

Quote of the day



“Party for the family, by the family... do I need to say more? If a party is run by one family for many generations, then, it isn't good for a healthy democracy... look at the political parties from Kashmir to Kanyakumari.”

INDIAN PM
NARENDRA MODI
SLAMS DYNASTIC POLITICS IN AN ALL-OUT ATTACK ON THE CONGRESS



Libyan health workers recover bodies of drowned migrants, who were hoping to travel to Europe by sea, after a shipwreck off the beach in Sabratha, some 120 kilometres west of the Libyan capital Tripoli, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MORE NEWS

Putin to travel to India in rare trip abroad

Russian President Vladimir Putin will travel to India next month, in only his second trip abroad since the Covid-19 pandemic began two years ago, the Kremlin said yesterday. Moscow said the Russian leader will go to India on December 6 for talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Putin has only left Russia once during the pandemic -- to meet US President Joe Biden in Geneva in June. In a statement, the Kremlin said Putin and Modi will hold talks on furthering the "privileged strategic partnership" between Russia and India. It said the pair will discuss their "joint work" within the G20, BRICS group, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation.

Indian builds Taj Mahal replica home for wife

A lovestruck and historically minded Indian husband has emulated the world's most famous display of marital devotion by building for his wife a replica of the Taj Mahal. The original "Monument to Love" was constructed on the orders of heartbroken Mughal emperor Shah Jahan to house the tomb of his favourite wife, Mumtaz, in the 17th century. Anand Prakash Chouksey's beloved remains very much alive, and even helped consult on the project and his version of the marble wonder of the world, around one-third the size of the original. "My wife's only demand was for a meditation room. She's a spiritual woman," the 52-year-old businessman told AFP.



‘Prepared for an escalation’

Says Ukraine President Zelensky amid growing concern over Russian military activity on the border

AGENCIES

President Volodymyr Zelensky said yesterday Ukraine was ready to take on Russia if Moscow decides to move troops across the border, amid growing Western concern over a new Russian military buildup.

“There is a threat today that there will be war tomorrow,” Zelensky told a news conference. “We are entirely prepared for an escalation.”

“We need to depend on ourselves, on our army. It is powerful,” he added.

Western countries have this month raised alarm over reported Russian military activity near Ukraine, reports AFP.

Moscow has dismissed growing Western claims that Russia may be preparing to invade Ukraine, accusing Nato of provocations.



Zelensky also said Ukraine has uncovered a plot for an attempted coup with the involvement of Russians, due to have taken place next week.

He did not give full details of the coup plot and did not accuse the Russian state of involvement, though he also spoke at length at the press conference of a threat of Russian military escalation, and said Ukraine would be ready for it.

The Kremlin swiftly denied any role in any coup plot, saying it had no plans to take part in such acts, reports Reuters.

“We have challenges not only from the Russian Federation and possible escalation - we have big internal challenges. I received information that a coup d’etat will take place in our country on Dec. 1-2,” Zelensky said.

Earlier this week, Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba warned Russia that it will “pay dearly” for an invasion.

The Ukrainian army has come a long way since 2014, when it was caught off guard by Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

Ukraine and its Western allies also accused Russia of sending troops and arms across the border to support separatists who carved out two statelets in the east, but Moscow has denied those claims.

Tunisia navy ‘rescues’ 487 migrants

AFP, Tunis

Tunisian authorities said yesterday they had rescued almost 500 migrants whose boat ran into trouble off the North African country’s coast during a bid to reach Europe.

“A sea patrol supported by units from the navy and the National Guard at dawn yesterday rescued 487 clandestine migrants of various Arab, Asian and African nationalities,” the defence ministry said. They included 93 children and 13 women.

The vessel had set off from neighbouring Libya and was heading towards Europe when it was intercepted off the Tunisian city of Sfax, it said. The ministry published photos of a vessel carrying dozens of people, with many others swimming next to it.

Libya saw a surge in departures as it plunged into lawlessness after a 2011 Nato-backed revolt.

Around half of those intercepted yesterday were Egyptians or Bangladeshis, along with dozens of Syrians and Moroccans and smaller numbers of Eritreans and Sudanese, the ministry said. The interception was the latest in a string of similar operations to thwart sea crossings or to rescue migrants in unseaworthy boats.

