

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lanka Tamils defy ban to stage independence day protest

Thousands of Sri Lankan Tamils defied bans to stage protests as the Sinhala-majority government celebrated its independence day with a military parade. Demonstrators marched in northern and eastern regions to demand the release of prisoners and seek information on thousands of Tamils missing since the end of an ethnic war 11 years ago, Tamil legislator M. A. Sumanthiran said. Police obtained court orders banning the protests, but thousands joined the marches anyway, shouting anti-government slogans and displaying black flags of defiance. "The reason for this protest walk is to draw attention to the rights of the Tamil-speaking people that have been denied in this country," Sumanthiran said. The legislator for the main opposition Tamil party, the Tamil National Alliance, said the group also wanted to draw attention to the military occupation of private land in the 1972-2009 civil war.

Israel destroys West Bank Bedouin village again

Israeli forces on Wednesday demolished the "illegal" homes of some 60 Palestinian Bedouins in the occupied West Bank's Jordan Valley, an AFP journalist and activists said. Israeli bulldozers knocked down tents and portable toilets owned by Bedouin families in Homsa al-Baqia, a makeshift village near Tubas in the West Bank that Israeli forces had previously demolished in November, an AFP videographer said. According to Israeli rights group B'Tselem, 61 people, over half of them children, were left homeless following Wednesday's demolitions. The European Union's mission in the Palestinian Territories announced



In this photo taken on Wednesday night, people take part in a noise campaign on the street after calls for protest went out on social media in Yangon as Myanmar's ousted leader Suu Kyi was formally charged two days after she was detained in a military coup. Inset, government staff wearing red ribbons pose during a protest against the coup in Naypyitaw yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



'Driving evil out'

Myanmar people kick up din to protest military coup

AFP, Yangon

Clanging cymbals and banging pots, Yangon residents unhappy with a putsch that ousted Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi have begun kicking up a nightly fracas to chase out "evil spirits" -- in this case, the military.

Suu Kyi and other top civilian leaders were detained in dawn raids on Monday.

The lightning coup brought a country on the path to democracy to a shuddering halt, returning the reins of power to the military who ruled Myanmar with an iron fist for nearly five decades.

The presence of soldiers, acute fears over Suu Kyi's safety in detention and concerns about the ongoing coronavirus pandemic have so far kept a lid on any mass demonstrations since the takeover.

But residents in the commercial capital of Yangon are resorting to an old tradition to express their displeasure -- making as much noise as possible.

For the last two nights in a row, Yangonites have stood on the streets at 8:00 pm to bang pots and pans, whack discarded cardboard boxes and clash cymbals for an hour. Those in their cars at the time honk their horns relentlessly.

"We used to do it to drive evil out of the village or out of the house," said Thinzar Shunlei Yi, an activist who is one of the organisers behind a so-called Civil Disobedience Movement opposing the coup.

"People are using this tactic to drive the military junta out of the country."

Similar scenes were witnessed during previous periods of protest in 1988 and 2007, both of which were suppressed with lethal force.

On Wednesday night, the cacophony also gave way to an old revolution song, "Kabar Ma Kyay Bu" -- "We Won't Forget Until the End of the World".

SYSTEMATIC ABUSE OF UIGHURS IN CHINA CAMPS

US 'deeply disturbed'

Says atrocities must be 'met with serious consequences'

REUTERS, Washington

The United States is "deeply disturbed" by reports of systematic rape and sexual abuse against women in internment camps for ethnic Uighurs and other Muslims in China's Xinjiang region and there must be serious consequences for atrocities committed there, the US State Department said on Wednesday.

A BBC report earlier on Wednesday said women in the camps were subject to rape, sexual abuse and torture. The British broadcaster said "several former detainees and a guard have told the BBC they experienced or saw evidence of an organized system of mass rape, sexual abuse and torture."

Asked to comment, a State Department spokeswoman said: "We are deeply disturbed by reports, including first-hand testimony, of systematic rape and sexual abuse against women in internment camps for ethnic Uighurs and other Muslims in Xinjiang."

The spokeswoman reiterated US charges that China has committed "crimes against humanity and genocide" in Xinjiang and added: "These atrocities shock the conscience and must be met with serious consequences."

The official said China should allow "immediate and independent investigations by international observers" into the rape allegations "in addition to the other atrocities being committed in Xinjiang."

The official did not specify what the consequences might be, but said Washington would speak out jointly with allies to condemn the atrocities and "consider all appropriate tools to

promote accountability for those responsible and deter future abuses."

The previous US administration of former President Donald Trump imposed sanctions on Chinese officials and firms it linked to abuses in Xinjiang, and the administration of new President Joe Biden, which took office on January 20, has made clear it plans to continue a tough approach to Beijing on this and other issues.

China denies accusations of abuses in Xinjiang, and has said the complexes it set up in the region provided vocational training to help stamp out Islamist extremism and separatism. Those in the facilities have since "graduated", it says.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Wang Wenbin said the BBC report was "wholly without factual basis" and charged that the people interviewed for it had been "proved multiple times" to be "actors disseminating false information."

The Biden administration was quick to endorse a Trump administration determination that China has committed genocide in Xinjiang.

Last year, a report by a German researcher published by a Washington think tank accused China of using forced sterilization, forced abortion and coercive family planning against Muslims in Xinjiang.

