

India's virus epidemic is world's fastest growing

India's coronavirus epidemic is now growing at the fastest in the world, increasing 20 per cent over the last week to more than 1.4 million confirmed cases, according to Bloomberg's Coronavirus Tracker.

Nearly 3,500 Afghans killed or hurt in first half of 2020

More than 1,280 Afghan civilians have been killed in the first six months of the year as fighting rages in Afghanistan despite a pact between the United States and Taliban militants, the United Nations said yesterday.

Young adults majority of new virus cases in Canada

Canadians under the age of 39 make up a clear majority of new cases of COVID-19 in Canada, health authorities said Sunday, warning young adults they are not "invincible" against the disease.

First batch of Rafale jets for India leaves France

The first batch of five Rafale jets flew out of France yesterday and will arrive in India today when the fighter jets will officially be inducted and join the Indian Air Force fleet in Haryana's Ambala.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS, ANN



This picture taken on Sunday and released from North Korea's official Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) yesterday shows North Korean leader Kim Jong Un attending a ceremony to confer "Paektusan" commemorative pistols on leading commanding officers of DPRK armed forces on the occasion of the 67th anniversary of the Korean War ceasefire in Pyongyang.

PHOTO: AFP

India bans 47 more Chinese apps

AFP, New Delhi

India has banned 47 more Chinese apps just weeks after blocking the highly popular video-sharing platform TikTok and 58 others over national security and privacy concerns.

Tensions between the world's two most-populous nations soared last month after a Himalayan border clash that left 20 Indian troops dead and an unknown number of Chinese casualties.

"We have banned 47 mobile apps from China in this ongoing exercise which highlights the government's seriousness about data privacy and security," the official, who asked to remain anonymous, told AFP.

"The order was issued on Friday. Most of these 47 apps are banned for the same reasons as the earlier 59, and many were lite versions or variants of the earlier banned applications."

There has been no official statement or order released by the government about the ban but it has been widely reported across major Indian media.

Anti-China sentiment has soared since the deadly fight in mid-June, which sparked street protests and calls for Chinese products to be banned in the nation of 1.3 billion people.

Several rounds of talks between the two Asian giants have made progress to disengage from military confrontation, but tensions persist.

Local media yesterday said 275 other Chinese apps could also be on the chopping block over similar concerns, including the hugely popular "PUBG Mobile" game owned by tech giant Tencent.

From toys, cosmetics and handbags to home appliances, pharma, auto components, and steel, China exports more than 3,000 products to India.

Assam rolls out red carpet for blood plasma donors

Govt says they'll get preference in jobs, housing

REUTERS, Guwahati

When doctors in a flood-ravaged Indian state urgently sought plasma of a particular blood type for a COVID-19 patient this month, health officials sent a boat for a marooned donor who had recovered from the disease weeks ago.

With coronavirus cases surging in the northeastern state of Assam and critical medicines running low, local authorities are rolling out the red carpet for now-cured patients - all for their blood plasma believed to be rich in virus antibody, although research on its efficacy has not been conclusive.

Assam says that symptomatic patients who donate plasma four weeks after recovery will get preference in government jobs and housing. For example, a donor may get extra marks if he or she is tied in any test or interview for a job.

It is also offering to cover travel and other expenses for donors from outside the state, and has been making its frontline workers scour the state - sometimes wading through flood waters - to bring willing participants to plasma donation centres.

Plasma from a previously infected person can be used to treat up to two moderately ill patients, Assam Health Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said. Without timely treatment, such patients' condition can potentially worsen, further straining the limited pool for medicines.

"We have seen that if you give plasma between moderate and critical stage, the results are very, very good," he said.

Assam, where floods have so far killed around 100 people and affected roughly 3 million, is predicting coronavirus infections will peak in mid-September. It has so far reported more than 32,000 cases with 79 deaths.

RETALIATION FOR HOUSTON CONSULATE CLOSURE BY US

China seizes Chengdu consulate

AFP, Chengdu

The American flag was lowered at the US consulate in Chengdu yesterday and Chinese authorities took charge of the building, as Beijing carried out a Cold War-style retaliatory closure of the mission.

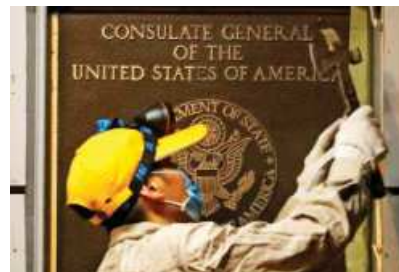
Relations have deteriorated in recent weeks in an intensifying standoff between Washington and Beijing, with the Chengdu mission ordered to shut in retaliation for the forced closure of the Chinese consulate in Houston, Texas.

Beijing confirmed that the consulate had closed at 10:00am. "Afterwards, Chinese authorities entered through the front entrance and took it over," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

Both consulates closed 72 hours after the respective orders were made.

A State Department spokesman told AFP the mission's diplomats and their dependents would leave China by August 27.

Video footage published later



yesterday by the US embassy on Chinese social media platform Weibo showed US Marines in dress uniform lowering and folding the Stars and Stripes from the front of the consulate, before handing it to consul general Jim Mullinax.

