

# WORLD

## Steady course seen likely for US-Israel ties

With new leaders steering relationship, analysts say any shifts won't be drastic

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As Israel transitions to an altered political landscape under a new leader, the country's relationship with its long-term ally the United States has been receiving much attention as observers speculate on the direction it will take.

Newly installed Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and US President Joe Biden, himself less than half a year into his term, have inherited a relationship that could be characterized as one in which neither side can afford to leave the other. But some commentators believe that the strong bonds between the nations might yet undergo some adjustments. These changes, though, will not be drastic, they say.

The broad framework of cooperation between the countries will not undergo fundamental changes even when there is a change in leaders, said Shu Meng, a researcher at the Middle East Studies Institute at Shanghai International Studies University.

"Israel will still be a close ally of the US in the Middle East, and the US will remain Israel's security guarantee," she said. "The two nations' policies on many issues will not undergo a fundamental turn."

In a call on Bennett's first day in office, Biden affirmed his "steadfast support for the US-Israel relationship" and "unwavering commitment to Israel's security." He pledged to work together with Israel on all security matters.

On Monday in the White House, Biden is scheduled to host Israeli President Reuven Rivlin, whose term will end next month.

"President Rivlin's visit will highlight the enduring partnership between the United States and Israel and the deep ties between our governments and our people," White House spokeswoman Jen Psaki said.

The role of president in Israel is largely ceremonial, but the officeholders are known to promote unity among the country's ethnic and religious groups.

"President Rivlin approaches the end of his term. This visit will honor the dedication he has shown to strengthening the friendship between the two countries over the course of many years," Psaki said.

Bennett's government has said it wants to repair the country's relations with the Democratic Party in the US and restore bipartisan support there for Israel.

However, the coalition that brought Bennett to power is unstable, owing its existence to the member parties' opposition to Benjamin Netanyahu, whose 12-year second stint as prime minister came to an end on June 14, Shu said, adding that such uncertainties may bring some changes to the US-Israeli relationship.

"The interests of many parties within the ruling coalition are inconsistent, and it is difficult for them to reconcile on many aspects," the academic said. "The relationship between Israel and the US under the Biden administration will certainly not be as close as it was in the era of former president Donald Trump."

### Significant divergences

There have been some significant divergences between the two sides on the nuclear deal that Iran signed with world powers in 2015, she said.

"The US may put more pressure on Israel to advance the peace talks on the Iranian nuclear issue, something different from what Trump used to do," Shu said.

Biden, a Democrat, has sought to return the US to the Iran nuclear deal, which the Republican Trump pulled the country from in 2018 to gain "cheers from pro-Israel US lawmakers and Israel," said an Associated Press report.

But the new Israeli government remains opposed to Biden's efforts to resurrect the deal, saying it would discuss the issue behind closed doors rather than staging a public confrontation.

In a conversation with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on June 17, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid said the two sides agreed on a "no surprises" policy and to keep lines of communication open.

Eytan Gilboa, an expert on US-Israeli relations at Israel's Bar-Ilan University, was quoted by The Associated Press as saying that the Israeli government, rather than trying to scuttle any agreement with Iran, will press the US administration to keep some sanctions on Iran in place and seek "strategic compensation" for Israel as part of any return to the deal.



A villager receives a COVID-19 vaccine while others wait their turn in the northern Indian city of Noida on Friday. SUNIL GHOSH / HINDUSTAN TIMES VIA GETTY IMAGES

## Concerns rise over Delta Plus variant

By CHINA DAILY

The emergence of a more contagious Delta Plus variant of COVID-19 is causing increasing concern in some Indian states and many other countries.

On Friday, the Indian government said that 51 cases of the Delta Plus variant of the coronavirus had been detected in 12 states, with Maharashtra reporting the highest number, 22. Maharashtra on Friday also reported the first death due to the Delta Plus variant.

About 200 cases of the new Delta Plus variant with an additional mutation called K417N had been found in as many as 11 countries by June 16.

India's health ministry asked chief secretaries of eight states on Friday to take immediate containment measures in districts where cases of patients infected with the Delta Plus variant have been found. On Tuesday the government had classified Delta Plus, the new mutant version of Delta variant of SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus, as a variant of concern.

Sujeet Kumar Singh, director of the National Centre for Disease Control, said that in India COVID-19 "variants of concerns" were found to be distributed in 174 districts in 35 states. The highest numbers were reported in Maharashtra, Delhi, Punjab, Telangana, West Bengal and Gujarat.

