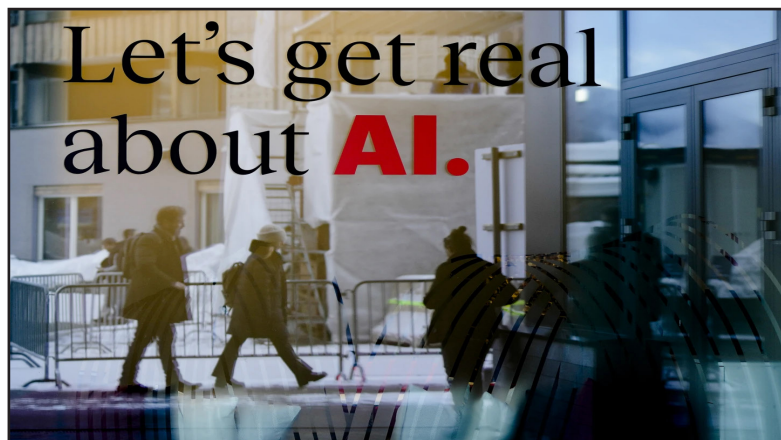


CEOs Fear Their Companies Won't Survive 10 Years



People reflected in a window of a hotel at the Davos Promenade with a slogan about AI alongside the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Jan. 15, 2024.

LONDON (AP) -- More executives are feeling better about the global economy, but a growing number don't think their companies will survive the coming decade without a major overhaul because of pressure from climate change and technology like artificial intelligence, according to a new survey of CEOs by one of the world's largest consulting firms, PwC.

The survey of more than 4,700 CEOs worldwide was released as business elites, political leaders and activists descended on the World Economic Forum's annual meeting in Davos, Switzerland, and it showed a mixed picture of the coming years.

Of the executives, 38% were optimistic about the strength of the economy, up from 18% last year, when the world was

mired in high inflation, weak growth, rising interest rates and more.

Even with the improved economic outlook, the challenge isn't close to over, with the World Bank saying last week that it expects the global economy would slow for a third consecutive year in 2024.

The executives, meanwhile, felt worse about the prospects for their companies' ability to weather big changes. The survey shows 45% of the respondents were worried that their businesses wouldn't be viable in a decade without reinvention, up from 39% last year.

The CEOs say they're trying to make changes, but they are running up against regulation, a lack of skills among workers and more.

"Whether it is accelerating the rollout of generative AI or building their business to address the challenges and opportuni-

ties of the climate transition, this is a year of transformation," Bob Moritz, global chairman of PwC, formerly known as PricewaterhouseCoopers, said in a statement.

Artificial intelligence was seen as both a way to streamline business operations and a weakness. Nearly three-quarters of the executives said "it will significantly change the way their company creates, delivers and captures value in the next three years," PwC said.

More than half the CEOs said AI will make their products or services better, but 69% noted that their workers needed training to gain skills to use the developing technology. They also were concerned about how AI would increase cybersecurity risks and misinformation.

Organizers of the Davos gathering warned last week that the threat posed by AI-powered misinformation, such as the creation of synthetic content, is the world's greatest short-term threat.

Another worldwide survey released around Davos, the Edelman Trust Barometer by public relations firm Edelman, says innovation is being managed badly and is increasing polarization, especially in Western democracies, where people with right-leaning beliefs are much more likely than those on the left to resist innovation.

"Innovation is only accepted if there is a sense that we're looking at the big picture of how we take care of the people whose jobs are going to change, how scientists are going to talk to the people directly so they understand it," CEO Richard Edelman told The Associated Press on Monday. "And finally, that one way in another, AI is affordable and makes it easier for people to live."

Japan Plans Fourth Release of Radioactive Water to Sea



Storage tanks for contaminated water at the Tokyo Electric Power Company's (TEPCO) Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant, Okuma, Fukushima prefecture, January 20, 2023.

TOKYO (Reuters) -- Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO) plans to start a fourth release of treated radioactive water from the wrecked Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant in late February, an official said on Tuesday, continuing a move criticized by China.

The staged water releases began last August in what Japan says is a key step in decommissioning the plant hit by an earthquake and tsunami in 2011 in the world's worst nuclear disaster since Chernobyl.

China and Russia have banned seafood imports from Japan over

safety concerns that Tokyo has said are scientifically unjustified.

