

WORLD

Heat of the battle



A helicopter pilot braves thick smoke as a wildfire churning in the Pacific Palisades area of Los Angeles gains strength on Sunday. Around 1,000 residents were ordered to evacuate. The cause of the fire is under investigation. By Sunday evening, the fire had charred more than 5.4 square kilometers of brush and trees.

QIAN WEIZHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Clear-sighted China view urged for Canada

By RENA LI in Toronto
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Canada should reconsider its approach toward China because while it is reaping the benefits of trade with Asia's biggest economy, it allows its deference to the United States to undermine the relationship, according to an international affairs expert.

"So, on one hand, we have an empirical reality that suggests that we have a workable, functional, economic relationship with China," said David Carment, a professor at Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs. "On the other hand, we have a security agenda that's suggested (that) under no circumstances should we not only not trust China, we shouldn't even be working with them; we should be de-linking from their economy; we should treat them as a security threat."

"We cannot rely solely on experts who clearly have hidden agendas. The best bet for Canada is to hedge their bets (and) play both sides," said Carment, who spoke at a recent webinar on Canada-China relations held by the Institute for Peace & Diplomacy.

"We need to understand how we can advance our economic interest while not allowing the security discourse to dominate and skew our foreign policy choices into avenues that are ultimately counterproductive."

Since Canada arrested Huawei Technologies executive Meng Wanzhou on behalf of the US in December 2018, it has been caught between two leading powers and is absorbing the punishment.

"Canada's stuck between partisan politics on the one hand and

pursuing interest-based foreign policy on the other," Carment said. "What we have is essentially a vacuum of leadership regarding very similar issues. It's being dominated by groups who clearly see that there's some advantage in securitizing our foreign policy vis-a-vis China. So now we have to contemplate whether we wish to support the US in its efforts to contain China and de-link from the Chinese economy. And there are a number of reasons why that's problematic and not in Canadian interests," he said.

Historically, Canada has always been interested in trade diversification, Carment said.

Dependence on US

There also is a desire to reduce dependence on the US. That strategy would help ensure that Canada would not get intertwined in disputes with more powerful countries at its own expense, according to Carment.

Canada's current relations with China can really only be interpreted through the lens of the United States, he said.

"We've seen an example of that through the arrest of Meng Wanzhou," said Carment. "Whether you agree or not, her detention is related to American efforts to weaken technological capacity with China. ... If you look at the larger geopolitical problems that the US faces from China, it is deeply concerned about reliance on Chinese technology."

In the last quarter of 2020, Canada saw its exports to China increase, where there was an actual net gain in trade despite the COVID-19 pandemic. Meanwhile, Canada's trade with the US diminished in part because of the closure of its border due to the outbreak.

Heavyweight delivery



A beluga whale is lowered onto a transport cart after arriving at an aquarium in the Connecticut city of Mystic on Saturday. The whale was among five imported to the city's aquarium from Canada for research on the endangered mammals. JASON DECROW / ASSOCIATED PRESS

BP calls on EU not to discard natural gas

By EARLE GALE in London
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The British multinational oil and gas company BP has urged the European Union not to close the door on natural gas for power generation.

The plea was the latest development in a row brewing within the bloc about the future of natural gas. Some lobbyists claim it should be phased out because of its contribution to greenhouse gasses and others say it should be tolerated because it is less damaging than coal.

Reuters reported on Monday that BP had called on the EU to support natural gas because, despite it being a fossil fuel, it is helping in the transition to a low-carbon world and will help the bloc hit its target of net-zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050.

The lobbying followed the bloc outlining its plan to exclude natural-gas power plants from its list of sustainable projects.

The bloc has since held back on making a decision about how to categorize the power plants while it seeks more advice.

Gaza pummeled by fresh strikes

UN chief says fighting 'utterly appalling', amid international pleas for de-escalation

GAZA CITY — Israeli airstrikes hammered the Gaza Strip on Monday after a week of violence that has killed more than 200 people, bucking international calls to de-escalate the violence.

The strikes rocked the Hamas-ruled enclave from north to south for 10 minutes in an attack that was heavier, over a wider area, and lasted longer than a series of air raids 24 hours earlier.

Israel's army said in a statement it hit the homes of nine "high-ranking" Hamas commanders, without providing details on casualties.