The health ministry said the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics, a network of 28 laboratories, found the new virus has increased transmissibility, with stronger binding to receptors of lung cells and that it leads to potential

“WHO is tracking this variant as part of the Delta variant, as we are doing for other variants of concern with additional mutations.”

World Health Organization statement

reduction in a monoclonal antibody response that can fight the disease.

### Dominant type

Delta grew to become the dominant variant in India because of its improved ability to jump to new hosts, according to a recent study by a group of scientists from the Institute of Genomics and Integrative Biology in collaboration with the Gupta Lab of Cambridge University.

The unique set of mutations makes the virus more infective, leads to higher viral load in people and causes larger outbreak clusters, the study found.

The Delta variant, first detected in India, carries a number of mutations in the spike protein that have been linked to increased transmission of the virus, experts say. The Alpha variant was first identified in the UK.

Globally the pandemic is still slowing, with the World Health Organization reporting the lowest number of new cases worldwide since February and decreasing deaths attributed to COVID-19.

However, the Delta variant has now spread to at least 85 countries and is the most contagious of any strain identified, said WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

The Delta variant has also been fueling rising case numbers in Australia, where its largest city, Sydney, entered a two-week lockdown on Saturday to contain a sudden surge. The lockdown, affecting more than 5 million people in the city and nearby local government areas, was met with dismay after months of very few cases.

In Russia, St. Petersburg on Saturday reported the country's highest death toll for a city since the start of the pandemic.

The country's second city, which has hosted six Euro 2020 soccer matches and is due to host a quarterfinal on Friday, recorded 107 virus deaths in 24 hours.

The WHO suggested three parameters — increased transmissibility, more virulence, and decreased effectiveness of public health measures — to determine its seriousness.

"WHO is tracking this variant as part of the Delta variant, as we are doing for other variants of concern with additional mutations," the WHO said in a statement.

The new mutant variant may just be capable of dodging immunities, both from COVID-19 vaccines as well as from earlier infections, said Shahid Jameel, virologist and former member of the Indian SARS-CoV-2 Consortium on Genomics.

Aparajit Chakraborty in New Delhi, agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

## Deadly plunge



Firefighters arrive at the site where a hot-air balloon crashed — killing all five people on board — in Albuquerque, New Mexico, on Saturday. The balloon hit a power line before plunging on to a busy street.

ADOLPHE PIERRE-LOUIS / THE ALBUQUERQUE JOURNAL VIA AP

## More jobs from China arrive in Zimbabwe and Cambodia

HARARE/PHNOM PENH — Zimbabwe on Saturday received a shipment of a COVID-19 vaccine from Chinese drugmaker Sinopharm as the southern African country ramps up vaccinations to battle a third wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

The country is also expecting to take delivery of a vaccine from another Chinese pharmaceutical company, Sinovac Biotech, this week.

The latest vaccine delivery from China comes as Zimbabwe registers a rebound in COVID-19 cases, prompting authorities to introduce new restrictive measures to curtail the spread of the coronavirus.

On hand for the arrival of the Sinopharm doses at Robert Gabriel Mugabe International Airport in Harare, Finance Minister Mthuli Ncube said the treasury has set aside enough resources to buy vaccines.

Apart from saving lives, the vaccination drive will accelerate the country's economic recovery, he said.

"When people are vaccinated, when citizens are vaccinated, it's easier for companies to operate, it's easier to do business, and carrying on with business is what will revive the economy."

The vaccines are expected to boost the country's vaccination drive. Some 725,582 people had received a first dose by Saturday, with 467,733 getting their second doses.

Zimbabwe is relying mainly on the China-supplied Sinopharm and Sinovac vaccines.

The country aims to inoculate 60 percent of its 14 million people to achieve so-called herd immunity by the end of the year.

In Cambodia, a new batch of the Sinovac vaccine arrived in the capital

Phnom Penh on Saturday, giving another boost to the country's vaccination drive.

At the city's airport for the hand-over the doses, Economy and Finance Ministry's Permanent Secretary of State Vongsey Vissoth said they were purchased from the drugmaker.

He thanked China for supplying the vaccine doses in a timely manner.

"The special bond of Cambodia-China friendship has played an invaluable role to ensure that the vaccines are available on time for Cambodia to inoculate our people," he said.

Cambodia has secured more than 10 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines from China and the World Health Organization's COVAX facility, Vongsey Vissoth said.

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## Foreign leaders and parties hail advances

Political parties, political leaders and friendly individuals in other countries are extending warm congratulations on the upcoming 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China.

