

NEWS IN BRIEF

NY mounts criminal probe of Trump Organization finances

The New York attorney general's office said on Tuesday it has now opened a criminal investigation into former President Donald Trump's company, increasing the legal risk for Trump and his family. Attorney General Letitia James has been investigating whether the Trump Organization falsely reported property values to secure loans and obtain economic and tax benefits. The latest announcement marked another escalation of the legal jeopardy Trump faces four months after leaving office, taking to three the number of known criminal investigations of the former Republican president. The Trump Organization, the former president's family-owned business, could not immediately be reached for comment. Trump has said that the investigation overseen by James, a Democrat, is politically motivated.

Israel accuses China state TV of 'blatant anti-Semitism'

The Israeli embassy in Beijing has accused China's state broadcaster of "blatant anti-Semitism" in a report on US policy during the ongoing deadly violence in the Palestinian Territories and Israel. A presenter on CGTN, the English-language arm of Chinese state broadcaster CCTV, on Tuesday mentioned several elements of anti-Semitic conspiracy theories while discussing the US government's support for Israel. The presenter said "powerful lobbies" of Jews in the United States were responsible for shaping Washington's position on the Middle East crisis and that "Jews dominate (US) finance, media and internet sectors". China has criticised the United States for blocking a joint statement on the crisis at the UN Security Council and called for the two-state solution to be implemented.

Saudi FM 'hopeful' over exploratory Iran talks

Saudi Arabia is "hopeful" after exploratory talks with its nemesis Iran, its foreign minister told AFP, in a rare comment on delicate discussions whose details have been closely guarded. The official-level meetings aim to restore relations severed five years ago between the Sunni Muslim kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the Shia Islamic Republic of Iran. "We have initiated some exploratory talks. They are at a very early stage but we are hopeful," Prince Faisal bin Farhan said in Paris on Tuesday, where he is participating in two international summits. Asked what the impact of the June presidential elections in Iran might be, he said he thought it would be minimal. "Our understanding of Iran's foreign policy is that it's set by the Supreme Leader," he explained.

US Congress passes bill to fight rise in anti-Asian crimes

US lawmakers on Tuesday sent an anti-hate bill to President Joe Biden's desk that aims to prevent violence against Asian Americans, following an alarming rise in attacks including murders during the coronavirus pandemic. The House of Representatives passed the Covid-19 Hate Crimes Act with a strong bipartisan vote of 364 to 62, weeks after it cleared the Senate with nearly unanimous support. Biden backs the legislation, which will speed up reviews of Covid-related hate crimes against Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, expand public awareness about the problem, and provide state and local governments with guidance on how to combat hate crimes. More than 6,600 incidences of anti-AAPI discrimination and violence were reported between March 2020 and March 2021.

Russian lawmakers vote to leave Open Skies pact

Russia's lower house of parliament yesterday voted to leave the Open Skies security agreement, another step in dissolving the Cold War-era pact that the US left last year. The vote in the State Duma came hours before Russia's foreign minister and his US counterpart were due to meet in Iceland. The United States said last week it was reviewing the previous administration's withdrawal from the Open Skies treaty, as Russia moved formally to leave the post-Cold War pact aimed at building trust. The treaty was signed in 1992 soon after the dissolution of the Soviet Union and came into force in 2002. It allowed its nearly three dozen signatories to carry out short-notice flights over one another's territories to monitor potential military operations. Members include countries across Europe, the former Soviet Union and Canada.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Palestinian Ryad Eshkuntana, checks his daughter Suzy, as they receive medical care at Al-Shifa hospital in Gaza City, yesterday, after his wife and other children were killed in an Israeli air strike.

PHOTO: AFP

Cyclone death toll hits 84 in India

Navy searches for dozens missing

AFP, Mahuva

The death toll from a major cyclone that slammed into coronavirus-ravaged India jumped to at least 84 yesterday, as the navy searched for 65 people still missing and authorities scrambled to restore power to the worst-hit regions.

Cyclone Tauktae, which pummelled the western coast late Monday and left a trail of destruction, has added to the country's woes as it is reeling from Covid-19 crisis.

The cyclonic storm was the latest in what experts say is a growing number of ever-bigger storms in the Arabian Sea because of climate change warming its waters.