In the fourth release, about 7,800 cubic meters (275,454 cubic feet) of the treated water will be sent into the Pacific Ocean, similar to the previous three discharges, Junichi Matsumoto, the TEPCO official overseeing the operation, said in a media presentation.

As part of the decades-long plan to release the water, the fifth and sixth discharges will occur during the fiscal year ending in March 2025, his presentation showed.

Japan says the water is treated to remove most radioactive elements

except tritium, an isotope of hydrogen that must be diluted because it is difficult to filter.

Tritium levels in surrounding waters since the initial discharge have met pre-determined standards and are below the World Health Organization's guidelines for drinking water quality, Matsumoto said.

After initially stopping all nuclear reactors after the 2011 Fukushima disaster, Japan has started to gradually bring nuclear power back to its energy mix as it tries to cut its carbon footprint and reduce imports of fossil fuels.

But the powerful earthquake that struck Japan's Ishikawa prefecture on New Year's Day caused water spillover from spent nuclear fuel pools and oil leaks at the idled Shika nuclear power station in the region, spurring fresh safety concerns.

Akira Ono, Tepco's chief decommissioning officer, told the same briefing on Tuesday that its Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear power plant, the world's biggest, did not observe "any specific damage" during the Jan. 1 earthquake, which also affected the Niigata prefecture where the plant is located.

Japan's Nuclear Regulation Authority lifted an operational ban on the Kashiwazaki-Kariwa nuclear plant just days before the recent earthquake, but its restart time is unknown.

China Blasts U.S. 'Smear' on Nauru's Shift From Taiwan

TAIPEI (Dispatches) -- The U.S. official who heads the body that handles unofficial ties with Taiwan on Tuesday decried Nauru's "unfortunate" decision to break ties with Taipei shortly after an election, claiming that Beijing's promises often go unfulfilled.

The Pacific, where tiny Nauru is located, has become a source of intense competition for influence by Washington which has traditionally viewed it as its backyard.

China claims Taiwan as its own territory with no right to state-to-state ties, a position Taiwan strongly disputes.

U.S. officials have previously expressed concern at Taiwan's allies, especially in Central America, pivoting to China. After Nauru ended ties with Taiwan on Monday, just two days after a presidential election in Taiwan, the island is left with only 12 countries that formally recognize it.

Laura Rosenberger, chair of the Virginia-based American Institute in Taiwan (AIT), told reporters in Taipei that Nauru's move was "unfortunate" and the United States encourages all countries to expand engagement with Taiwan.

"While the government of Nauru's action is a sovereign decision, it is nonetheless a disappointing one," she said. "The PRC often makes promises in exchange for diplo-

matic relations that ultimately remain unfulfilled," Rosenberger added, referring to the People's Republic of China.

Beijing said the United States' expression of disappointment in Nauru for switching diplomatic recognition from Taiwan was a "smear" on China.

Washington "is doing its utmost to smear and slander China's diplomatic efforts, and putting in a word for Taiwan to expand its space on the international stage," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning tells a regular press conference.

The United States switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing in 1979, but is Taiwan's most important backer and a major arms supplier.

Taiwan's government has said China specifically chose the timing just after Saturday's presidential election to move on Nauru.

Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) Lai Ching-te won the election, as expected, and will take office on May 20. In the poll's run-up, China had repeatedly called him a dangerous separatist.

In the Pacific, only Palau, Tuvalu and the Marshall Islands now have official diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

North Korean Leader Calls for South to be Seen 'Primary Foe'



North Korean leader Kim Jong-un with his daughter Kim Ju-ae at a missile launch in 2022.

SEOUL (Reuters) -- North Korean leader Kim Jong-un on Monday called for the constitution to be changed to ensure that South Korea is seen as the "primary foe" and warned his country did not intend to avoid war should it happen, state media KCNA reported on Tuesday.

In a speech to the Supreme People's Assembly, North Korea's parliament, Kim said he had concluded that unification with the South was no longer possible, and accused Seoul of seeking regime collapse and unification by absorption.

Kim said the constitution should be amended to educate North Koreans that South Korea is a "primary foe and invariable principal enemy" and define the North's territory as separate from the South.

"We don't want war but we have no intention of avoiding it," Kim was quoted as saying by KCNA.

