

NEWS IN BRIEF

Singapore blogger ordered to pay \$100,000 for defaming PM

A Singaporean blogger was ordered yesterday to pay almost \$100,000 in damages for defaming the prime minister by sharing an article on Facebook linking the leader to a corruption scandal.

Australians warned of deadly spider 'plague' after floods

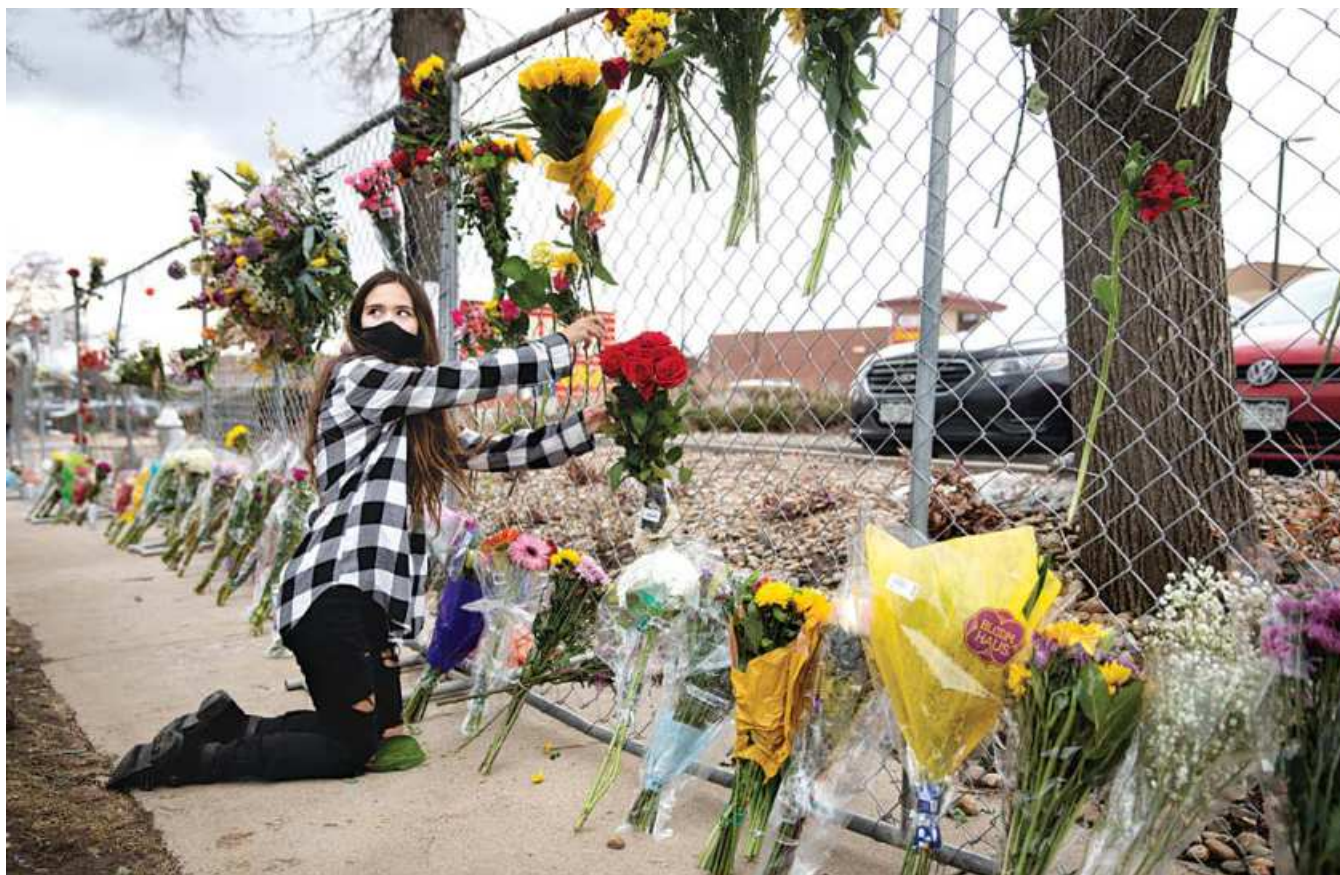
A "plague" of the world's most venomous spiders could swarm Sydney after torrential rain and flooding, the Australian Reptile Park said yesterday, warning that the deadly arachnids could seek refuge in homes as they escape the deluge.

Exit polls forecast stalemate in Israel's election



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's prospects for retaining power were uncertain yesterday after exit polls in Israel's fourth national election in two years projected yet another stalemate.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A girl leaves flowers at the site of a mass shooting at King Soopers grocery store in Boulder, Colorado, US on Tuesday. President Joe Biden has called for a US ban on assault weapons, after the country's second mass shooting in a week left 10 people dead in Colorado and sparked urgent new calls for gun control.

