

Tesla cars banned from China's military complexes on security concerns



BEIJING: The Chinese military has banned Tesla cars from entering its complexes, citing security concerns over cameras installed on the vehicles, two people who have seen notices of the directive told Reuters.

The move is the latest sign of China's growing scrutiny of the US electric carmaker amid tensions with Washington. Analysts said it resembled Washington's measures against Chinese telecoms firm Huawei citing national security. Chinese military restrictions on Tesla surfaced as senior Chinese and US officials held a contentious meeting in Alaska, the first such interaction since US President Joe Biden took office.

"I presume the timing of the announcement surely linked to the fireworks planned for Anchorage," said Ian Bremmer,

president at Eurasia Group consulting firm.

Tesla shares ended up 0.3% after falling as much as 4.4% during a trade. The US electric car maker won strong backing from Shanghai when it built its first overseas factory there in 2019. Tesla's sleek Model 3 sedans were the best-selling electric vehicle in the country before being overtaken by a much cheaper micro EV. Verkada surveillance cameras at Tesla, hundreds more businesses breached. The directive advises owners to park Teslas outside the military property, and residents were notified this week, the two sources said, declining to be named due to the sensitivity of the issue.

Bloomberg News earlier reported the move. Pavel Molchanov, an analyst at Ray-

mond James & Associates, said the latest restrictions on Tesla were a close parallel to the US government's hostility toward Huawei on concerns Beijing could have access to US telecom infrastructure.

"Even if such concern is exaggerated, it can create dislocation for the companies directly affected," he said.

Separately, the Wall Street Journal reported that China's government was restricting the use of Tesla cars by personnel at military, state-owned enterprises in sensitive industries, and key agencies. It was not immediately clear whether the measure applied to all such facilities. The move came after a government security review of Tesla's vehicles, the report said, citing people familiar with the effort.

Tesla sold 147,445 cars in China last year, or 30% of its total deliveries, though the competition is growing from domestic rivals such as Nio Inc and Geely.

China's State Council Information Office and Tesla did not immediately respond to requests for comment. China's defence ministry could not immediately be reached for comment.

CARS AND CAMERAS: Automakers have been equipping more vehicles with cameras and sensors that capture images of a car's surroundings. Control of how those images are used and where they are sent and stored is a fast-emerging challenge for the industry and regulators around the world.

Microsoft says Chinese hackers targeted groups via server software Tesla cars have several external cameras to assist drivers with parking, changing lanes, and other features. Chief Executive Elon Musk has often spoken about the value of the data Tesla vehicles capture that can be used to develop autonomous driving.

Tesla's Model 3 and Model Y also have cameras in the rearview mirror for driver safety that is disabled by default.

"China has an array of tools - some direct, some indirect - for putting the heavy on foreign companies like Tesla. The pressure can come from any direction, for any reason at any time," said Michael Dunne, chief executive of consultancy ZoZo Go. A Chinese state regulator said in February that government officials had met representatives from Tesla over consumer reports of battery fires, unexpected acceleration, and failures in over-the-air software updates. Musk is scheduled to speak online on Saturday at a state-hosted annual global economic gathering in Beijing called the China Development Forum. The event includes Chinese officials. —Reuters

US Justice Dept probing Visa over debit practices

The Justice Department is looking at Visa Inc's debit practices, the company said on Friday, after reports the United States was investigating whether the credit card company uses anti-competitive practices in the debit-card market.

"The US Department of Justice has informed Visa of its plans to open an investigation into Visa's US debit practices," the company said in a securities filing.

"We have received a notice to preserve relevant documents related to the investigation." The Justice Department is probing whether Visa uses anti-competitive practices in the debit-card market, a source familiar with the matter said on Friday. The Wall Street Journal, which first reported the news, said the Justice Department's antitrust division was looking into whether Visa limited merchants' ability to route debit-card transactions over card networks that are often less expensive.

Big companies Tesla, BNY, Mastercard embrace cryptocurrency

"We believe Visa's US debit practices are in compliance with applicable laws," the company said. "Visa is cooperating with the Department of Justice."

Visa shares fell sharply on Friday, sinking 6.2% to close at \$206.90. The Justice Department declined to comment.

Merchants have long complained about the high cost of network fees, or interchange fees, which can be 2% or more of each transaction and go to the financial institutions behind the transactions.

Industry group the Merchants Payments Coalition, which fights so-called swipe fees, called the probe good news. "The MPC has been concerned about these practices to limit debit routing for years and it's great to see the Department of Justice looking into it," said spokesman Craig Shearman.

Payment startups big winners of e-commerce boom While such investigations are not unusual, this one comes amid a greater interest in the digital marketplace.

Earlier this year, Visa and fintech startup Plaid called off a \$5.3 billion merger after the government sued to stop the deal and called Visa a "monopolist in online debit transactions." The Justice Department has previously investigated the credit card payments industry but settled with Visa and Mastercard Inc in 2010 when they agreed to allow merchants to offer consumers incentives to use a low-cost credit card. American Express refused to settle. It took its battle with the Justice Department all the way to the Supreme Court, which ruled in 2018 that it was legal for American Express to forbid merchants from trying to



Facebook services including WhatsApp back online after worldwide outage



Facebook Inc has fixed a technical issue that caused a global outage of its services after more than a million people reported problems with its photo-sharing app Instagram.

The issue had also affected the company's online messaging services Whatsapp and Messenger, with #whatsappoutage trending on Twitter in many countries, including India. A Facebook spokesperson said the company had resolved the

issue, which prevented access to its services.

Over one million people had reported problems with Instagram, while nearly 20,000 users posted about issues with WhatsApp, according to outage tracking website Downtime-detector.com. Downtime-detector tracks outages by collating status reports from a series of sources, including user-submitted errors on its platform. The outages might be affecting a large number of users. —Reuters

Cyber-attacks on virus control system up by 400 percent

ANKARA: Cyber-attacks on Japan's Covid-19 control system increased by 400% last year amid a battle against the pandemic, officials have claimed.

The country's National Center for Global Health and Medicine (NCGHM) was the target of around 5.3 million such attacks last year compared to 1.2 million cyber cases in 2019, Kengo Miyo, head of the center's medical informatics intelligence, told Kyodo News on Friday.

These attacks did not lead to a leak of confidential research or personal information "due to robust cybersecurity measures," Miyo said. Chrome does not clear your Google, YouTube data even if you tell it to

In 2019, the NCGHM faced roughly 100,000 attacks per month on average, while this figure surged to some 440,000 in 2020.

The official explained that the attacks were primitive attempts, phishing emails with electronic attachments containing viruses or links to fraudulent websites, the report added.

"The intensification of cyberattacks is in another dimension altogether. Implementing new defense systems is necessary through exchanges of information on damage, attack methods, and counter-measures," said Miyo. You can poison the data that Big Tech uses to monitor



you Apart from attacks on its virus controls, Japan faced a rush of Covid-19 patients in its hospitals despite a limited number of appropriate beds. In an earlier phase, Japan also saw lower daily test numbers.

The country imposed a state of emergency twice to stem the spread of infection. The latest emergency imposed since January in the capital Tokyo, as

well as Kanagawa, Saitama, and Chiba provinces, will end this Sunday. Japan's first state of emergency was declared on April 7 last year.

The country has reported 452,147 Covid-19 cases, including 8,750 deaths, since the outbreak began, along with 429,742 recoveries, according to figures compiled by US-based Johns Hopkins University. —Anadolu Agency

Bizarre ancient shark glided through the sea with lengthy wing-like fins

WASHINGTON: About 93 million years ago, a bizarre plankton-eating shark shaped unlike any other known marine creature glided through the sea in what is now northeastern Mexico using curiously elongated wing-like fins that rendered its body wider than it was long.

Scientists on Thursday announced the discovery of a nearly complete fossil of the shark, called Aquilolamna milarca, that lived during the Cretaceous Period at a time when dinosaurs ruled the land.

Its unusual proportions - a fin span of about 6-1/4 feet (1.9 meters) and a length from head to tail of about 5-1/2 feet (1.65 meters) - left the scientists amazed.

Aquilolamna's name means "eagle shark," a nod to its slender pectoral fins, which "mainly acted as an effective stabilizer," according to vertebrate paleontologist Romain Vullo, lead author of the study published in the journal Science. "Many adjectives can be used to describe this shark: unusual, unique, extraordinary, bizarre, weird. Yes, it is the only shark that is wider than long," said Vullo, affiliated with Geosciences Rennes, a research unit involving the University of Rennes and France's National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS).

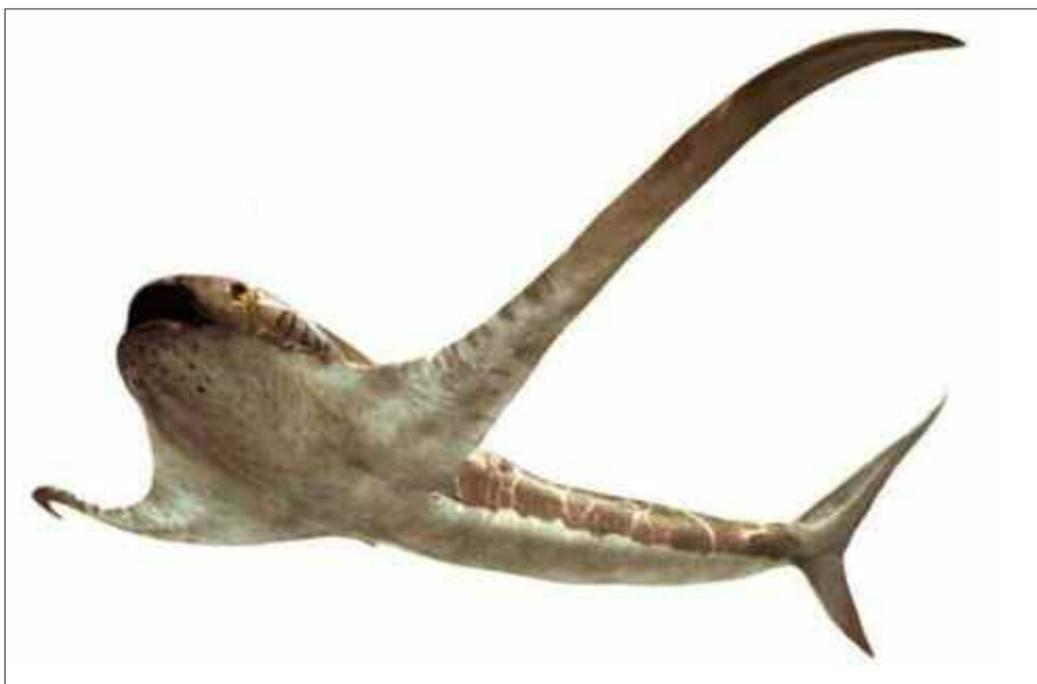
"Aquilolamna is indeed a perfect example of an extinct creature revealing an unexpected new morphology. This strongly suggests that other outstanding body shapes and morphological adaptations may have existed through the evolutionary history of

sharks," Vullo said. Like all sharks and the related skates and rays, Aquilolamna had a cartilaginous skeleton. It had the familiar torpedo-shaped body and tail of a shark but its pectoral fins were utterly unique. The researchers said Aquilolamna appears to have been a slow-swimming shark that fed on plankton through filter-feeding, as plankton-eating whale sharks and basking sharks do today. The fossil, unearthed in Mexico's state of Nuevo Leon, did not reveal Aquilolamna's filter mechanism for eating.

Rays such as the manta ray, with their flattened bodies and large pectoral fins fused all the way to the head, swim through the water as if they are flying through the air. Aquilolamna appears to have done something similar.

"Whereas the locomotion of manta rays is like underwater flight, with flapping movements of their powerful pectoral fins, the long slender pectoral fins of Aquilolamna rather acted as the wings of a glider, or sailplane," Vullo said. Aquilolamna lived in the open ocean at a time when the seas were populated with marine reptiles, squid relatives with large shells called ammonites, various bony fishes, and large sharks. The largest predator in its ecosystem was a shark called Cretoxyrhina, measuring 20 feet long (6 meters). The fish group that includes sharks appeared roughly 380 million years ago, long before the dinosaurs.

Aquilolamna is not the only unusual shark that has swum Earth's oceans. Sharks and their close relatives have taken on many



shapes and sizes - including a prehistoric one called Helicoprion that had a mouth like a spiral saw, another prehistoric one called Stethacanthus that had a dorsal fin shaped like an ironing board, and today's strange goblin and sawfish sharks. —Reuters