North Korea should also plan for "completely occupying, subjugating and reclaiming" South Korea in the event of a war, and South Koreans should also no longer be referred to as fellow countrymen, Kim added, calling for the severing of all inter-Korean communication and the destruction of a monument to reunification in Pyongyang.

Three organizations dealing with unification and inter-Korean tourism would also be shut down, state media added.

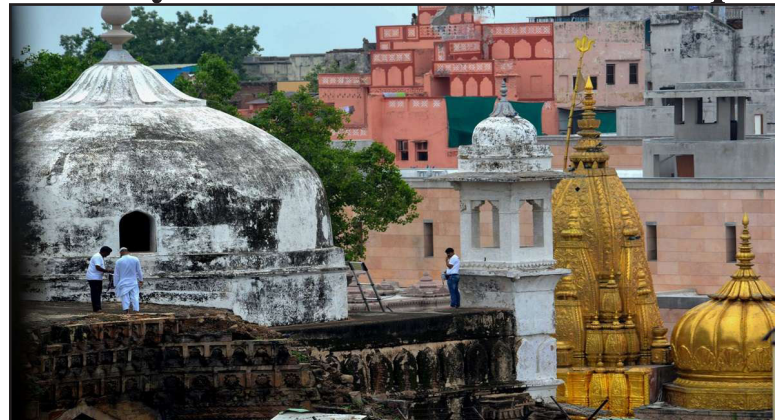
South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, at a cabinet meeting, said Pyongyang was being "anti-national" for calling the South a hostile country.

Kim's call for constitutional changes come as tensions have worsened in the Korean Peninsula recently amid a series of missile tests and a push by Pyongyang to break with decades of policy and change how it relates to the South.

Significant portions of Kim's speech laid out plans for improving livelihoods and he suggested his rhetoric toward South Korea and the U.S. was designed to help maintain internal unity and achieve economic and military goals, while the U.S. was distracted with other crises, said Lim Eul-chul, professor of North Korea studies at South Korea's Kyungnam University.

On the other hand, Won Gon Park of Seoul's Ewha Womans University argued that Kim appeared to feel threatened by nuclear expansion by South Korea and the U.S., the deployment of U.S. strategic assets to the Korean Peninsula, and trilateral military efforts with Japan.

Indian Court Halts Plans for Survey of Centuries-Old Mosque



Members of the Archaeological Survey of India's (ASI) team conduct scientific survey at the Gyanvapi mosque complex, in Varanasi.

MUMBAI (Reuters) -- India's Supreme Court halted on Tuesday plans for a survey of a centuries-old mosque to determine if it contained Hindu relics and symbols, just days before another key temple, built on a razed mosque, is set to be inaugurated.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will preside at Monday's event centered on a temple in the town of Ayodhya dedicated to Lord Ram, a deity worshipped by millions of Hindus, during his campaign to win a third term in general elections due by May.

The Supreme Court setting up of a commission to survey the Shahi Eidgah mosque in the city of Mathura in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, said news agency ANI, in which Reuters has a minority stake.

Its panel of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said the application filed for appointment of the local commission was very vague, the Bar and Bench news website reported.

Last December, the state's Allahabad high court had permitted a survey of the 17th century mosque, where Muslims still pray, to determine if there were any relics or Hindu symbols in the complex.

Members of hardline Hindu groups linked to Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) believe that Islamic invaders and rulers destroyed Hindu temples over several centuries.

Last year, another court allowed a similar survey of the centuries-old Gyanvapi mosque in Modi's constituency of Varanasi, to determine if it had been built atop a Hindu temple.

Nationwide riots that killed 2,000 people, most of them minority Muslims, broke out in 1992 after a Hindu mob razed a mosque on the Ayodhya site they believed to be the birthplace of Lord Ram, saying there had earlier been a temple there.

In 2019, the Supreme Court handed over the land to Hindus, and construction of the temple began in 2020.

