

# US lawmakers visit Taiwan in show of support for new President after China drills

TAIPEI, May 27 (AP)

A US congressional delegation met Taiwan's new leader on Monday in a show of support days after China held drills around the self-governing island in response to his inauguration.

Rep. Andy Barr, the co-chair of the Taiwan caucus in the US Congress, said the United States is fully committed to supporting Taiwan militarily, diplomatically and economically.

"There should be no doubt, there should be no scepticism in the United States, Taiwan or anywhere in the world, of American resolve to maintain the status quo and peace in the Taiwan Strait," the Republican from Kentucky said at a news conference in the capital, Taipei, after the delegation met

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te.

China regards Taiwan as a renegade province that must come under its control, by force if necessary. The US, like most countries, does not have formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan but is bound by its own laws to provide the island with the means to defend itself.

The Chinese Government expressed strong opposition to the congressional visit, saying it undermined China-US relations and peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

The lawmakers' visit "ran against the political commitment of the US government to maintain only unofficial relations with Taiwan, sending a seriously wrong signal to the separatist force of Taiwan independence," Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Mao Ning said.

# China premier agrees on ties with Seoul, Tokyo but... Issues veiled rebuke against their US ties

SEOUL, May 27 (AP)

CHINA'S premier agreed Monday to revive three-way cooperation with South Korea and Japan in the face of shared challenges, but issued a veiled rebuke against the two countries' expanding security cooperation with the United States.

Chinese Premier Li Qiang met South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in Seoul in what was their countries' first such trilateral meeting in more than four years.

Many experts say just restarting the countries' highest-level annual meeting and agreeing on the need to improve ties is a positive sign for cooperation among the three Northeast Asian neighbours, as they all face economic uncertainties caused by wars and instability around the world. But how drastically their cooperation will be promoted is unknown as the three countries have a range of long-running complex issues.

Li said China wants to cooperate with



South Korea and Japan on economic issues, especially on supply chains and the restart of talks on a three-way free trade deal.

Yoon said the three leaders agreed to promote people-to-people and cultural exchanges, establish safe supply chain networks and work together to tackle shared environmental, health and other issues. Kishida said the three countries share a big responsibility for regional peace and that Japan will chair the next round of the trilateral leaders' meeting.

However, Li at one point expressed Chinese uneasiness about Japan and South Korea's moves to beef up their security

partnership with the US, which Beijing views as an attempt to form a bloc to contain China.

"We need to have honest dialogues to better enhance trust and resolve doubts. We must uphold the spirit of strategic autonomy and maintain our bilateral relations," Li said in comments at the start of the meeting with Yoon and Kishida. "We need to promote multipolarity in the world and oppose the formation of blocs or camps." China is wary of Japan's plan to purchase 400 US Tomahawk long-range cruise missiles and allow repair and maintenance of US warships in Japan to support their operations in the western Pacific. The expansion of military drills among South Korea, the US and Japan have also drawn protests from China.

The trilateral meeting was also briefly overshadowed by North Korea's abrupt notification to Japan of its plan to launch a satellite by early next week, an apparent bid to place its second spy satellite into orbit.

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## 'Offered hassle-free re-election for air base in B'desh'

Dhaka: Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina has said that she was offered a hassle-free re-election in the Jan 7 polls if she allowed a foreign country to build an air base inside the country. Hasina, 76, secured a fifth overall term in the one-sided election in Jan, which was boycotted by the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party led by former PM Khalida Zia.

"If I allowed a certain country to build an air base in Bangladesh, then I would have had no problem," Daily Star Bangladesh quoted Hasina as saying on Sunday. She, however, did not name the country that had made the offer to her



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"It may appear that it is aimed at only one country, but it is not. I know where else they intend to go," she said, adding that this is why her Awami League party-led govt is always in trouble. "There will be more trouble. But don't worry about it," she said.

