

Quotes of the day



“Upon review of the available information, we are confident that Iran conducted this attack.”

US SECRETARY OF STATE **ANTONY BLINKEN** ON ATTACK ON ISRAELI TANKER



“The current situation is due to a sudden decision on the withdrawal of the international troops.”

PRESIDENT **ASHRAF GHANI** ON WORSENING SECURITY SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN



A migrant prepares to climb on board the German NGO migrant rescue ship Sea-Watch 3 from a rigid-hulled inflatable boat (RHIB) after 12 migrants were rescued from a wooden boat in international waters north of Libya, western Mediterranean Sea, yesterday. Inset, a migrant feeds her baby on the rescue ship Sea-Watch 3. Rescue ships picked up more than 700 people trying to cross the Mediterranean in makeshift vessels this weekend, mainly off the coasts of Libya and Malta, a migrant aid group said. PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN brief

Indian states to resolve border row 'amicably'

Two states in India's north-east have agreed to resolve their differences peacefully after their long-running border dispute erupted into deadly violence last week, reports AFP. Last Monday clashes on the demarcation between Assam and Mizoram left six police officers dead in a major embarrassment for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government. The two regions' chief ministers tweeted late Sunday that they would now seek an "amicable" approach to the dispute. Mizoram chief minister Zoramthanga urged locals to stop posting "sensitive messages" on social media while his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma highlighted the "spirit of the north-east."

Two more Tunisia MPs critical of president arrested

Tunisian security forces have arrested two MPs from an Islamist party opposed to a power grab by President Kais Saied, their party said Sunday. Maher Zid and Mohamed Affes of Al-Karama have been placed in provisional detention in connection with a military investigation, party head Seifeddine Makhlouf wrote on Facebook. Al-Karama is allied to the Islamist-inspired Ennahdha party, the main opponent of the president. Their arrest late Saturday came a day after the detention of an independent MP, Yassine Ayari, reports AFP. Ayari was arrested after branding Saied's decision last Sunday to suspend parliament and sack the prime minister and other top officials a "military coup". Tunisia's military court said he was arrested pursuant to a two-month prison sentence passed in late 2018 for criticising the army. Rights groups have expressed concern over his arrest.

Military 'not elected by people' More 'suffering ahead'

Shadow govt condemns army ruler for taking PM role; Indonesian FM urges junta to approve appointment of Asean envoy

REUTERS

Members of a shadow government set up by opponents of Myanmar's coup yesterday condemned the country's military ruler for taking on the role of prime minister in a caretaker government and said the move was designed to try to win legitimacy.

Military ruler Min Aung Hlaing made the announcement in a speech on Sunday, six months after the army seized power by overthrowing an elected government led by Aung San Suu Kyi.

The "Provisional Government" replaces the State Administration Council (SAC) chaired by Min Aung Hlaing that has run Myanmar since the coup.

"The transition from a military council to a caretaker government is a reflection of the fact that they are preparing for an international diplomatic battle, trying to prove the fact that they are a government," said Aung Myo Min, minister for human rights in the National Unity

POST-COUP MYANMAR



Government (NUG), which was formed in April by various groups including members of Suu Kyi's party and pro-democracy activists.

"However, there is no denying the fact that the military is not elected by the people," Aung Myo Min said in a post on Facebook.

The creation of the caretaker government was done "in order to perform the country's duties fast, easily and effectively", a news reader on state Myawaddy television said on Sunday.

In his speech, Min Aung Hlaing

repeated a pledge to hold elections by 2023 and said his administration was ready to work with a regional envoy on Myanmar.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has been spearheading diplomatic efforts and Asean ministers met yesterday to try to appoint an envoy to help end violence and promote dialogue to end the crisis.

Indonesia's foreign minister urged Myanmar to approve the appointment of an Asean special envoy and said little progress had been made on a plan to promote talks between Myanmar's rival sides.

Talking to media by video conference, Indonesia's Retno Marsudi said the group had made "no significant progress" on implementing its five-point plan to stop the turmoil in Myanmar, which was announced in April.