Israel had targeted the homes in recent days of a number of senior Hamas leaders, including Yehiyeh Sinwar, the top leader inside Gaza. The group's leadership went underground when the fighting began and it was unlikely any were at home at the time of the strikes.

Gaza's residents awakened by the barrage described it as the heaviest since the war began a week ago.

West Gaza resident Mad Abed Rab-

bo, 39, expressed "horror and fear" at the intensity of the onslaught. "There have never been strikes of this magnitude," he said.

Gaza resident Mani Qazaat said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "should realize we're civilians, not fighters".

"I felt like I was dying," he said.

Nearly 3,100 rockets have also been fired by Palestinian militants toward Israel since the conflict escalated on May 10 in the heaviest exchange of fire between the rivals in years, sparked by unrest in Jerusalem.

A total of 197 Palestinians have been killed in Gaza, including at least 58 children. More than 1,200 have been wounded since Israel launched its air campaign.

Israel says 10 people, including one child, have been killed and 294 wounded by rocket fire.

Both Israel and Hamas faced mounting international calls for a cease-fire in hostilities that entered their second week on Monday with no end in sight.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres pled for an immediate end to the "utterly appalling" violence and warned of an "uncontainable security and humanitarian crisis" during an open debate on the situation held by the UN Security Council on Sunday. "Fighting must stop. It must stop immediately. Rockets and mortars on one side and aerial and artillery bombardments on the other must stop. I appeal to all parties to heed this call," Guterres said.

Efforts blocked

The United States, Israel's closest ally, has so far blocked days of efforts by China, Norway and Tunisia to get the Security Council to issue a statement, including a call for the cessation of hostilities.

Robert Mardini, director-general of the International Committee of the Red Cross, also called on the leaders concerned to exert maximum influence to stop the hostilities between Gaza and Israel, and to ensure better access to the people affected by the mayhem.

"Actors on the ground must stop this cycle of violence. The rules are

crystal clear: Civilians must be protected at all times. Sadly, that is not the case today," he said.

Netanyahu said on Sunday the Israeli airstrikes and shelling of the Gaza Strip "will continue as long as necessary". In a televised statement in Tel Aviv, Netanyahu downplayed international pressure on Israel to agree to a truce that will quell the worsening conflict.

Hamas' top leader, Ismail Haniyeh, who is based abroad, said the group has been contacted by the United States, Russia, Egypt and Qatar as part of truce efforts but "will not accept a solution that is not up to the sacrifices of the Palestinian people".

Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi said his government is working to "urgently" end the violence, in his first comments since the war broke out. Egypt, which borders both Gaza and Israel, has played a central role in the cease-fires brokered after previous rounds of fighting.

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Classmates remembered



Afghan students sit in a classroom on Sunday with bouquets of flowers on empty desks as a tribute to the 90 killed in the bombing of a girls school in Kabul on Saturday. No one has claimed responsibility for the attack on the Syed Al-Shahad school. On Sunday, fighting between the Taliban and Afghan government forces resumed in the southern province of Helmand, ending a three-day cease-fire to mark the Eid al-Fitr holiday. RAHMAT GUL / ASSOCIATED PRESS

Art plays role in fighting anti-Asian crimes

By CHANG JUN in San Francisco
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Artists across genres gathered in the San Francisco Bay Area recently to display their photographs, paintings, sculptures and installations to denounce hate crimes against Asians. They also hoped to raise public awareness about Asians' contribution to the United States since the 19th century.

In line with the Asian Heritage Month celebration in May, organizers in San Francisco hosted the *Chinatown Thrives Because of You* photo exhibition. It descended everyday life in Chinatown since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the populous area in February 2020, and how citizens battled the pandemic and racist attacks.

Wang Donghua, China's consul general in San Francisco, said anti-Asian incidents are "man-made" disasters compared with the pandemic. "Some of the US politicians went astray and used the coronavirus as an excuse to smear China," Wang said. "Their wrongdoings not only bring harm to China-US relations but intensify tensions at home and put the lives of millions of Asian

Americans in danger. We strongly condemn those anti-Asian crimes."

According to a statewide poll that the Center for Asian Americans United for Self Empowerment helped administer, Californians who believe Asian Americans were "frequently or sometimes discriminated against" increased to 70 percent, 15 percentage points higher than in February 2020.