PHOTO: REUTERS

'India desires cordial relations' Modi writes to Imran Khan

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan received a letter of goodwill from his Indian counterpart Narendra Modi on Tuesday, a Pakistani senior Cabinet minister said, as relations thaw between the two nuclear-armed neighbours.

India and Pakistan have fought three wars and have shared a fractious relationship since the two gained independence in 1947, and in 2019 tensions rose dramatically as they sent combat planes into each other's territory.

Asad Umar, a senior Pakistani minister, in a post on Twitter welcomed Modi's letter, calling it a "message of goodwill". He added that Khan had already expressed a desire for a peaceful South Asia.

The message from Modi arrived on Pakistan's Republic Day, March 23, and follows a series of moves and statements signalling rapprochement. The two sides are holding talks on water sharing, with Pakistani officials in Delhi.

Last week, the chief of Pakistan's influential army called on the two sides to bury the past.

Last month, the militaries of both countries released a rare joint statement announcing a ceasefire along a disputed border in Kashmir, having exchanged fire hundreds of times in recent months.

Neither country's foreign office immediately responded to requests for comment on the letter.

Reuters was unable to independently verify the contents of the letter.

North Korea fires two short-range missiles

US plays down significance of test

AGENCIES

North Korea fired two short-range missiles at the weekend, US and South Korean officials said, but Washington played down the first such tests under President Joe Biden and said it was still open to dialogue with Pyongyang.

The North Korean activity involved weapons systems at the low end of the spectrum that were not covered by UN Security Council testing bans, two senior officials of the Biden administration told a briefing call on Tuesday.

South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said two cruise missiles were fired off North Korea's western coastal town of Onchon on Sunday morning. The launch marks North Korea's first publicly known weapons test since Biden took office in January.

But Biden downplayed the latest activity, saying "nothing much has changed," while one senior official said it was "normal" testing and warned against "hyping" it.

The test came just days after US Secretary of State Antony Blinken vowed to work to denuclearize North Korea and criticized its "systemic and widespread" human rights abuses while in Seoul with the US Defense Secretary.

The senior US officials said the administration's North Korea policy review was in its "final stages" and would host the national security advisers of allies Japan and South Korea next week to discuss that.

EU NATIONS REBUKE CHINA ENVOYS France, Germany and other EU nations called in Chinese ambassadors on Tuesday to protest at sanctions imposed by Beijing targeting their citizens, as China and Europe faced off over claims of rights abuses against China's Muslim Uyghur minority.

The diplomatic spat erupted after the EU, Britain and Canada on Monday blacklisted four former and current officials in the Xinjiang region, while Washington, which had already sanctioned two of those officials in July 2020, extended them to the two others. China responded with entry bans on 10 Europeans -- including five members of the European Parliament -- as well as two EU bodies and two think-tanks.

No Indian is outsider in Bengal: Modi

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday said that no Indian was 'outsider' in West Bengal and promised the Bharatiya Janata Party, if voted to power in West Bengal assembly poll, would make a "son of the soil" the chief minister of the state.

"Bengal brought together the people of India through Vande Mataram, and on that land, Mamata-didi is talking about 'bohiragoto' (outsider). No Indian is an outsider here, they are the children of Bharat Mata," Modi said while addressing an election rally in Kanthi in Purba Medinipur district.

Modi's comments came amid an "insider vs outsider" debate with CM Mamata regularly saying she would not allow Bengal to be ruled by "outsiders" from Delhi or Gujarat which is Modi's home state.

The eight phases polling in West Bengal will start from March 27. Results will be declared on May 2.

Silent strike shuts Yangon

Junta frees hundreds of protesters; country braces for 'big protest' as violence claims youngest victim

REUTERS

Myanmar's junta freed hundreds of demonstrators arrested during its months-long crackdown on protests, while businesses in Yangon were shut and streets deserted in response to a call by anti-coup activists for a silent strike.

Several buses full of prisoners drove out of Yangon's Insein jail in the morning, said witnesses, who included lawyers for some inmates. There was no immediate word from authorities on how many prisoners were freed. A spokesman for the military did not answer calls.

In the biggest city Yangon, a call by pro-democracy activists for a silent strike turned the streets eerily quiet.

"No going out, no shops, no working. All shut down. Just for one day," Nobel Aung, an illustrator and activist, told Reuters.

"The usual meat and vegetables vendors on the street didn't show up," said a resident of the city's Mayangone district. "No car noises, only birds."

Yesterday's strike came a day after staff at a funeral service in Mandalay told Reuters that a seven-year-old girl had died of bullet wounds in the city - the youngest of about 275 people killed in the bloody crackdown, according to the AAPP.