In messages addressed to General Secretary Xi Jinping of the CPC Central Committee or to the CPC Central Committee, they spoke highly of the splendid achievements the CPC has made during the past century, and conveyed their wishes to boost exchanges and cooperation with the CPC.

The following is an edited summary of some of these messages.

Moroccan Prime Minister Saadeddine El Othmani, also general secretary of the Justice and Development Party, said thanks to Xi's notion for governance, bold and resolute reform, as well as grand initiatives especially the Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese Dream is becoming a reality, and China has become the locomotive driving the development of the world economy.

Under Xi's leadership, the Chinese people have scored a complete victory in the fight against poverty, which has won worldwide acclaim, said Nepali Prime Minister KP Sharma Oli.

Nepal expects to work with China to promote the building of a beautiful world featuring lasting peace and common prosperity, added Oli, also president of the Communist Party of Nepal (Unified Marxist-Leninist).

### Path to prosperity

Prime Minister of Trinidad and Tobago Keith Rowley underlined the CPC's exploration of the path to prosperity and rejuvenation.

China has made hard-won achievements in its economic development, poverty alleviation, social progress and other areas, said Rowley, also the leader of the People's National Movement party.

Bob Loughman, leader of the Vanua'aku Pati and Vanuatu's prime minister, said the CPC, with its strong leadership and outstanding ability to govern the country and the party, has led China to achieve remarkable achievements in political, economic and social sectors as well as international affairs.

Robert Abela, leader of Malta's Labour Party and Malta's prime minister, congratulated the CPC on celebrating the historic moment of its 100th anniversary, adding that the Malta-China relationship has achieved remarkable progress in recent years.

Sultan al-Barakani, deputy secretary-general of General People's Congress Party of Yemen and speaker of the Yemeni parliament, expressed admiration for the achievements made by the CPC in pursuing freedom, carrying out construction and promoting development as well as its leading role in the world in sectors of economy and good governance.

Al-Barakani said that the Belt and Road Initiative proposed by General Secretary Xi has been leading China in building a bridge that connects the whole world.

## Nothing to fear, but a lot to admire, says Beijing envoy

By LIU YINMENG in Los Angeles  
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China will not impose its own systems and values on other countries, has no intention of interfering in other countries' political systems and has no desire to export its development model, says Zhang Ping, China's consul general in Los Angeles.

China is also committed to the path of peaceful development, Zhang said in remarks made at the opening on Friday of an online photo exhibition to celebrate the com-

ing 100th anniversary of the establishment of the Communist Party of China.

"China will not hit the well-trodden path by which a growing power is bound to seek hegemony," Zhang said.

The exhibition, which chronicles the history of the Party over a century, is jointly organized by the consulate general and China's State Council Information Office.

"Over the past 100 years the CPC has endured great hardship in its pioneering cause and undertaken a magnificent historical journey,"

Zhang said. "The CPC has remained firmly committed to its aspirations and forged ahead relentlessly, producing today's glory."

Zhang said he hopes the exhibition will help people understand the CPC.

### Workers' movement

The CPC was founded as China was embroiled in domestic turmoil and external threats, as its people fought against feudal rule and foreign aggression as the workers' movement fully adopted Marxism, Zhang said.

Its founding profoundly changed the history of modern China, the fate and future of its people and the direction and pattern of world development, he said.

"From the date of its founding the CPC aspired to seek happiness for the Chinese people and the rejuvenation for the Chinese nation. By uniting and leading the Chinese people through painful struggle it founded the People's Republic of China."

Under the leadership of the CPC, the Chinese people "completed the

broadest and most profound social transformation in the history of the Chinese nation, embarked on the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics and created economic and social development miracles with remarkable achievements", Zhang said.

China has made great strides in economics, science and technology, living standards and overall national strength, he said.

The CPC is committed to a people-centered approach and regards as its goal people's aspirations to live a better life, he said.

"Putting people's safety and health first, the CPC and Chinese government have led an all-out fight

against COVID-19, marking a major strategic achievement in fighting the virus."

After years of effort, the CPC has also eliminated absolute poverty, a miracle in humanity's fight against poverty, he said.

In addition, it has established the world's largest system of social care, covering 1.4 billion people, which has given them "a much stronger sense of gain, happiness and security", Zhang said.

"The CPC ... has won the whole-hearted endorsement of the Chinese people. ... This is the fundamental institutional guarantee for the development and progress of contemporary China."