

Taiwan to enforce stricter citizenship laws for Hong Kong, Macau residents

TAIPEI, Mar 3 (IANS)

HONG Kong and Macau residents would no longer be provided with leniency for permanent residency in Taiwan as the country is considering introducing stricter citizenship laws due to China's policies, according to local media.

The Taiwanese Government may remove the optional path to citizenship for Hong Kong and Macau residents and is considering lengthening the terms of permanent residency eligibility.

On the condition of anonymity, an official familiar with the

matter told the 'Taipei Times' that in a bid to prevent the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) from infiltrating Taiwan through immigration from Hong Kong and Macau, the Taiwanese Government could amend immigration laws for residents of the territories who currently receive preferential treatment. Under the amendments, before becoming eligible for permanent residency, arrivals from the Chinese territories would have to reside in Taiwan for four years, up from the current one year, and they would no longer be able to apply for citizenship.

1.6-BILLION-POUND DEAL confirmed by UK PM with Ukraine to buy missiles

LONDON, Mar 3 (IANS)

BRITISH Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced that Britain will allow Ukraine to use 1.6 billion pounds (\$2 billion) of British export finance to purchase more than 5,000 air defence missiles.

"This will be vital for protecting critical infrastructure and strengthening Ukraine," Starmer told a press conference on Sunday following a summit with Western leaders in London. Xinhua news agency

reported. The goal is "to put Ukraine in the strongest position" so the country can negotiate from a position of strength, he added.

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Western leaders, including more than a dozen European heads of State and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, gathered in London on Sunday for a defense summit aimed at advancing a peace plan for Ukraine. Starmer said leaders at the summit had agreed on a four-step plan to guarantee

peace in Ukraine, to maintain military aid to Ukraine while the conflict continues and increase economic pressure on Russia; to ensure that any lasting peace guarantees Ukraine's sovereignty and security, with Ukraine at the table for any negotiations; to deter "any future invasion by Russia" in the event of a peace deal; and to establish a "coalition of the willing" to defend Ukraine and uphold peace in the country. The leaders also agreed to meet again soon to sustain the momentum behind these efforts, Starmer said.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed Britain's commitment to supporting the peace plan with "boots on the ground, and planes in the air."

"Europe must do the heavy lifting," he said, emphasising that the agreement needs US backing. "Let me be clear, we agree with Trump on the urgent need for a durable peace. Now we need to deliver together," he said.

Earlier on Sunday before the summit, Starmer announced that Britain, France and Ukraine will work on a ceasefire plan to present to the US.

Ukraine ready to sign minerals deal with US, says Zelenskyy

KYIV, Mar 3 (ANI)

UKRAINIAN President Volodymyr Zelenskyy has announced that Ukraine is "ready to sign" a minerals agreement with the US, describing it as the "first step toward security guarantees."

Sharing a post on X, he wrote, "We are ready to sign the min-

erals agreement, and it will be the first step toward security guarantees. But it's not enough, and we need more than just that."

"A ceasefire without security guarantees is dangerous for Ukraine. We've been fighting for 3 years, and Ukrainian people need to know that America is on our side," he added.

Myanmar junta leader to hold parleys with ally Putin

BANGKOK, Mar 3 (AP)

THE head of Myanmar's military Government travelled to Russia on Monday on an official visit to a major ally of the Southeast Asian nation that has been shunned by much of the West for overthrowing a democratically elected Government and subsequent brutal repression.

Senior Gen Min Aung Hlaing, who departed from the military airport in the capital, Naypyitaw, will meet with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The General is accompanied by fellow members of the ruling military council and Cabinet, as well as military officials.

Min Aung Hlaing will also meet with other top Russian officials and discuss bilateral ties, economic affairs and security with the aim to strengthen strategic cooperation.

Russia, along with China, is a major supporter and arms supplier of Myanmar's military Government. Russian-made fighter jets are used in attacks on territory under the control of ethnic minority groups, many of which are allies with pro-democracy resistance forces.

Russia defends Myanmar's military Government in international forums, and the ruling generals generally support Moscow's foreign policy agenda.

India, Belgium exploring defence ties in Indo-Pacific

NEW DELHI, Mar 3 (PTI)

INDIA and Belgium on Monday discussed the possibility of bilateral maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and looked at ways to enhance defence industrial ties.

Ways to bolster India-Belgium defence engagement figured prominently at a meeting between Belgium's Princess Astrid and Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

The two sides also agreed to explore the setting up of an institutionalised defence cooperation mechanism between the two nations. Belgian Defence Minister Theo Francken was also part of the Belgian delegation.

Princess Astrid is leading an Economic Mission to India that



Defence Minister Rajnath Singh during a meeting with Princess Astrid of Belgium, in New Delhi. (PTI)

comprises top ministers and business leaders.

"Both sides discussed the possibility of future engagements in the Indo-Pacific, particularly in maritime domain," the Defence Ministry said.

It said there were discussions on ways and means to enhance bilateral defence industrial cooperation and that Singh welcomed Belgian investments in the defence sector.

"He suggested that the Belgian companies could play an important role by expanding their footprint in India and integrating the Indian vendors in their supply chains," the Ministry said.

"Further, both countries agreed to explore an institutionalised defence cooperation mechanism," it said.

World more than normally interesting at these times: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, Mar 3 (PTI)

THE "steady" relationship between India and Belgium has the possibility of growing in a more contemporary format with cooperation in areas of semiconductors, clean energy and artificial intelligence, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Monday.