Both US and China have alleged that the respective consulates were engaged in activities against national security.

"Today, we bid farewell to the US consulate in Chengdu. We will miss you forever," the US embassy in Beijing posted on Weibo.

In a separate statement the consul general posted that his mission had

provided services to more than 200 million people in southwest China and Tibet, and had given "thousands" of visas every day to Chinese students and tourists.

The Chengdu consulate covered southwest China, including Tibet. Many Tibetans accuse the central government of religious repression and eroding their culture.

Tensions have soared between the world's two biggest economic powers on a range of fronts including trade, China's handling of the novel coronavirus and a tough new security law imposed on Hong Kong, with US officials warning of a "new tyranny" from China.

Nationalistic tabloid the Global Times warned in an editorial Monday that if Washington was "determined to push China-US ties in the worst direction... the 21st century will be darker and even more explosive than the Cold War era."

It said the rising tensions could lead to "unprecedented catastrophe".



A wildfire burns in Vale da Cuba near Isna village, Castelo Branco, on Sunday night. More than 850 firefighters brought the huge wildfire sweeping across part of central Portugal under control yesterday as the country entered a state of alert due to the high risk of further outbreaks.

PHOTO: REUTERS

26 Rohingyas found alive on Malaysian islet

REUTERS, Kuala Lumpur

Twenty-six Rohingya refugees, who had been feared drowned while trying to swim ashore on the Malaysian resort island of Langkawi, were found alive hiding in the bushes on a nearby islet, a senior coastguard official said yesterday.

Malaysia does not recognise refugee status, but the Muslim-majority country is a favoured destination for Rohingyas seeking a better life after escaping a 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar and, more recently, refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Late on Saturday, one Rohingya swam ashore from a small boat off Langkawi's west coast. Officials had feared that the rest of the group had drowned while trying to reach the beach, but they were later discovered on an islet just off the coast.

Authorities have detained the refugees. Two more Rohingya migrants have also been arrested for suspected trafficking in connection with the people found.

The refugees were believed to have transferred to a small boat to sneak into Malaysia, having travelled on a "motherboat" carrying hundreds of Rohingyas from Bangladesh, the official said.

I was duped by Mahathir

Says Anwar Ibrahim THE STAR/ANN

Malaysia's Parti Keadilan Rakyat (PKR) president Anwar Ibrahim has now realised that he was duped by Dr Mahathir Mohamad when the latter promised to pass on the country's top job to him, Sin Chew Daily reported.

In an exclusive interview with the newspaper, the Pakatan Harapan leader said he had believed that Dr Mahathir would fulfil his promise of handing over the baton to him after two years in office.

However, Dr Mahathir kept changing the date before finally saying he would vacate the post after the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation (Apec) meeting this November.

On Feb 24, he resigned as prime minister without informing Pakatan party leaders, leading to the collapse of the Pakatan-led government and voiding



the succession promise. If Mahathir did not resign, Pakatan would not be the government now, he said, adding that all internal issues could have been dealt with.

Anwar denied that Mahathir's resignation was due to pressure from PKR.

"Why was there pressure? Because he (Dr Mahathir) did not seem to be leaving. One year, two years, three years, election..." said Mr Anwar, who added that while he could still communicate with Dr Mahathir, he would never endorse him as prime minister again.

"Dr Mahathir is unable to garner support (to rule) from the majority of MPs," said Anwar.

Eat less to reduce Covid-19 death risk

UK unveils plans to tackle 'obesity time bomb'

AGENCIES

British people should eat less to lose weight as being obese increases the risk of dying from the novel coronavirus, junior health minister Helen Whately said as UK yesterday unveiled a plan to tackle obesity problem in the country.

Restaurants will have to display calories on menus under plans announced by the British government.

Other measures outlined include bans on "buy one get one free" deals on unhealthy items, junk food television adverts being aired before 9pm and a "consultation" on placing calorie labels on alcohol. Another potential measure announced on Monday was a proposal to ban the placing of sweets and chocolate bars at supermarket checkouts.

It is not the first time a British government has attempted to do something about the country's bulging waistlines, but this latest attempt has been prompted by the pandemic.

Analyses show that nearly eight percent of critically-ill patients in intensive care units with the virus were categorised as morbidly obese, compared with less than three percent of the general population.

A Public Health England study published on Saturday found that obesity increased the risk of death from coronavirus by 40 percent.

Two-thirds of UK adults are above a healthy weight, with 36 percent overweight and 28 percent obese, according to government data.

"Losing weight is hard but with some small changes we can all feel fitter and healthier," Prime Minister Boris Johnson said. Johnson required intensive care treatment in April after catching the virus.

The British premier has previously criticised government attempts to spur weight control but said the latest initiative would not be enforced "in an excessively bossy or nannying way".

Advertisement for Bangladesh Shipping Corporation (BSC) recruitment. Includes logo, website (www.bsc.gov.bd), and a table with columns for job number, name, age, and other details. The table lists various positions like 'উপ-মহাবাহাদরক' and 'উপ-মহাবাহাদরক (সিপি)' with their respective ages and other specifications.