

China launches missile from nuclear sub in Pacific

Draws criticism from Japan, Australia

■ By **K J M Varma**

BEIJING, July 6 (PTI)

CHINA on Monday successfully test-fired a long-range strategic missile from one of its nuclear-powered submarines in the Pacific Ocean, drawing sharp reactions from Japan and Australia.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy said that one of its nuclear submarines successfully launched a strategic missile carrying a dummy warhead toward the relevant high seas of the Pacific Ocean at 12:01 pm, state-run 'Xinhua news agency' report-



ed. The missile landed precisely within the designated waters, the report said.

The test launch is a routine arrangement of the annual training of the PLA Navy, the Navy said, adding that the Chinese side has already notified relevant countries in advance.

The test launch complies with international law and international practice, and is not directed at any specific country or target, the Navy said, without identifying the missile and its range.

Japan and Australia, which confirmed they had been given advance notice of the launch,

criticised China for the test, saying that it reflected China's heavy military build-up in the region.

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong said the launch was "destabilising to the region."

"Australia has been clear that this proposed test is in the context of a rapid military build-up by China, which is lacking in the transparency and reassurance as to intent that the region expects," she was quoted as saying by the Hong Kong-based *South China Morning Post*.

"Destabilising acts can lead to miscalculation, can lead where we do not want these actions to lead. I think China is aware of Australia's position," Senator Wong was quoted as saying by the *Australian Broadcasting Corporation*.

7 OPEC+ countries agree to expand monthly oil production

NEW YORK, July 6 (AP)

A HANDFUL of countries in the OPEC+ oil-producing alliance plan to increase their outputs modestly next month, which would bring more oil online after fuel prices have fallen to levels not seen since before the US and Israel's war with Iran.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and its allies collectively known as OPEC+ announced on Sunday that seven countries would expand oil production by a combined total of 188,000 barrels per day in August. It was the fifth consecutive month OPEC+ agreed to raise oil outputs.

The participating countries in Sunday's decision are Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, Kuwait, Kazakhstan, Algeria and Oman.

"The countries will continue to monitor and assess market conditions, and in their continuous efforts to support market stability, they reaffirmed the importance of adopting a cautious approach,"

the group of oil producers said in a statement.

In the last month, market optimism caused crude oil prices to tumble before and after the US and Iran reached an interim deal to end their fighting. As part of a broader memorandum of understanding, Iran agreed to allow ships to pass unimpeded through the Strait of Hormuz, and the US agreed to end its blockade of Iran's ports.

More and more commercial vessels have since transited the strait, which before the war was a conduit for roughly a fifth of the world's oil. But ship traffic remains below pre-war levels, and tensions over the waterway continue. Iran's joint military command warned as recently as Thursday that all oil tankers moving through the strait must use its approved routes or face a "forceful response."

Oil prices have continued to decline while negotiators for Iran and the US try to reach a final peace agreement.

Hamas dissolves its govt in Gaza to transfer power to UN-backed panel

DEIR AL-BALAH, July 6 (AP)

THE Hamas militant group said Monday it had dissolved its Government in Gaza and is preparing to transfer power to a technical committee backed by the United Nations as part of a US-brokered ceasefire deal.

Hamas did not say whether it planned to take the crucial step of disarming or handing over security to an international force, but described its decision as evidence of its commitment to Gaza's reconstruction after years of war.

It was unclear if the move, announced by a lower-level official, would lead to any meaningful change on the ground.

The Board of Peace, the new entity led by President Donald Trump with the mandate of governing and rebuilding Gaza, said

it was aware of the Hamas announcement but said it would assess the impact based on "actions, not promises." The board stressed in a statement on X that the technocratic committee must control all weapons in Gaza, as laid out in the ceasefire agreement. At a news conference on Monday, Ismail al-Thawabta, general director of the Hamas-run Government Media Office, said "only technical and professional staff" would remain in their positions to run the Palestinian enclave's day-to-day affairs.

"All employees working in service provision are state employees' and are fully prepared to work under the National Committee for the Administration of Gaza," al-Thawabta said during a press conference in the courtyard of

Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah. Hamas spokesperson Hazem Qassem called it "a positive step forward on the path to implement the ceasefire deal."

Israel dismissed the announcement as irrelevant. "The alleged resignation of the Hamas government, where all of the Hamas members stay in their positions, is a spin that has no significance," an Israeli official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because they were not authorised to speak to the media.

The committee of technocrats, which is based in Cairo, is chaired by Ali Shaath, a Gaza-born engineer and former official with the Palestinian Authority. It has a mandate to restore essential services and oversee civilian affairs under the supervision of the UN and Board of Peace.

Netanyahu disapproves Vance's 'US only ally' remark, highlights India's support

JERUSALEM, July 6 (IANS)

ISRAELI Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has pushed back against US Vice President J D Vance's remarks that the US is Israel's "only powerful ally" by highlighting 'tremendous' support from India.

In an interview with 'Fox News', Netanyahu described India as a "friend" of Israel and pointed out the immense support he receives from Indians on social media platforms. He also described US President Donald Trump as the "greatest friend" that Israel has in the White House. When asked about J D Vance's remarks, Netanyahu responded, "We have a very good relationship, but it doesn't mean that I agree with everything that he says, and I have to point out this. Donald Trump is a great, the greatest friend we've ever had in the White



House, and I stand by that completely. Secondly, we have some other friends like the small country called India. It has 1.4 billion people, and boy, do we have a tremendous support there. This Facebook thing, I am just flooded by the overwhelming support there, and we have many others."

Without naming anyone, Benjamin Netanyahu said that it is "fashionable" in many nations to have media and social media "inundated with anti-Israel, anti-semitic material." However, he stated that leaders

from these supposed nations call him up to sign deals. He emphasised that Israel has many friends in the world.

"Many leaders call me up and say, 'Hey, look, I have got this problem with public opinion, but I want you to know we respect you', and 'can we some deals, and can you teach us some of the things that your military does, can we have some of your AI and cyber expertise?' Israel is number two country in the world. Our technology is so good. So, the relations are not quite as they appear, and we have many, many friends," he told Fox News.

The Israeli PM's remarks came after Vance warned members of Netanyahu's Cabinet against criticising Trump's deal to end the Iran war. He described Trump as the "only head of the State in the world" who was sympathetic to Israel at the current time.

21 killed as Russian missiles, drones hit Ukraine

KYIV, July 6 (AP)

RUSSIA launched waves of missiles and drones at Ukraine early Monday, killing at least 21 people in an attack that exposed widening gaps in country's air defences, authorities said.

All of the ballistic missiles launched by Russia struck their targets, underscoring Kyiv's need for more Patriot interceptor missiles -- a point Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy will likely reiterate at a NATO summit in Ankara, Turkey, this week.

Fifteen people were killed in the capital of Kyiv, which was Russia's main target, and 56 were injured, according to administrative head Tymur Tkachenko. Another six people were killed in the wider Kyiv region and 21 were



injured, according to Mykola Kalashnyk, the head of the regional administration, and other emergency officials.

At least 60 people were wounded, according to Zelenskyy, as emergency workers combed through rubble looking for survivors at residential high-rises in two locations that suffered direct hits in the capital.

Days earlier, on Thursday, a Russian strike killed 31 people in Kyiv, the deadliest for the capital this year. Russia's Defence Ministry said the bombardment was retaliation for Ukraine's recent long-range strikes, which

Emergency services personnel work to extinguish a fire following Russian missile attacks in Kyiv on Monday. (AP/PTI)

have caused severe fuel shortages and pressured President Putin.

More than four years after Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of its neighbour, Ukraine's advances in drone technology have given it an edge in recent months, analysts and Western officials say. Strikes on supply routes behind the front line have stripped the Russian army of momentum on the battlefield, they say, slowing its advance and driving up the cost.

But Russia is now exploiting a different kind of momentum: vulnerabilities in Ukraine's air defences, which remain heavily reliant on the US Patriot systems to intercept ballistic missiles it can rarely shoot down any other way. The war in the Middle East has strained the global supply of Patriot interceptors.

PM arrives in Indonesia to further strengthen India's Act East Policy

JAKARTA, July 6 (PTI)

PRIME Minister Narendra Modi on Monday arrived in Indonesia on the first leg of his three-nation tour, aimed at further strengthening India's Act East Policy, MAHASAGAR Vision and its commitment to a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

In a special gesture, Modi was received at the airport by Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto. In addition, four ministers were also present to receive the Prime Minister, who was accorded a traditional ceremonial welcome and a Guard of Honour.