Soldiers shot at her father but hit the girl who was sitting on his lap inside their



Men pray during the funeral of 7-year-old girl Khin Myo Chit who was shot at her home in Mandalay, Myanmar, yesterday.

home, her sister told the Myanmar Now media outlet. Two men were also killed in the district, it said.

Since the crisis started at least 23 children have been killed and at least 11 others seriously injured, UNICEF said.

Activists have called for a "big protest" today.

The Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (AAPP) activist group says at least 2,000 people have been arrested in the military crackdown on the protests against the Feb. 1 coup.

Among those freed on Wednesday, was Thein Zaw, a journalist for The Associated Press who was arrested last month, AP reported, quoting him as saying the judge had dropped the charges because he was doing his job at the time of his arrest.

Waive import duty on newsprint, cut corporate tax

FROM PAGE 1 of tax proposals for fiscal year 2021-22 beginning July 1.

Speaking at the meeting, Noab President AK Azad said newspapers have to pay 30pc final tax and 32.5 percent tax on their profit.

"It is very hard to pay the tax [at this rate] in the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic," he said.

Circulation of newspapers crashed during the pandemic and the import cost of newspaper also went up, he said, adding that the industry did not get any incentives from the government.

"We have to use imported newsprint because the quality of the local newsprint is below standard."

Azad recommended reliving the industry of 5 percent newsprint import duty considering the impact of the pandemic.

The Noab president, also the publisher of Bangla daily Samakal, suggested slashing corporate tax on newspapers as it is a public service

industry. Mahfuz Anam, editor and publisher of The Daily Star, said as the government declared newspaper as an industry, newspapers should get benefits similar to those enjoyed by other industries.

The newspaper industry has been seriously impacted by the pandemic and it is in desperate need for whatever the government can do for it, said Mahfuz Anam, also a former president of Noab.

NBR Chairman Abu Hena Md Rahmatul Muneem said the revenue authority will consider reducing import duty on newsprint if it finds that local paper manufacturers cannot produce quality newsprint.

Mozammel Haque Babu, chairman of the Association of Television Channel Owners (ATCO), said many multinational companies are giving advertisements to foreign TV channels which are broadcast in the country as people are watching those.

The government is losing VAT from those advertisements, he said.

On the other hand, many cable operators are not paying VAT despite doing good business. The NBR is being deprived of VAT of about Tk 1,720 crore from the cable operators, Mozammel said.

In response, the NBR chairman said they will take steps to ensure VAT is realised from cable operators properly.

Noab Executive Member Dewan Hanif Mahmud said government offices do not issue VAT receipts when newspapers collect bills from them against government advertisements.

He requested the NBR take steps to make sure that the government offices issue VAT receipts.

Mahmud, editor of Bangla daily Bonik Barta, requested the authorities to waive newspaper of paying advance income tax for the upcoming fiscal year considering the pandemic.

"This might be a lifeline for us."

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Local Government Engineering Department Office of the Executive Engineer District: Manikganj www.lged.gov.bd



Memo No: 46.02.5600.000.07.001.20- 640

Date: 23/03/2021

Invitation for Tender (works)

e-Tender Notice No.21/2020-2021

e-Tender's are invited in the National e-GP System Portal (http://www.eprocure.gov.bd) for the procurement of the following packages.

Table with 5 columns: SL No., Tender ID & Package No., Name of Works, Tender Method, Tender Proposal Document last selling & Submission Date and Time.

These are online Tender's where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. The fees for downloading the e-Tender Documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered Bank's branch.

(Md. Faizool Huq) Executive Engineer LGED, Manikganj. Ph:+8802-7710911, Fax:+8802-7710517 E-mail: xen.manikganj@lged.gov.bd

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh Office of the Executive Engineer Health Engineering Department (HED) Ministry of Health & Family Welfare Khulna Division HED Bhaban, Boyra, Khulna. www.hed.gov.bd



Memo No: 45.02.0000.303.20.001.2019-3052, Reference No: 45.02.0000.051.14.001.20-4063, 45.02.0000.009.99.001.21-436, e-Tender Notice

Date: 23.03.2021 Date: 02.03.2021 Date: 17.02.2021

Table with 7 columns: Sl No., Tender ID No., Package No., Description of Work, Publication date, Last Date of Selling Document, Closing date & time.

The defaulter Contractor of HED/HED Khulna division those who are unable to complete the Construction, Re-Construction, repair, maintenance works of Revenue & Development budget under HED, Khulna Division of FY:2017-18, 18-19, 19-20. Those Contractor have accepted/Absorbed 3 or above work orders is not allowed to participate in this tendering process.

These are online Tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP system portal (https://www.eprocure.gov.bd) is required.

(Signature) Executive Engineer Health Engineering Department (HED) Khulna Division, Khulna e-mail:hedkhi2017@yahoo.com

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