Jaishankar made the remarks during a meeting with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Belgium Maxime Prevot.

Prevot is visiting India as part of a high-level economic mission headed by Belgium's Princess Astrid that is aimed at significantly shoring up bilateral cooperation in several key areas.

The two foreign ministers are known to have discussed various global challenges, including the situation in Ukraine. "The world is more than normally interesting at these times," Jaishankar remarked in his televised opening remarks at the meeting.

The remarks came amid renewed focus on the Ukraine conflict after US President Donald Trump and his Ukrainian counterpart Zelenskyy traded verbal blows at the Oval Office in the White House last week that drew global attention.

Jaishankar to visit UK, Ireland from 4-9

NEW DELHI, Mar 3 (PTI)

EXTERNAL Affairs Minister

SC allows visually-impaired persons in judiciary

Strikes down discriminatory rules

NEW DELHI, Mar 3 (PTI)

IN A landmark judgement, the Supreme Court on Monday held that visually-impaired persons cannot be denied opportunity of employment in judicial services, as it struck down provisions of the Madhya Pradesh Judicial Service Rules that excluded them.

The top court said, "It is high time that we view the right against disability-based discrimination, as recognised in the RPwD Act (Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act) 2016, of the same stature as a fundamental right, thereby ensuring that no candidate is denied consideration solely on account of their disability."

A bench of justices J B Pardiwala and R Mahadevan delivered the significant

judgement on petitions, including a suo motu case, over non-grant of quota to visually impaired and low vision candidates in judicial services in a few States. In the 122-page judgement, Justice Mahadevan held, "Visually impaired candidates cannot be said to be 'not suitable' for judicial service and they are eligible to participate in selection for posts in judicial service."

The verdict said the amendment made in Rule 6A of the Madhya Pradesh Judicial Service (Recruitment and Conditions of Service) Rules, 1994, "falls foul of the Constitution, and is hence, struck down to the extent that it does not include visually-impaired persons who are educationally qualified for the post to apply".

It also said that the provision to Rule

7 relating to additional requirements violated the equality doctrine and the principle of reasonable accommodation, and struck down its application to differently-abled persons who have requisite qualifications for applying to judicial posts.

"The overall analysis would demonstrate that a rights-based approach necessitates that PwD (persons with disabilities) must not face any discrimination in their pursuit of judicial service opportunities, and instead, there must be affirmative action on behalf of the state to provide an inclusive framework," the bench said.

It referred to the principle of reasonable accommodation, as enshrined in international conventions, established jurisprudence, and the RPwD Act and said accommodations be provided to them as a prerequisite to assess their eligibility.

Yunus: India-B'desh ties in 'good shape' despite 'misunderstandings'

Ahsan Tashim

Dhaka: Chief adviser Muhammad Yunus said on Monday that relations between Bangladesh and India "remain positive", with no deterioration in bilateral ties, despite "some challenges" arising from "propaganda".

"Some conflicts had been seen mid-way. I would say, some clouds were seen. These clouds mostly came through propaganda. Others will judge the sources," he said as the interim govt in Dhaka is set to complete seven months in office.

"We are trying to overcome these misunderstandings. There is no problem in our basic relationship (with India)," Yunus told BBC Bangla in an interview.

New Delhi's response to his statement about the bilateral ties being "in good sha-

“ There were conflicts (between India and B'desh). But our ties are historically, politically and economically so deep, they will remain good in future.



There is **no problem in our basic relationship**. And there is **no alternative to maintaining good ties**. There is **huge interdependence**
— Muhammad Yunus

pe" remains to be seen.

India had repeatedly cited targeted attacks on Hindus, their temples and businesses in Bangladesh since the ouster of PM Sheikh Hasina on Aug 5 last year, a charge Yunus denied on different occasions.

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Japan 'no' to join UN meet on N-arms, citing support for US deterrence

TOKYO, Mar 3 (AP)

JAPAN will not attend a UN conference on the treaty banning nuclear weapons, a top Government official in Tokyo said on Monday, noting US nuclear deterrence is crucial to the country's security and that its participation would send the "wrong message."

Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi said Japan's national security is the primary reason it will not participate as an observer at the conference, which starts Monday in New York.

"Under the severe security

environment, nuclear deterrence is indispensable to defend the people's lives and assets, as well as Japan's sovereignty and peace," Hayashi told reporters.

Japan's participation as an observer at the conference would "send a wrong message about the Japanese policy (supporting) nuclear deterrence and interfere with our effort in security, peace and safety."

The UN Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons was approved in 2017 and went into force in 2021 following a decades-long campaign aimed at preventing a repeat of the US

atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. Japan, despite being the only victim of the nuclear attacks, has refused to sign the treaty, saying its goal is not feasible without the participation of any of the nuclear weapons states.

Hayashi said participating as an observer would also interfere with Japan's ongoing effort to gain support for strengthening the non-proliferation treaty and hinder nuclear disarmament.

He did not give further details about Japan's next steps.

Japanese officials have said they share the ultimate goal of

achieving a nuclear-free world but that Japan needs to be realistic amid growing global conflicts. Atomic bombing survivors and their supporters have criticised Japan's Government for making a hollow promise while clinging to the US nuclear umbrella.

The survivors and their supporters have urged the Japanese Government to participate in the conference as an observer amid growing global attention after Nihon Hidankyo, the atomic bombing survivors' grassroots organisation, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize last year.