The delay "does Asean no good" and, if inaction went on, the issue should be returned to leaders to give directions, she said.

Says top scientist Fauci on US Covid spike

AGENCIES

The top infectious disease expert in the United States has warned that the country will experience more "pain and suffering in the future" as coronavirus infections are surging, especially in parts of the country where large segments of the population remain unvaccinated.

In an interview with ABC's This Week programme on Sunday, Dr Anthony Fauci said "an outbreak of the unvaccinated" has spurred a dramatic increase in the seven-day average of new COVID-19 infections in the US.

"Things are going to get worse if you look at the acceleration of the number of cases, the seven-day average has gone up substantially," said Fauci, explaining that some 100 million people who are eligible for COVID-19 jabs have not been inoculated.

"We're looking not I believe to lockdown, but we're looking to some pain and suffering in the future because we're seeing the cases go up," he said, "which is the reason why we keep saying over and over again, the solution to this is get vaccinated and this would not be happening."

COVID-19 vaccines have been available across the US for months and 60.4 percent of adults are considered fully inoculated, according to data from the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). However, many people have not been vaccinated for a variety of reasons, including ideological and political views – and health officials for weeks have been desperately calling on people to get their jabs as the highly contagious Delta variant is spreading.

According to data from Johns Hopkins University, the seven-day rolling average for daily new cases in the US rose from 30,887 on July 16 to 77,827 on July 30. The seven-day rolling average for the country's daily new deaths rose over the same period from 253 on July 16 to 358 on July 30.



Death toll in central China floods rises to 302

The death toll from floods in central China last month is at least 302 with dozens of people still missing, officials said yesterday, after record downpours dumped a year's worth of rain on a city in just three days, reports AFP. Zhengzhou, the capital of Henan province and the epicentre of the record flooding, was hardest-hit with 292 people dead and 47 missing, according to a provincial government press briefing, as residents were trapped in subway trains, underground car parks, and tunnels. Images of passengers inundated by shoulder-height water went viral on Chinese social media on Line 5 of the city subway where 14 people died, while dozens of cars in a tunnel were tossed aside by the deluge, many with passengers still inside. "Thirty-nine people were found dead in underground carparks," Zhengzhou's mayor Hou Hong told reporters while updating the toll, adding that six died in a car tunnel.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



AUGUST 03

1914 - Germany declared war on France at the start of World War One.

2000 - The Indonesian attorney-general's office formally charged ex-president Suharto with corruption.

2001 - Thailand's Constitutional Court cleared PM Thaksin Shinawatra of charges that he had deliberately concealed assets, allowing him to carry on in the post.

2004 - The Statue of Liberty in New York reopened to visitors for the first time since the attacks of Sept 11, 2001, following security and safety improvements.

SOURCE: REUTERS

Pegasus spyware found on 3 journalists' phones

French intelligence confirms

AGENCIES

French intelligence investigators have confirmed that Pegasus spyware has been found on the phones of three journalists, including a senior member of staff at the country's international television station France 24.

It is the first time an independent and official authority has corroborated the findings of an international investigation by the Pegasus project – a consortium of 17 media outlets, including the Guardian.

Forbidden Stories, a Paris-based nonprofit media organisation, and Amnesty International initially had access to a leaked list of 50,000 numbers that, it is believed, have been identified as those of people of interest by clients of Israeli firm NSO Group since 2016, and shared access with their media partners.

France's national agency for information systems security (Anssi) identified digital traces of NSO Group's hacking spyware on the television journalist's phone and relayed its findings to the Paris public prosecutor's office, which is overseeing the

investigation into possible hacking.

Anssi also found Pegasus on telephones belonging to Lénaïg Bredoux, an investigative journalist at the French investigative website Mediapart, and the site's director, Edwy Plenel, reports The Guardian.

Forbidden Stories believes at least 180 journalists worldwide may have been selected as people of interest in advance of possible surveillance by government clients of NSO.

A source at France 24 said the broadcaster had been "extremely shocked" to discover one of its staff had potentially been monitored.