Italy hits Apple, Google with antitrust fine

Italy’s antitrust watchdog imposed 20 million euros (\$22.5 million) in fines on Apple and Google yesterday, the second time the regulator has sanctioned US tech giants this week. European countries have cracked down on the business practices of Big Tech in recent years, while the EU is moving forward with legislation to tighten regulation. The Italian competition authority said it fined Apple and Google 10 million euros each for violations of the consumer code, including failing to provide enough information to customers and resorting to “aggressive methods” in the use of their data for commercial ends. “Neither Apple nor Google provided clear and immediate information on the acquisition and use of user data for commercial ends,” the statement said. Google said in a statement that it would appeal the fine.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

COAL MINE TRAGEDY

Russia mourns more than 50 dead in Siberia

AFP, Gramoteino

A Siberian mining region began three days of mourning yesterday after more than 50 people died in a coal mine accident and a rescue effort that ended in tragedy.

After initially reporting that six rescuers had died during attempts to reach miners, officials said yesterday that one had been found alive and taken to hospital for treatment.

But news of his survival was a small consolation for a community devastated by the loss of 51 lives, including those of 46 miners, in the worst mining accident in Russia in more than a decade.

Officials said it appeared Thursday’s accident at the Listvyazhnaya mine in the Kemerovo region had been caused by a methane explosion.

Investigators launched a series of probes into possible safety violations, with senior managers at the facility arrested.

Flags flew at half-mast outside official buildings in Kemerovo and grief-stricken relatives of the victims wept outside the



snow-covered mine site.

“I can’t carry on,” one woman said, as families gathered in sub-zero temperatures.

A former worker at the mine, Denis Timokhin, told independent TV channel Dozhd safety violations were frequent at the facility, accusing management of forcing miners to work despite high methane concentrations.

“If you don’t want to work, quit,” he said. “No safety protocols, all sensors are plugged with bags.”

Accidents are a part of life in the mining region, and some residents in the village of Gramoteino next to the mine laid flowers at a memorial dedicated to rescuers killed in a previous mine accident in 2000.

Officials said the Listvyazhnaya mine filled with smoke on Thursday morning after the apparent explosion, with 285 people underground.

Miners described a frantic scramble to evacuate.

“I stretched out my hands, they couldn’t find me on their own, because the visibility was bad,” another said.

China extends maternity leave to boost births

AFP, Beijing

Several regions in China have extended maternity leave by at least 30 days, in the latest attempt to encourage child-rearing as the country faces a demographic crisis fuelled by a record-low birth rate.

The changes follow the relaxation of strict family planning rules this year to allow families to have a third child -- as officials grapple with a rapidly ageing workforce and slowing economy.

Yesterday, Beijing’s city government announced that women can now take 158 days of maternity leave, a bump up of 30 days.

Shanghai authorities announced similar changes beginning a day earlier. Last year, China recorded 8.52 births per 1,000 people.



French fishermen on their trawler install a banner which reads “Stop your fishy business” before the blockade of the port of Calais during a day of protests to mark their anger over the issue of post-Brexit fishing licenses, in Calais, France yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS



PHOTO: AFP

This photo taken on November 24, 2021 shows 11-month-old toddler Wang Yuji sliding down a slope on her snowboard at a ski resort in Zhangjiakou, in northern China’s Hebei province. At just eleven months old, Wang Yuji can’t even walk but she is already snowboarding and taking the slopes -- and the internet -- by storm.

Italy takes in National Geographic’s green-eyed ‘Afghan Girl’

REUTERS

Italy has given safe haven to Sharbat Gula, the green-eyed “Afghan Girl” whose 1985 photo in National Geographic became a symbol of her country’s wars, Prime Minister Mario Draghi’s office said on Thursday.

The government intervened after Gula asked for help to leave Afghanistan following the Taliban takeover of the country in August, a statement said, adding that her arrival was part of a broader programme to evacuate and integrate Afghan citizens.

US photographer Steve McCurry took the picture of Gula when she was a youngster, living in a refugee camp on the Pakistan-Afghan border.

Her startling green eyes, peering out from a headscarf with a mixture of ferocity and pain, made her know

internationally but her identity was only discovered in 2002 when McCurry returned to the region and tracked her down.



An FBI analyst, forensic sculptor and the inventor of iris recognition all verified her identity, National Geographic said at the time.

In 2016, Pakistan arrested Gula for forging a national identity card in an effort to live in the country.

The then Afghan president, Ashraf Ghani, welcomed her back and promised to give her an apartment to ensure she “lives

with dignity and security in her homeland”.

Since seizing power, Taliban leaders have said they would respect women’s rights in accordance with sharia, or Islamic law. But under Taliban rule from 1996 to 2001, women could not work and girls were banned from school. Women had to cover their faces and be accompanied by a male relative when they left home.

Italy is one of several Western countries that have airlifted hundreds of Afghans out of the country following the departure of U.S. military forces and the Taliban takeover.

Gula’s travel to Italy is “part of the wider evacuation program in place for Afghan citizens and the government’s plan for their reception and integration,” the European nation added.