In South Bay, the Silicon Valley Asian Art Center curated the show *Situation: The Moments of Asian American Artists*, which showcases 40 pieces of art by 19 artists of Asian descent throughout the month.

The works reflect the plight Asian Americans are facing today, said Shu Jianhua, the curator. Regardless of differences in language, race and ideology, "we want to communicate in unison the message that Asian hate must stop," said Shu.

Michael Arcega, an art professor at San Francisco State University, presented his 2007 installation work *SPAM/MAPS: Oceania*. Arcega dried, diced and pinned Spam lunchmeat to represent US Army bases around the world on a map.

The work originated out of his lin-

gering curiosity, said Arcega, who frequently ate Spam meat during his childhood in the Philippines.

"I always wonder, why did I grow up eating Spam?" said Arcega. As he followed the notion of "you are what you eat" and got caught up with his identity after he came to the US, Arcega realized that "as a US military ration", Spam is deep in his heart as the "residue of the Philippines' colonial era".

By mirroring the past through his work, Arcega said he hoped to "empower Asian Americans" by accepting their identities. "Any name-calling, racial hatred against people of Asian descent should immediately stop," Arcega said. "We need to flip the toxic rhetoric."

Guan Dazhuo, using stone and a pair of worn gardening shears, created the *Expressive Goat* sculpture in 2020. The shears, at their widest opening, comprise the head of a goat with its mouth agape.

"As if we could hear outcries of rage from Asian Americans (from Guan's work)," said Shu. "Under the current circumstances that we see continuous Asian-hate crimes, we must not be silent."

And Reuters said at least nine EU countries have lobbied the EU to call natural-gas power plants sustainable; these include the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland.

But other EU nations have insisted that the bloc stands firm and refuses to label natural-gas power plants sustainable; these include Denmark, Spain, and Ireland.

The online news site and industry hub Gasworld on Monday published an interview with Louise Jacobsen Plutt, BP's senior vice-president of hydrogen, carbon capture usage and storage, in which she said becoming a net-zero company by 2050, or sooner, "will no doubt be challenging".

Other energy companies, including Total and Repsol, have also lobbied recently on behalf of natural gas.

Briefly

INDIA

Gujarat state braces for severe cyclone

Nearly 150,000 people were moved from their homes in the Indian state of Gujarat to safety on Monday and authorities closed ports and a main airport as the most intense cyclone in more than two decades roared up the west coast. Cyclone Tauktae has killed at least 12 people and left a trail of destruction as it brushed past the coastal states of Kerala, Karnataka, Goa and Maharashtra, authorities said. It was set to make landfall in Gujarat late on Monday. "This will be the most severe cyclone to hit Gujarat in at least 20 years. This can be compared with the 1998 cyclone that hit Kandla and inflicted heavy damage," state revenue secretary Pankaj Kumar said. The 1998 cyclone killed at least 4,000 people and caused hundreds of millions of dollars in damage.

JAPAN

80 percent of people oppose Games

More than 80 percent of Japanese oppose hosting the virus-postponed Summer Olympics this year, a new poll published on Monday showed, less than 10 weeks before the Tokyo Games open. The latest survey came after Japan expanded a coronavirus state of emergency on Friday as the nation battles a fourth wave of virus infections. The surge has put pressure on the country's healthcare system, with medical professionals repeatedly warning about shortages and burnout. The weekend survey by the Asahi Shimbun daily found 43 percent of respondents want the 2020 Games canceled, and 40 percent want a further postponement.

SOUTH KOREA

Envoy's wife invokes immunity over assault

The wife of Belgium's ambassador to South Korea will exercise her diplomatic immunity to avoid criminal charges on accusations she hit two boutique staff in the head in a row over shoplifting, police said on Monday. Ambassador Peter Lescouhier has previously said he "sincerely regrets the incident involving his wife". A detective at Yongsan police station in central Seoul said police would not pursue the case. Reports say the envoy's wife tried on clothes in a Seoul store before walking out, prompting an assistant to run after her to ask about an item she was wearing and triggering the confrontation. CCTV camera footage showed her pulling at one employee's arm and hitting her in the head, before slapping another worker who tried to intervene across the face. The footage was widely reported by local media and circulated online and turned public opinion sharply against the ambassador's family.

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