"We are stupefied and angry that journalists could be the object of spying. We will not be taking this lying down. There will be legal action," the source said.

Le Monde reported that the France 24 journalist, based in Paris, had been selected for "eventually putting under surveillance". Police experts discovered the spyware had been used to target the journalist's phone three times: in May 2019, September 2020 and January 2021, the paper said.



PHOTO: AFP

Malaysia's former prime minister Mahathir Mohamad (C) and opposition member of parliament Anwar Ibrahim (centre L) address the media as they protest the closure of parliament in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia yesterday. Mahathir and Anwar put aside long-running animosity and demand the country's embattled premier resign.

Canada officially marks first nationwide Emancipation Day

After years of campaigning by Black legislators and community advocates, Canada on Sunday is officially marking the abolishment of slavery nearly 200 years ago in its first nationwide Emancipation Day. Canadian parliamentarians unanimously voted in March to recognise Emancipation Day across the country on August 1, the same date in 1834 that an act came into effect banning slavery in former British colonies, including Canada, reports Aljazeera Online. Senator Wanda Thomas Bernard, a leading figure in the years-long push for federal recognition of Emancipation Day, said the day "is not a celebration" but rather "a time of reflection, a time of remembering our ancestors and a time for honouring our ancestors". "The national recognition of Emancipation Day signals



the beginning of what we do next," Thomas Bernard said during an online event ahead of Sunday, explaining that Black history must be taught across Canada year-round, and that an apology and reparations need to be discussed. "If we use our collective power, Emancipation Day... should propel us to move forward in very positive ways," she said.

Zoom to settle US privacy lawsuit for \$85m

The videoconferencing firm, has agreed to settle a class-action US privacy lawsuit for \$85 million, it said Sunday. The suit charged that Zoom's sharing of users' personal data with Facebook, Google and LinkedIn was a breach of privacy for millions, reports AFP. While Zoom denied wrongdoing, it did agree to improve its security practices. The settlement needs to be approved by US District Judge Lucy Koh in San Jose, California. A Zoom spokesman told AFP: "The privacy and security of our users are top priorities for Zoom, and we take seriously the trust our users place in us. "We are proud of the advancements we have made to our platform, and look forward to continuing to innovate with privacy and security at the forefront." The settlement will set up a "non-reversionary cash fund of \$85 million to pay valid claims, notice

and administration costs, Service Payments to Class Representatives, and any attorneys' fees and costs awarded by the Court," according to the preliminary settlement. All class members are eligible for payment, it said. Those who paid for an account can receive 15 percent of the money they paid to Zoom for their core subscription during that time or \$25, whichever is greater; while those who did not pay for a subscription can make a claim for \$15. As the coronavirus pandemic closed offices due to health risks and companies shifted to working online, use of video and collaboration platforms hosted by companies including Zoom, Slack, Microsoft, and Google rocketed. But Zoom's rapid growth came with pressure to deal with security and privacy as the platform faced scrutiny from rising usage.

Panda loaned to France gives birth to twins: Beauval zoo

Huan Huan, a giant panda on loan to France, gave birth to twin cubs very early yesterday, according to the Beauval zoo. The twins, born around 1 am, are Huan Huan and her partner Yuan Zi's third cubs after the first panda ever born in France, Yuan Meng, in 2017. "The two babies are pink. They are perfectly healthy. They look big enough. They are magnificent," said Rodolphe Delord, president of Zoo-Parc de Beauval in Saint-Aignan, central France. Panda reproduction, in captivity or in the wild, is notoriously difficult as experts say few pandas get in the mood or even know what to do when they do, reports AFP. Further complicating matters, the window for conception is small since female pandas are in heat only once a year for about 24-48 hours. Huan Huan and her partner Yuan Zi -- the star attractions at



Beauval -- thrilled zoo officials in March when they managed to make "contact", as they put it, eight times in a weekend. Veterinarians also carried out an artificial insemination, just to be sure. Huan Huan's first cub, Yuan Meng, now weighs more than 100 kilogrammes (220 pounds).

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS