

Quotes of the day



Afghan leaders have to come together. They've got to fight for themselves.

US PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN DEFENDS HIS DECISION TO WITHDRAW US TROOPS



There are probably 20 people (world leaders, vaccine makers and suppliers) in the world that are crucial to solving this (Covid-19 vaccines) equity problem. ... We should be collectively disgusted with ourselves.

BRUCE AYLWARD, SENIOR WHO OFFICIAL

TALIBAN'S LIGHTNING OFFENSIVE IN NORTH AFGHANISTAN

Eighth provincial capital falls

US intel fears Kabul may fall in 90 days; Ghani flies into Mazar-i-Sharif to rally warlords against insurgents; Biden says he doesn't regret troops withdrawal

REUTERS, Kabul

Taliban fighters could isolate Afghanistan's capital in 30 days and possibly take it over in 90, a US defence official told Reuters yesterday citing US intelligence, as militants took control of an eighth provincial Afghan capital.

The Taliban now control 65% of Afghanistan and have taken or threaten to take 11 provincial capitals, a senior EU official said on Tuesday.

The US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said that the new assessment of how long Kabul could stand was a result of the rapid gains the Taliban had been making around the country as US-led foreign forces leave.

"But this is not a foregone conclusion," the official added, saying that the Afghan security forces could reverse the momentum by putting up more resistance.

Yesterday's loss of Faizabad, capital of the northeastern province of Badakhshan, was the latest setback for the Afghan government, which has been struggling to stem the momentum of Taliban assaults.

It came as President Ashraf Ghani flew in to Mazar-i-Sharif to rally old warlords to the defence of the biggest city in the



A Taliban flag is seen on a plinth yesterday after the insurgents captured Pul-e-Khumri, the capital of Baghlan province.

PHOTO: AFP

north as Taliban forces close in. Badakhshan borders Tajikistan, Pakistan and China.

US President Joe Biden urged Afghan leaders to fight for their homeland, saying on Tuesday he did not regret his decision to withdraw, noting that the United States had spent more than \$1 trillion over 20 years and lost thousands of troops.

The United States was providing significant air support, food, equipment

and salaries to Afghan forces, he said. The United States will complete the withdrawal of its forces this month in exchange for Taliban promises to prevent Afghanistan being used for international terrorism.

The Taliban promised not to attack foreign forces as they withdraw but did not agree to a ceasefire with the government. A commitment by the Taliban to talk peace with the government side has come to nothing

as they eye military victory. The speed of their advance has shocked the government and its allies.

The Taliban advances have raised fears of the return to power of the hardline militants who emerged in the early 1990s from the chaos of civil war and controlled most of the country from 1996 to 2001, when they were ousted by a US-led campaign for harbouring al-Qaeda chief Osama bin Laden.

Afghan officials have appealed for pressure on Pakistan to stop Taliban reinforcements and supplies flowing over the border. Pakistan denies backing the Taliban.

In the south, government forces were battling Taliban fighters around the city of Kandahar and thousands of civilians from outlying areas had taken refuge there, a resident said.

Fighting was also taking place in city of Farah in the west, near the Iranian border, while the Ministry of Defence said in a statement security forces had also battled Taliban in Laghman, Logar, Paktia, Uruzgan, Zabul, Ghor, Balkh, Helmand, Kapisa and Baghlan provinces.

The Taliban have captured districts bordering Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, Pakistan and China, heightening regional security concerns.

NEWS IN brief

Biden announces virtual democracy summit on Dec 9-10

US President Joe Biden will gather world leaders in December for a virtual "Summit for Democracy" that is being seen as a challenge to authoritarian China and an alternative to the traditional G20 meeting. Biden is seeking to bring together heads of state with major figures in philanthropy, civil society and the private sector "from a diverse group of the world's democracies," the White House said in a statement yesterday.



Algeria wildfires kill 65

Firefighters, troops and civilian volunteers battled blazes in forests across northern Algeria yesterday as the country reeled at a death toll of at least 65 people in the latest wildfires to hit the Mediterranean. Soldiers deployed to back the overstretched emergency services tackle the rash of more than 50 fires that broke out on Tuesday accounted for 28 of those killed, state television reported. The authorities say they suspect widespread arson after so many fires erupted in such a short space of time. They have announced several arrests but have yet to elaborate on the identity or suspected motives of those detained. High winds fuelled the rapid spread of the fires in the tinder-dry conditions created by a heat wave across North Africa and the wider Mediterranean, fire official Youcef Ould Mohamed told the state-run APS news agency. On the northern shores of the Mediterranean, Turkey reported eight deaths and Greece three from wildfires that have raged for the past two weeks.

10 dead, 60 people feared trapped in India landslide

Rescuers were working to clear tonnes of rocks and mud Wednesday after a landslide buried about 60 people in India's Himalayan north, killing at least 10. A bus carrying between 20 and 25 people had been buried under rubble, said the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), which is involved in the rescue efforts. Fourteen injured have been rescued, the ITBP said in a statement. A local police official at the site, which is in Himachal Pradesh state's Kinnaur district, bordering Tibet, told AFP that rocks were still falling in the area. Television channels showed images of a truck and cars mangled and half-buried in the debris.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

Junta leader aims to solidify grip on power

Says UN special envoy on Myanmar, fears Suu Kyi's NLD party may be disbanded soon

AGENCIES

The UN special envoy on Myanmar said the country's military leader appears determined to solidify his grip on power following a February coup and ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi's political party could soon be disbanded.



She said unless UN member states act, Myanmar's UN Ambassador Kyaw Moe Tun - an opponent of the junta - remains the country's legitimate envoy at the world body in New York and Suu Kyi and Myanmar President Win Myint are the country's leaders.

Schraner Burgener stressed that it was up to member states to decide who should represent Myanmar, but she described it as a "crucial moment".

Meanwhile, two people died and three were injured yesterday after jumping from the fourth floor of a building in Myanmar's commercial capital to escape a raid by security forces, authorities said.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military's February coup, with over 900 killed and more than 7,000 arrested in a bloody crackdown, according to a local monitoring group. Rights groups and the UN say hundreds of anti-coup demonstrators have disappeared and protesters face arbitrary arrest and the threat of torture.

Christine Schraner Burgener cited military ruler Min Aung Hlaing's announcement this month that he was now prime minister in a newly formed caretaker government and also a formal annulment of the results of a November election, which was won by Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy (NLD). "I fear that we will soon hear also that the NLD party could be disbanded. This is an attempt to promote legitimacy against lack of international action taken," Schraner Burgener told reporters on Wednesday. "I have to make clear that the UN does not recognize governments, so it's up to the member states."

Global infections spike as Delta variant spreads

AGENCIES

Australia's second-biggest city Melbourne yesterday extended lockdown despite growing anger among people as world struggles on to stamp out infections caused by the highly infectious Delta variant of the coronavirus.

Melbourne had been due to exit the lockdown today, the sixth for its five million people in stop-start battles against the coronavirus also seen elsewhere across the country have triggered frustration and discord.

Victoria state Premier Dan Andrews confirmed strict stay-at-home orders for Melbourne will remain in place until at least Aug 19 after authorities were unable to trace how several of the 20 people confirmed as new cases on Wednesday contracted Covid-19.

Australia has so far fared much better than many other countries in the developed world during the pandemic, with just under 37,000 Covid-19 cases. The death toll rose to 944 yesterday after two people, including a man in his 30s, died in Sydney.

The coronavirus pandemic has killed at least 4,314,196 people worldwide since the virus first emerged in late 2019, according to an AFP

compilation of official data.

The US is the worst-affected country with 618,137 deaths, followed by Brazil with 564,773, India with 429,179, Mexico with 245,476 and Peru with 197,102.

In China, drug regulator has approved the country's first mixed-vaccine trial, a company involved in the study said, as the rapid spread of the Delta variant raises concern about the efficacy of domestically produced jabs.

The trial will test the efficacy of combining an "inactivated" vaccine made by China's Sinovac with a DNA-based one developed by US pharmaceutical company Inovio, a statement issued on Tuesday said.

The WHO has said there is still not enough data to say whether using two different vaccines together is safe or can boost immunity.

Meanwhile, Russia's Health Minister Mikhail Murashko yesterday claimed that Sputnik V vaccine around 83 percent effective against the Delta variant of coronavirus. The vaccine's developers in June said Sputnik V was around 90% effective against the Delta variant.

In Asia, South Korea yesterday reported more than 2,200 new daily Covid-19 cases, a record since the pandemic began, Health Minister Kwon Deok-cheol said.

COVID PANDEMIC

- Melbourne extends lockdown
South Korea reports record coronavirus cases
China approves first mixed-vaccine trial
Sputnik V shot '83pc effective against Delta variant'

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

AUGUST 12
1898 - The brief Spanish-American War comes to an end when Spain formally agrees to a peace protocol on US terms: the cessation of Cuba, Puerto Rico and Manila in the Philippines to the United States pending a final peace treaty.
1945 - Emperor Hirohito of Japan informs the imperial family that he has decided to surrender.
1981 - IBM introduces its first Personal Computer (PC & PC-DOS version 1.0)