The defence ministry yesterday said that Navy ships had rescued more than 600 people after waves up to eight metres (26 feet) high hammered offshore oil installations.

But 22 bodies were also recovered while planes and helicopters were still searching for 65 workers missing from one of several support vessels that slipped its moorings in the storm and sank.

MK Jha, head of the Naval Western Command, said that the sea was so rough that they could not board life rafts.

Even before the cyclone made landfall in Gujarat state with gusts up to 185 kilometres (115 miles) per hour, associated heavy rains and strong winds killed around 20 people in western and southern India.

Although the cyclone was one of the fiercest in decades, better forecasting than in previous disasters meant that 200,000 people in danger zones -- including hundreds of Covid-19 patients -- were moved to safety.

EU to reopen bloc's borders

Agrees to let in fully vaccinated tourists; 1.5b anti-Covid shots injected worldwide; Malaysia warns situation 'dire'

AGENCIES

EU member states yesterday agreed to reopen the bloc's borders to travellers who have been fully vaccinated against the coronavirus, European sources said.

Meeting in Brussels, diplomats also agreed to increase the level of new cases a country can hit before being declared unsafe -- a measure that would open up travel into the EU from more places.

The recommendations will be adopted by EU ministers on Friday, they said. An EU Commission spokesman confirmed that the envoys had endorsed the update to travel rules.

Since March 2020, non-essential travel into the 27-member European Union has been banned, apart from a small number of countries deemed safe because of their low Covid case rate.

But businesses on the continent are reopening as virus restrictions are phased out and bars, hotels and restaurants are worried about the summer tourist trade.

Diplomats said that, under the new



rules, travellers who could demonstrate that they had received the required number of doses of an EU-approved vaccine could enter the bloc.

According to an AFP count, more than 1.5 billion doses of anti-Covid vaccines have been injected into people's arms around the world, six months after the vaccination drive started.

Nearly three fifths of the total have been administered in three countries: China (421.9 million), the United States (274.4 million) and India (184.4 million). Malaysia yesterday reported a record 6,075 coronavirus cases in a single day, with authorities warning of a "dire" situation as hospitals rapidly fill up in the worst-hit areas.

The Southeast Asian nation has been battling a growing outbreak for months and had already tightened curbs nationwide ahead of the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr last week.

But infections have continued to rise and authorities are now considering tougher lockdowns in some areas.

Taiwan yesterday raised its coronavirus alert level, tightening social distancing measures as it battled a widening outbreak.

The Level 3 alert was imposed on the entire island with entertainment venues, libraries, sports facilities and community centres closed.

Meanwhile, the US global coordinator on Covid Gayle Smith yesterday told a news conference that the United States will donate a significant number of vaccines through the WHO's COVAX scheme for distributing doses to poorer countries.

Smith also said that the United States was also planning to increase its funding for COVAX, in addition to \$2 billion which she said it had already donated to the facility in past months.

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's approval ratings have fallen to a new low, two surveys showed, as the country struggles to contain a devastating second wave of the coronavirus pandemic.

Modi, who swept to power in 2014 and was re-elected in 2019 with the biggest majority of any Indian politician in three decades, has long fostered the image of a powerful nationalist leader.

But India's Covid-19 caseload surged past 25 million this week, exposing a lack of preparation and eroding Modi's support base, according to US data intelligence company Morning Consult's tracker of a dozen global leaders.

Modi's overall ratings this week stand at 63%, his lowest since the US firm began tracking his popularity in August 2019. The big decline happened in April when his net approval dropped 22 points.

Another survey by Indian polling agency CVMOTER found the number of respondents "very much satisfied" with Modi's performance had dropped to 37% from around 65% a year ago.

Despite the slide in his approval ratings, Modi remains the country's most popular politician.

Meanwhile, a chain of private laboratories yesterday said nearly two-thirds of people tested in India have shown exposure to Covid-19, indicating a runaway spread of the virus as the daily death toll rose to a record 4,529.

India reported 267,334 new daily infections on Wednesday, taking its tally to 25.5 million, the world's second highest after the United States, with a death toll of 283,248, health ministry data showed.

Only the United States has had a worse single day death toll, when it lost 5,444 people on Feb. 12, a Reuters tracker shows.