"Landed in Jakarta. I'm touched by President Prabowo Subianto's gesture of welcoming



Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Indonesia's President Prabowo Subianto on his arrival in Jakarta, Indonesia. (@MEAIndia/X via PTI)

me at the airport," Modi said in a social media post.

This is PM Modi's first bilateral visit to Indonesia since the ele-

vation of ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership in 2018.

"In 2018, we elevated our
(Contd on page 5)

India for BRICS Virtual Working Group to curb drug trafficking

GUWAHATI, July 6 (PTI)

INDIA on Monday proposed a dedicated virtual working group to address evolving trends in narcotics trafficking at a two-day meeting of the heads of anti-drug agencies from BRICS member countries here.

Speaking at the inauguration of the meet, Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) director general Anurag Garg said the emergence of modern trafficking methods has turned drug menace into a global threat.

"Emergence of modern, highly sophisticated methods of trafficking has turned what was once a localised problem into a hyper-connected global threat," he said.

The two-day meeting will focus on three priority areas -- combating synthetic drugs and precursor diversion, strengthening intelligence sharing and operational coordination, and capacity building and institutional cooperation.

Underlining the role of BRICS in addressing the challenge, Garg said, "I propose the establishment of a dedicated BRICS Virtual

Working Group to address these rapidly evolving trends." "This mechanism would serve as a vital platform to meet regularly, exchange real-time intelligence, analyse shifting trafficking patterns, and seamlessly coordinate joint law enforcement operations," he added. Garg also stressed the need to build the capacity of frontline officers through specialised cross-border training initiatives and continuous sharing of best practices among member agencies.

"Together, as an expanded BRICS family, we possess the collective strength to truly change the world and turn the vision of a drug-free society into a reality," the NCB DG added, as he highlighted the expansion of the bloc to become one of the greatest and most influential collaborations at the global level.

He also thanked the delegations for their contributions during the recent 8th BRICS Anti-Drug Working Group Meeting and said, "The consensus and strategic clarity forged last month have provided us with a robust framework to advance our high-

level deliberations over the next two days."

Cautioning that the world today faces an aggressive narcotics landscape, Garg said, "The reality of 21st-century drug traf-

ficking is stark. Criminal networks do not respect borders, they do not recognise sovereignty, and they do not wait for bureaucratic clearances."

To defeat these syndicates, law enforcement agencies must operate with a level of agility, mutual trust and seamless, real-time cooperation that cuts through traditional barriers, he said.

BRICS Women's Working Group meet begins, focus on women-led devpt

NEW DELHI, July 6 (PTI)

INDIA on Monday began the two-day BRICS Women's Working Group Meeting in Kochi, with senior officials from BRICS member countries discussing women's

empowerment and women-led development while strengthening cooperation across areas of shared interest," the Ministry of Women and Child Development said in a statement.

Welcoming the delegates, Secretary in the Ministry of Women and Child Development Anil Malik said that while geography kept the countries physically apart, their shared commitment to advancing women's empowerment had kept them closely connected. "While geography kept us physically apart, our shared commitment to advancing women's empowerment has kept us closely connected," Malik said. He expressed confidence that the meeting would facilitate meaningful discussions, mutual learning and constructive collaboration, further strengthening the collective commitment of BRICS countries towards the empowerment of women. Referring to India's BRICS Chairship, Malik said the Women Track had been guided by four priority areas reflecting the shared aspirations of BRICS nations and contemporary global challenges. These include

building a more resilient BRICS through women's governance and leadership; advancing financial and digital inclusion as catalysts for change; promoting women's entrepreneurship and skill development; and strengthening women's role in climate action, food security and nutrition, he said. He noted that these priorities have provided a strong framework for engagement over the past several months and would continue to guide the deliberations during the Kochi meeting.

Malik also expressed confidence that the constructive spirit demonstrated by member countries during the preparatory consultations would continue to shape the discussions over the next two days, enabling participants to exchange perspectives, refine their shared understanding and build consensus on the outcomes of the meeting.

The discussions are being held under India's BRICS Chairship theme, "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability," reflecting a people-centric and humanity-first approach.



empowerment and women-led development under its BRICS Chairship 2026.

"India commenced the BRICS Women's Working Group (WWG) Meeting in Kochi, Kerala, under its BRICS Chairship 2026. Senior government officials from the BRICS Member Countries are participating in the two-day meeting to deliberate on key issues relating to women's