SOURCE: WEBSITES

Sudan to hand Bashir over for international war crimes trial

Sudan will hand longtime autocrat Omar al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court along with other officials wanted over the Darfur conflict, Foreign Minister Mariam al-Mahdi said yesterday. Bashir, 77, has been wanted by the ICC for more than a decade over charges of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Sudanese region. The United Nations says 300,000 people were killed and 2.5 million displaced in the Darfur conflict, which erupted in the vast western region in 2003. The cabinet's decision to hand him over came during a visit to Sudan by ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan, who met with Mahdi on Tuesday. Mahdi noted the handover of wanted officials will be discussed between the cabinet and the ruling sovereign council comprised of military and civilian figures for final approval, according to state news agency SUNA. The transitional authorities have previously said they would hand Bashir over, but one stumbling block was that Sudan was not party to the court's founding Rome Statute. But last week, Sudan's cabinet voted to ratify the Rome Statute, a crucial move seen as one step towards Bashir potentially facing trial. Bashir, who ruled Sudan with an iron fist for three decades before being deposed amid popular protests in 2019, is behind bars in Khartoum's high security Kober prison. The Hague-based ICC issued an arrest warrant for Bashir in 2009 for war crimes and crimes against humanity in Darfur.



China to ban songs deemed as 'national security' threats

China will ban karaoke songs perceived to "endanger national security", as state controls attempt to muzzle the mics of a KTV-obsessed nation. The Ministry of Culture and Tourism said it will establish a blacklist of banned songs with "illegal content", such as endangering national security and unity, inciting ethnic hatred, or promoting cults, gambling and crime. China regularly removes songs deemed to be "politically incorrect" from domestic music streaming services. In its note, published Tuesday, the ministry did not elaborate on how a song could endanger national security, or reveal the contents of its blacklist. But a national security law imposed by Beijing on Hong Kong last year effectively criminalised the public performance of songs sung during anti-government protests that rocked the semi autonomous city in 2019. The new regulations, which come into effect October 1, require karaoke content providers to audit their catalogues, adding that the ministry may establish a central expert review group for songs. The regulations were met with widespread ridicule on the Chinese social network Weibo. "Our culture has gone 15 years backwards. How many people are still going to karaoke now and it still needs to be positive? -- why don't they just sing the national anthem every day?" posted one user. "Should I sing a positive song ten times over to brainwash myself into becoming positive?" commented another.

New York Governor Cuomo resigns in sexual harassment scandal

Faced with mounting legal pressures and demands for his departure from President Joe Biden and others, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo resigned on Tuesday following an inquiry that found he sexually harassed 11 women, capping a startling downfall for one of the most prominent politicians in the United States. A Democrat who had served since 2011 as governor of the fourth most-populous state, Cuomo made the announcement a week after New York Attorney General Letitia James released the results of a five-month independent investigation that concluded he had engaged in conduct that violated US and state laws. In a televised, 20-minute address, Cuomo, 63, said his resignation would take effect in 14 days, derailing a long political career that once appeared headed for a possible US presidential campaign. Cuomo again denied any wrongdoing, though he said he accepted "full responsibility" for what he characterized as ill-conceived attempts to be affectionate or humorous. Cuomo's resignation spared him from possible removal from office through impeachment proceedings in the Democratic-controlled state legislature, which appeared overwhelmingly likely as lawmakers abandoned him in droves. The investigation, detailed in a 168-page report, found that Cuomo groped, kissed or made suggestive comments to women including current and former government workers.



SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd. (SPCBL) Gazipur Amendment of e-Tenders. This is for information of all concerned that the following e-Tenders of The Security Printing Corporation (Bangladesh) Ltd. (SPCBL), Gazipur are hereby amended as follows: Table with 6 columns: Sl. No., Names of the items, e-Tender Nos., Extended pre-bid meeting date and time, Extended last date and time for submission of e-Tender, Extended last date & time for opening of e-Tender. Includes details for supply of rotary numbering machines and coated gummed paper.

গণপ্রজাতন্ত্রী বাংলাদেশ সরকার নির্বাহী প্রকৌশলী, সওজ এর কার্যালয় সড়ক বিভাগ, শরীয়তপুর। স্মারক নং: ৩৫.০১.৮৬৬৯.৪৬৮.০৭.০০২.২১-১৫৩২ তারিখ: ০৯/০৮/২০২১খ্রি:। "সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতিতে (LTM) ঠিকাদার তালিকাভুক্তির বিজ্ঞপ্তি" এতদ্বারা সংশ্লিষ্ট সকলের অবগতির জন্য জানানো যাচ্ছে যে, সড়ক বিভাগ, শরীয়তপুর কর্তৃক পাবলিক প্রকিউরমেন্ট বিধিমালা-২০০৮ এর আলোকে সীমিত দরপত্র পদ্ধতির আওতায় ২০২১-২০২২ অর্থ বছরের জন্য ঠিকাদার তালিকাভুক্ত করা হবে। সিপিটিইউ (CPTU) কর্তৃক নির্ধারিত আবেদন ফরম অত্র দপ্তর হতে অফিস চলাকালিন সময়ে সরবরাহ করা হবে।