POST-COUP ETHNIC CONFLICTS IN MYANMAR

Fears for supplies as exodus grows from clashes

REUTERS

People displaced by an upsurge of fighting in Myanmar's Chin State voiced concerns over shelter and supplies, as more flee the conflict between the army and insurgents opposed to the junta that seized power in February.

The exodus also threatens to push more people over the nearby border with India, where an Indian government official said more than 15,000 had sought refuge since the Feb. 1 coup that has plunged the Southeast Asian country into chaos.

"When it rains, we don't have strong shelters," said Mai, who fled on foot from the town of Mindat, in western Myanmar, at the weekend and is now at a village 15 km (nine miles) away.

Those fleeing say thousands of people left Mindat after the army attacked to uproot fighters of the Chinland Defence Force, who are aligned with a National Unity Government formed by the junta's opponents.

"There are also reports of civilians killed and injured and civilian property damaged or destroyed," the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said on Tuesday.

Since overthrowing and detaining elected leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the junta has struggled to impose its authority in the face of daily protests, paralyzing strikes and an upsurge of fighting against old and new groups of ethnic minority fighters.

At least 10 people had been killed in Chin State in the past week, according to figures from the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners activist group. It puts the countrywide death toll since the coup at 805.



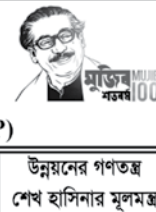
Spanish soldiers stand guard as migrants stand on rocks off the shore of the Spanish enclave of Ceuta, on Tuesday. A European commissioner yesterday vowed that the continent would not be "intimidated" after some 8,000 migrants rushed into Ceuta from Morocco since Monday.

PHOTO: AFP

Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

Local Government Engineering Department

Western Economic Corridor & Regional Enhancement Program (WeCARE) Phase-I:
Rural Connectivity, Market and Logistic Infrastructure Improvement Project (RCMLIIP)
LGED Bhaban, Level-10
Agargaon Sher-e-Bangla Nagar Dhaka-1207



Memo No.46.02.0000.981.11.008.21.300

Date: 19.05.2021

Request for Expressions of Interest
Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Expert.
(Consulting Services – Individual Consultant Selection)
Western Economic Corridor & Regional Enhancement Program (WeCARE) Phase-I

Assignment Title: Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Expert.

Reference No.: SP-06 (C)

The Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh has received financing from the World Bank toward the cost of the Western Economic Corridor & Regional Enhancement Program (WeCARE) Phase-I and intends to apply part of the proceeds for Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Consultancy Services.

The broad scope of consulting services ("the Services") includes carrying out the following in the project influence areas of Jashore, Jhenaidah, Magura, Chaudanga, Satkhira, and Meherpur.

1. Assist LGED to set up, operationalize and run ICT system required for efficient running of the project.
2. Help PIU explore areas where ICT can be deployed for ease of project implementation.
3. Advise PIU about ICT initiatives for project documentation, operation, supervision, management etc. and implement them.
4. Improve ICT initiatives over time to ensure IT security, efficiency and transparency.

The expected date for commencement of the services is July 2021 and the tentative duration of the entire assignment is about 42 (Forty-Two) months. A draft TOR can be found at the following website: (www.lged.gov.bd or can be obtained at the address given below).

The Local Government Engineering Department (LGED) under the Local Government Division, Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Government of Bangladesh now invites eligible Individuals to indicate their interest in providing the Services. Interested individuals should provide information demonstrating that they have the required qualifications and relevant experience to perform the Services. The shortlisting criteria are:

1. Experience in operating and maintaining network, computer, telecommunication and other office equipment.
2. Experience in computer hardware, LAN, WAN networks; setup video-audio conferences.
3. Experience in IDA-funded projects.

The attention of interested Consultants is drawn to the Section III, Para 3.14.3.16, and 3.17 of the World Bank's "Procurement Regulations for IPF Borrowers, July 2016 and updated in August 2018," setting forth the World Bank's policy on conflict of interest.

An Individual will be selected in accordance with the Individual Consultants Selection (ICS) method set out in the Procurement Regulations.

Further information can be obtained at the address below during office hours (9:00 AM to 17:00 PM BST). Expression of Interest must be delivered in a written form to the address below (in person, or by e-mail) by 17:00 PM (BST), 24 June, 2021.

(Momin Mozibul Haque Shamaji)
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