

Six killed as building collapses in Mumbai

REUTERS, Mumbai

Heavy rains lashing India's financial capital of Mumbai have caused the collapse of a multi-storey building, killing six people and injuring several, authorities said.

The dilapidated six-storey structure in the city's south was home to five or six families who stayed on after residents were advised to evacuate as it was under repairs, eyewitnesses told television channels.

Two people were declared dead on Thursday evening, with disaster response officials pulling four more bodies from debris during the night, fire and police officials said.

Several people had been trapped under the debris with many more stranded in the portion left standing after the collapse, causing instability, city fire chief P.S. Rahangdale said.

"The risk of secondary collapse can't be ruled out," he added.

Another building collapsed in the western suburb of Malad earlier, killing two, including a child, and injuring several.



Buildings are seen submerged in floodwaters following heavy rainfall in Poyang county of Jiangxi province, China yesterday. Large parts of central and eastern China were reeling yesterday from the worst floods in decades, as disruption mounted for key supply chains, including crucial personal protective equipment for fighting the coronavirus.

PHOTO: REUTERS

130 accounts were targeted in cyber-attack: Twitter

Twitter Inc disclosed late on Thursday that hackers targeted about 130 accounts during the cyber attack this week, an incident in which profiles of many prominent personalities and organizations were compromised. Hackers had accessed Twitter's internal systems to hijack some of the platform's top voices including US presidential candidate Joe Biden, reality TV star Kim Kardashian, former US President Barack Obama and billionaires Elon Musk, Jeff Bezos, Warren Buffett, Bill Gates and used them to solicit digital currency. The FBI's San Francisco division is leading an inquiry into the hacking, with many Washington lawmakers also calling for an accounting of how it happened.

Trump niece's memoir sells nearly 1m copies on first day

A new book on Donald Trump written by his niece sold nearly a million copies on the first day it went on sale in the United States, its publisher said Thursday. Mary Trump's "Too Much and Never Enough: How My Family Created the World's Most Dangerous Man" is billed as the first unflattering portrayal of the US president by a family insider. Mary, a psychologist whose father was Trump's oldest brother Fred, accuses the president of hubris and ignorance, and says he fits the clinical criteria for being a narcissist. The White House has dismissed the memoir as a "book of falsehoods".

Putin orders snap military drills

President Vladimir Putin has ordered snap military drills involving 150,000 personnel and hundreds of aircraft and naval vessels to ensure "security in Russia's southwest," the defence ministry said yesterday. The drills involve nearly 150,000 personnel including airborne troops and marine infantry of the Northern and Pacific Fleets, the defence ministry said. The exercises also involve more than 400 aircraft and over 100 vessels and will be conducted in the Black and Caspian Seas, among other places. The drills aim to test the Russian army's readiness to ensure "security in Russia's southwest where a serious threat of terrorism remains" as well as prepare for the Caucasus-2020 war games, the defence ministry said.

US aircraft carriers return to South China Sea



For the second time in two weeks, the United States has deployed two aircraft carriers to the South China Sea, the US Navy said yesterday, as China and the United States accuse each other of stoking tensions in the region. The USS Nimitz and USS Ronald Reagan carried out operations and military exercises in the contested waterway between July 4 and July 6, and returned to the region on Friday, according to a US Navy statement. Heated rhetoric has been on the rise between the US and China over South China Sea, where Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam challenge China's claim to about 90% of the sea.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

India passes 1m cases

AGENCIES

Coronavirus cases in India passed one million yesterday, official data showed as authorities struggle to check the spread of the deadly pandemic across the world's second-most populous nation.

With over 600 Indians dying daily, lockdowns are being re-imposed across the country of 1.3 billion following an easing of restrictions in recent weeks on hopes the outbreak was under control.

Health ministry data released yesterday put the total cases recorded at 1,003,382, a jump of almost 35,000, with 25,602 deaths after an increase of 687 -- both new daily records.

India, home to some of the planet's most densely packed cities, is the third nation to hit a million cases after the United States and Brazil, although the numbers of deaths in those two countries are far higher.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies said Thursday that India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are together fast becoming the next epicentre of the virus.

CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

US sets one-day record with more than 77,000 new infections

EU haggles over virus rescue plan

UN seeks \$3.6b more for its plan to battle pandemic

first time in five months hoping to overcome divisions about a planned 750-billion-euro (\$855 billion) stimulus package.

And the United States, which has recorded more cases than both countries combined with over 3,560,000, on Thursday posted yet another record number of new infections in one day with more than 77,000 cases.

The United Nations is seeking an additional \$3.6 billion for its Global Humanitarian Response Plan to battle the pandemic, warning developed countries on Thursday of "the price of inaction" if poorer nations don't receive help.

In China -- where Covid-19 first emerged late last year -- flights were curtailed and public transport shut down in Urumqi, the capital of the far-western Xinjiang region, after new infections were detected.

A record 293 cases were also reported in Tokyo yesterday.

In Melbourne, Australia's second-biggest city, a second wave continues to worsen despite the re-imposition of a lockdown.

TRAVEL BAN

US may target all Chinese Communist Party members

REUTERS, Washington

The Trump administration is considering banning travel to the United States by all members of the Chinese Communist Party and their families, a person familiar with the matter said on Thursday, an idea that China dismissed as absurd.

Senior officials discussing the matter had begun circulating a draft of a possible presidential order, but deliberations were at an early stage and the issue had not yet been brought to President Donald Trump, the source said, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The discussions, first reported by the New York Times, center on whether to deny visas to more than 90 million Chinese in what would be one of Washington's toughest actions yet in a widening feud with Beijing that some have likened to a new Cold War.

Such a ban, if implemented, could hit the ruling Communist Party from the highest levels down to its rank-and-file and would be certain to draw retaliation against Americans who travel to China. This could include not only diplomats but also business executives, potentially harming US interests in China.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying, asked about the possibility of such a travel ban, yesterday told reporters that, should it materialise, it would mean the United States was choosing to stand against 1.4 billion people.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo stopped short of confirming it was under consideration but said: "We're working our way through, under the president's guidance, about how to think about pushing back against the Chinese Communist Party."



Superheroes reach out to 6-year-old real-life hero

THE STRAITS TIMES/ANN

Six-year-old Bridger Walker, who was mauled after shielding his four-year-old sister from a charging dog earlier this month, has caught the attention of celebrities, including Captain America himself.

Three days after the incident on July 9, the boy's aunt, Nicole Walker, shared the incident on Instagram. She tagged several Avengers stars and wrote: "I'm reaching out to the Avengers and other heroes so that they can learn about this latest addition to their ranks."

The post quickly went viral and actor Chris Evans, who plays Captain America, promptly reached out, sending Bridger and his family a video message: "I'm sure you heard a lot of this over the past couple days, but let me be the next one to tell you, pal, you're a hero."

In her post, Walker said that after the attack, Bridger, who required around 90 stitches after the dog bit his face and head, had told his family: "If someone had to die, I thought it should be me."

Evans' Avengers co-stars also reached out, including Tom Holland, who plays Spider-Man, and Mark Ruffalo, who plays the Hulk. Other celebrities such as Hugh Jackman, Zachary Levi, Anne Hathaway also praised Bridger's heroism.

Talks on to ease tensions but can't guarantee success

Says India defence minister on Ladakh stand-off

THE STATESMAN/ANN

Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh yesterday assured that "not an inch of our land can be taken by any power in the world" as he interacted with the Indian Army and ITBP personnel at Lukung in Ladakh.

He also said that talks between India and China on border dispute are underway but added that the extent of the success, however, "cannot be guaranteed".

"Talks are underway to resolve the border dispute but to what extent it can be resolved I cannot guarantee. I can assure you, not an inch of our land can be taken by any power in the world," Singh said and added, "If solution can be found by talks, there is nothing better".

The Lukung post is in the northwestern side of lake, 43 km by road from the Finger 4 area, where the troops of India and China are in the process of disengagement. Lukung is a combined post, where the Indian Army and the Indo-Tibetan Border Police are stationed.

The Defence Minister also paid tributes to the 20 Indian soldiers who lost their lives in a violent clash with the Chinese People's Liberation Army troops Patrolling Post 14 on the Line of Actual Control in Galwan valley on June 15.

Referring to the martyred soldiers, he said, "I am happy to meet you all but also saddened because of their loss. I pay my tributes to them".

Further, in his address, Rajnath Singh said India is the only country in the world that has given a message of peace to the world.

"We have never attacked a nation and have never staked claim to any country's land. India believes in the message - 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (world is one family)," he was quoted as saying by NDTV. Rajnath Singh was also accompanied by Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat and Army chief General MM Naravane.

Following the address, Singh reached Srinagar where he will review the situation at the borders and also visit forward areas in Jammu and Kashmir, his office informed.

DELHI RIOTS TARGETING MUSLIMS OVER CITIZENSHIP LAW

Govt panel faults police role

REUTERS, New Delhi

A government-appointed commission promoting the rights of India's religious minorities said police failed to protect Muslims campaigning against a new citizenship law during violent riots in Delhi this year.

At least 53 people, mostly Muslims, were killed and more than 200 were injured in the worst communal violence in the Indian capital for decades.

The clashes erupted amid an outcry over a new federal law laying out the path to citizenship for six religious groups from neighbouring countries except Muslims. Critics said the law was discriminatory and flouted India's secular constitution.

The Delhi Minorities Commission (DMC) said Muslim homes, shops and vehicles were selectively targeted during the rioting that erupted in



northeast Delhi in February when protests against the new Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) broke out across the country.

In all, 11 mosques, five madrasas or religious schools, a Muslim shrine and a graveyard were attacked and damaged, a team from the commission said the report released on Thursday.

Recommendations made in the commission's report to safeguard minority rights are not binding. "Seemingly, to crush the protests,

with support of the administration and police, a retaliatory plan of pro-CAA protesters was worked out to trigger violence at a large scale," it said.

The commission said police had charged Muslims for the violence even though they were the worst victims.

Delhi police spokesman Anil Mittal rejected the allegation of bias and said police had acted fairly.

Critics of PM Narendra Modi's BJP government say it has been promoting a Hindu-first India and that the citizenship law aimed to further marginalise the country's 170 million Muslims. The BJP denies any bias but says it is opposed to the appeasement of any community.

The report also alleged some senior BJP leaders like former member of Delhi legislative assembly Kapil Mishra of fuelling the Feb 23 violence, but the party spokesman said there was no basis of such allegations.



Lawmakers from Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) clash with lawmakers from the main opposition Kuomintang (KMT) party with water balloons and fists inside the parliament in Taipei, Taiwan, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

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