News in Brief

BEIJING (AFP) -- China on Tuesday said it had summoned the Philippine ambassador after President Ferdinand Marcos said he looked forward to working with Taiwanese president-elect Lai Ching-te. "This morning, Assistant Minister Nong Rong summoned the ambassador of the Philippines to China to make solemn representations and urge the Philippine side to give the Chinese side a responsible explanation," foreign ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning told a regular press conference. "The Chinese side is strongly dissatisfied and resolutely opposes" Marcos's remarks, Mao said. Independence-leaning Lai eased to a comfortable victory in Taiwan's presidential election on Saturday. China regards the island as part of its territory and has vowed to seize it, by force if necessary. In a Monday social media post, Marcos congratulated Lai on his election and said he looked forward to "close collaboration" with him. "We are telling the Philippine side not to play with fire on the Taiwan issue... and to stop immediately its wrongful words and deeds on Taiwan-related issues and sending wrong signals to separatist forces for Taiwan independence," Mao said.

PARIS (AFP) -- Counterfeit products -- mainly clothes -- cost the European economy 16 billion euros a year and result in nearly 200,000 lost jobs, the EU's Intellectual Property Office said Tuesday. The findings, based on data from 2018 to 2021, show that fakes take the biggest toll on the clothing sector, costing 12 billion euros (\$13.1 billion) annually, or 5.2 percent of its overall revenues, the agency said. Fake cosmetics account for three billion euros of losses while toys represent one billion euros, though the EUIPO cautioned that "Counterfeiting, like any illegal activity, cannot be accurately measured". It based its findings on the number of items seized by police as well as the percentage of Europeans who admitted to buying counterfeit products in each country in the bloc. The bulk of the counterfeiting occurred in just five EU members, with Germany, France, Italy, Spain and Austria accounting for half the yearly losses.

DES MOINES, United States (AFP) -- Republican entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy, a political newcomer who sought to shake up the 2024 presidential race by challenging more established candidates, announced Monday that he was pulling out and endorsing Donald Trump. "We are going to suspend this presidential campaign," Ramaswamy told supporters after he was projected to finish a distant fourth in the Iowa caucuses. "I called Donald Trump to tell him I congratulate him on his victory, and now going forward he will have my full endorsement for the president." Ron DeSantis eked out a second-place finish in the Iowa caucuses. U.S. media projected, as the Florida governor sought to paint the Republican Party nomination as a battle between him and frontrunner Donald Trump.

STRASBOURG, France (AFP) -- Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, whose country holds the EU's presidency, on Tuesday urged Europe to become more self-reliant, given the possible return of Donald Trump to the White House. "If 2024 brings us 'America First' again, it will be more than ever Europe on its own," De Croo told the European Parliament. "We should not fear that prospect. We should embrace it, by putting Europe on a more solid footing -- stronger, more sovereign, more self-reliant." The comments came after Trump romped to a landslide victory in the first vote to secure the Republican nomination for U.S. president, cementing him as frontrunner for a bitter rematch against incumbent Joe Biden in November. U.S. networks said Trump took 51 percent of the vote in the Iowa caucuses, putting him an unprecedented 30-point ahead of his nearest Republican challenger. Europe is warily eyeing any potential return of the volatile former reality TV star as US president. Concern is swirling that he could pull the plug on support for Ukraine or undermine the United States' leading role in the NATO military alliance which underpins European security.

MOSCOW (Reuters) -- Niger's junta-appointed Prime Minister Ali Mahamane Lamine Zeine has arrived in Moscow for a visit, the Izvestia newspaper reported. Izvestia showed footage of Zeine being greeted in snow at a Moscow airport. During the visit, Zeine intends to discuss widening a partnership with Russia in the areas of defense, agriculture and energy, Izvestia reported. Zeine, a former finance minister, was appointed prime minister last August following a military coup the previous month. Niger's uranium and oil reserves and its pivotal role in a war with takfiri militants in the Sahel region give it economic and strategic importance for the United States, Europe, China and Russia.

HANOI (AFP) -- Nearly 100 people belonging to ethnic minority groups went on trial in Vietnam Tuesday, accused of terrorism following gun attacks that killed nine in the country's Central Highlands. In the early morning of June 11 last year, a group of people riding motorbikes used guns and other weapons to attack the local political headquarters and police offices in the Cu Kiu district of Dak Lak province. Individuals are not allowed to own firearms in Vietnam and gun violence is extremely rare. Nine people were killed, including four police officers, two local officials and three civilians. Tuesday's trial, at the prison where the accused are being held, saw 98 people charged with terrorism, one with hiding criminals and the other with intermediating illegal immigration, state-run Tuoi Tre newspaper reported.