When asked about her response to the offer, the PM sa-

id she made the same reply as she did in 2001 when the US offered to sell the country's gas to India. "I've clearly said that I'm the daughter of Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. ... we won our Liberation War, I don't want to come to power by renting part of the country or handing it over to some other country and I don't need power," she said. The premier

said she would only stay in office if the people wanted.

Hasina said she was fighting a battle everywhere, both at home and abroad, and the "conspiracies are still on" to carve a new country out of Bangladesh. "Like East Timor... they will carve out a Christian country, taking parts of Bangladesh (Chattogram) and Myanmar with a base in the Bay of Bengal," Hasina said without giving details. She said conspiracies were being hatched to topple her govt and that she might have to face the same consequences her father... Daily Star reported. Rahman was assassinated 1975. ❏

10 DEAD MILLIONS GANS DOWER AS

# North Korea plans to launch a rocket soon, likely carrying its 2nd military spy satellite

SEOUL, May 27 (AP)

**NORTH** Korea on Monday announced plans to launch a rocket apparently carrying its second military spy satellite by early next week, drawing quick, strong rebukes from neighbours South Korea and Japan.

The notification of the planned launch, banned under UN resolutions, came as South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida met Chinese Premier Li Qiang in Seoul for their first trilateral meeting in more than four years.

Japan's coast guard said it was notified by North Korea about its planned launch of a "satellite rocket", with safety cautioned in the waters between the Korean Peninsula and China and east of the Philippine island of Luzon beginning Monday and running through midnight June 3.

North Korea gives Japan its launch information because Japan's coast guard coordinates and distributes maritime safety information in East Asia.

North Korea's planned launch likely would be an attempt to put its second military spy satellite into orbit. South Korea's military said Friday it detected signs of suspected preparations to launch a spy satellite at North Korea's main Tongchangri launch facility in the northwest.

The UN bans North Korea from conducting any satellite launches, viewing them as covers for testing its long-range missile technology. North Korea has steadfastly maintained it has the right to launch satellites and test missiles. It says spy satellites would allow it to better monitor the US and South Korea's moves and enhance the precision-strike capability of its nuclear-capable missiles. "

# Iran's near-bomb-grade uranium stock has grown, says IAEA report

**Vienna:** Iran has further increased its stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels, according to a confidential report on Monday by the UN nuclear watchdog, the latest in Tehran's attempts to steadily exert pressure on the international community.

Iran is seeking to get economic sanctions imposed over its controversial nuclear programme lifted in exchange for slowing it down. This is all under the guidance of Iran's supreme leader and likely won't change after the helicopter crash that killed Iran's president and foreign minister.

The report, seen by AP, said Iran now has 142.1 kg of uranium enriched up to 60% — an increase of 20.6 kg since the last report by the watchdog in Feb. Uranium enriched at 60% purity is just a short, technical step away from weapons-grade levels of 90%. According to the report, Iran's overall stockpile of enriched uranium at the current moment stands at 6,201.3 kg, which represents an

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increase of 675.8 kg since the last report by the International Atomic Energy Agency.

According to the IAEA's definition, around 42 kg of uranium enriched to 60% is the amount at which creating one atomic weapon is theoretically possible — if the material is enriched further to weapons-

grade levels of 90%.

Iran has maintained its nuclear programme is peaceful, but the IAEA chief, Rafael Mariano Grossi, has already warned that Tehran has enough uranium enriched to near-weapons-grade levels to make "several" nuclear bombs if it chose to do so. He has acknowledged the agency cannot guarantee that none of Iran's centrifuges may have been peeled away for clandestine enrichment.

The latest IAEA report also said that Tehran has not reconsidered its Sept 2023 decision to bar nuclear inspectors from monitoring its nuclear programme. The report also said that the death of Iran's Prez Raisi have triggered a pause in the IAEA's talks with Tehran over improving cooperation. Iran has suggested that discussions related to the cooperation between the IAEA and Iran "be continued in Tehran on an appropriate date that will be mutually agreed upon," the report said. AP