Meanwhile, Britain's media regulator yesterday revoked a Chinese TV licence after it concluded that the Chinese Communist Party had ultimate editorial responsibility for the channel while Beijing lodged an official complaint over the BBC's Covid-19 coverage.

Outcry grows over Navalny crackdown

Top EU envoy heads to Moscow

AFP, Moscow

The outcry grew in Russia over the crackdown on peaceful protesters yesterday as EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell was set to visit the country under pressure to confront Moscow over the imprisonment of opposition figure Alexei Navalny.

Borrell's visit -- the first to Russia by a top EU envoy since 2017 -- comes at a period of unusual turbulence in the country, with tens of thousands taking to the streets in support of President Vladimir Putin's top critic.

Navalny was sentenced this week to nearly three years in prison.

Over the past few weeks police detained thousands of protesters and dozens of journalists, and detention centres in Moscow and Saint Petersburg were overflowing with demonstrators serving brief jail terms.

On the eve of the EU foreign policy chief's visit, a court sentenced Sergei Smirnov, chief editor of Mediazion -- an online news publication often critical of the government -- to 25 days in jail over a re-tweet of a joke that included the time of a recent protest rally.

The jailing of Navalny, 44, and the crackdown sparked outrage among many Russians, and top broadsheets added their voices to the chorus of condemnation.

"Over the past few weeks we've witnessed extremely harsh actions of members of law enforcement," leading broadsheet Kommersant said.



Open insulin can be stored at up to 37C

AFP, Geneva

Opened insulin can be stored for four weeks in warm conditions without losing efficacy, a study showed Wednesday, giving hope to diabetics in hot countries without access to refrigerators.

The research by the medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) and the University of Geneva showed that a vial of insulin could be stored for four weeks after opening at temperatures fluctuating between 25 and 37 degrees Celsius (77 and 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit).

The study was published in the PLOS One medical journal.

"The current pharmaceutical protocol requires insulin vials to be stored between 2 C and 8 C until opened, after which most human insulin can be stored at 25 C for four weeks," said Philippa Boule, a non-communicable diseases advisor at MSF.



it visited the site yesterday. COGAT, the Israeli army branch responsible for civilian affairs in the West Bank, said in a statement that the structures had been illegally built in a military training zone and that "the residents had agreed to take down the tents". However, COGAT said the families changed their minds, and so on Wednesday the "last remaining tents at the site were confiscated".

US accident victim gets first double hand, face transplant

A 22-year-old man from New Jersey who suffered horrific injuries in a car accident has become the world's first person to undergo a successful face and double hand transplant, his medical team announced Wednesday. Joe DiMeo sustained third-degree burns on over 80 percent of his body when he fell asleep while driving home from a night shift in July 2018, causing his car to flip over and then explode. Though he was pulled to safety by a passerby, his injuries included amputated fingertips, severe facial scarring, and the loss of his lips and eyelids -- affecting his vision and ability to lead a normal, independent life. He remained in a hospital burn unit for four months, where he received numerous grafts and life-saving blood transfusions, and was placed in a medically induced coma for nearly two and a half months. But DiMeo said he now had a "second chance at life" and offered a message of hope.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

HK enforcing single nationality: Canada Britain, US express deep concern



AFP, Hong Kong

Canada, Britain and the United States have expressed alarm after Ottawa revealed authorities in Hong Kong forced a dual citizen to choose one nationality, enforcing what they said was a little-used regulation for the first time in decades.

Canada's foreign affairs department said on Tuesday that a dual-national in prison in Hong Kong was required to make a declaration of nationality on January 18.

"We are aware of more such incidences involving dual nationals of other countries," a Global Affairs Canada spokesperson told AFP.

The revelation has sent diplomats scrambling for more information given the potential implications for hundreds of thousands of dual nationals living in Hong Kong -- and those who travel there for business and tourism.

Under Chinese law, dual nationality is not legally recognised in Hong Kong and authorities may refuse to grant consular access to those who retain Hong Kong or Chinese passports.

But diplomats say the regulations were never enforced and that, until now, officials faced few problems accessing dual nationals in custody.

A US official told AFP they were also aware of more examples than the single case Canada went public with. In response to enquiries, a State Department spokesman said Washington had "deep concerns that this new Hong Kong policy will compel people to declare their citizenship under duress".

A spokesperson for the British consulate said the UK was "seeking answers from the Hong Kong authorities following the suggestion that they may withdraw our consular access to dual national prisoners and prevent us providing the support we have given since 1997" when London handed control of the former colony back to China.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Merin Academy, Chittagang, featuring a ship and two officers. Text includes: বাংলাদেশ মেরিন একাডেমি, চট্টগ্রাম সহ সরকারি/বেসরকারি মেরিটাইম শিক্ষা প্রতিষ্ঠানে মেরিন ক্যাডেট প্রশিক্ষণ কোর্সে ভর্তি বিজ্ঞপ্তি. লিখিত পরীক্ষার তারিখ/সময়: পরবর্তীতে মোবাইলে এসএমএস এর মাধ্যমে জানানো হবে।

২০২১-২০২২ সালের নটিক্যাল/ইঞ্জিনিয়ারিং ক্যাডেট হিসেবে যোগ দিন

Detailed advertisement for the 2021-2022 Nautical/Engineering Cadet recruitment. It lists eligibility criteria (age, height, weight, vision, etc.), exam dates, and application procedures. It also includes contact information for the Bangladesh Merin Academy.

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