

MORE NEWS

Fugitive parents of US school shooting suspect arrested

The parents of a Michigan teenager accused of murdering four fellow high school students were taken into custody yesterday, a day after each was charged with four counts of involuntary manslaughter in connection with the campus mass shooting.

Bolsonaro probed for vaccine and AIDS claim

A Brazilian Supreme Court justice ordered on Friday that a probe be opened into President Jair Bolsonaro for having said during a live broadcast on multiple social media platforms in October that Covid-19 vaccines may raise the chance of contracting AIDS.



Militants kill at least 31 in central Mali

Militants killed at least 31 people in central Mali on Friday when they fired upon a bus ferrying people to a local market, local authorities said - the latest deadly attack in a region racked by violent insurgency.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A protester holds up a placard during a rally against new pandemic laws and vaccination mandates in Melbourne, Australia yesterday. The state of Victoria, home to Melbourne, requires full vaccination to access most hospitality services and non-essential retail, as well as to work in health care and many other industries.

PHOTO: AFP

Omicron in 38 countries

Says WHO; India detects 4th case of the Covid variant

AGENCIES

The Omicron variant has been detected in 38 countries but no deaths have yet been reported, the WHO said on Friday, as authorities worldwide rushed to stem the heavily mutated Covid-19 strain's spread.

The World Health Organization has warned it could take weeks to determine how infectious the variant is, whether it causes more severe illness and how effective treatments and vaccines are against it.

"We're going to get the answers that everybody out there needs," WHO emergencies director Michael Ryan said.

The new variant could also slow global economic recovery, just as the Delta strain did, International Monetary Fund chief Kristalina Georgieva said on Friday.

"Even before the arrival of this new variant, we were concerned that the recovery, while it continues, is losing somewhat momentum," she said.

Meanwhile, India reported its fourth case of the Omicron variant yesterday, government officials said, as total Covid-19 cases inched closer to the 35 million mark.

Officials said a 33-year old man from Maharashtra who travelled to Mumbai from South Africa via Dubai has been tested positive with the Omicron variant, reports our New Delhi correspondent.

Iran nuclear talks break

Europe, US dismayed by Tehran's stance; envoys say talks to resume in middle of next week

REUTERS, Vienna

Indirect US-Iranian talks on saving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal broke off until next week as European officials voiced dismay late Friday at sweeping demands by Iran's new, hardline government.

The seventh round of talks in Vienna is the first with delegates sent by Iran's anti-Western President Ebrahim Raisi on how to resuscitate the agreement under which Iran limited its nuclear program in return for relief from economic sanctions.

Raisi's election in June caused a five-month hiatus in the talks, heightening suspicions among US and European officials that Iran is playing for time while advancing its nuclear program.

"Iran right now does not

seem to be serious about doing what's necessary to return to compliance, which is why we ended this round of talks in Vienna," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told the Reuters Next Conference.

"If the path to a return to compliance with the agreement turns out to be a dead-end, we will pursue other options," he added, without elaborating.

Diplomats said the Iranian delegation had proposed sweeping changes to a text that was painstakingly negotiated in previous rounds and that European officials had said was 70-80% finished.

"Over five months ago, Iran interrupted negotiations. Since then, Iran has fast-forwarded its nuclear program. This week, it has back-tracked on diplomatic

progress made," senior officials from France, Britain and Germany said in a statement, adding that Iran was demanding "major changes" to the text.

It is "unclear how these new gaps can be closed in a realistic time frame," they added.

The three European powers expressed "disappointment and concern" at Iran's demands, some of which they said were incompatible with the deal's terms or went beyond them.

The 2015 agreement imposed strict limits on Iran's uranium enrichment activities, extending the time it would need to produce enough fissile material for a nuclear bomb, if it chose to, to at least a year from around two to three months. Most experts say that period is now shorter than before the deal.

INDONESIA VOLCANO ERUPTION

Thousands flee in panic, one killed

AGENCIES

Indonesia's Mount Semeru erupted yesterday, spewing out a tower of smoke and ash that plunged local communities into darkness and forced thousands of nearby residents to flee.

Deputy chief of Lumajang district said one person died and 41 people sustained burn injuries.

Rescuers moved to evacuate local residents as lava reached nearby villages and destroyed a bridge in Lumajang regency in East Java.

"A number of areas went dark after being covered by volcanic ash," agency spokesman Abdul Muhari said.

"We are building up some shelters in several locations in Lumajang," he added.

A video released by the agency showed locals, including scores of children, running for safety as Mount Semeru erupted at 3:00 pm local time (0700 GMT) yesterday.

Local authorities established a restricted zone of five kilometres from the crater after the eruption, reports AFP.

Semeru's alert status has remained at its second-highest level since its previous major eruption in December 2020, which also forced thousands to flee and left villages covered.

The Volcanic Ash Advisory Center (VAAC) in Darwin, Australia said the ash appeared to have detached from the summit and was drifting south-west over the Indian Ocean.

The VAAC provides advice to the aviation industry about the location and movement of potentially hazardous volcanic ash.

Indonesia sits on the Pacific "Ring of Fire", where the meeting of continental plates causes high volcanic and seismic activity.

The Southeast Asian archipelago nation has nearly 130 active volcanoes.

In late 2018, a volcano in the strait between Java and Sumatra islands erupted, causing an underwater landslide and tsunami which killed more than 400 people.

Quote of the day



"I hope that China's leaders think very carefully about this and about not precipitating a crisis that would have I think terrible consequences for lots of people and one that's in no one's interest, starting with China."

US SECRETARY OF STATE ANTONY BLINKEN WARNS CHINESE LEADERS OVER TAIWAN



A Kurdish migrant from Iran protects himself under an umbrella as heavy rain falls on the makeshift camp at Loon Beach near Dunkirk, France, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

LYNCHING OF LANKAN

Dozens held in Pakistan

AFP, Sialkot

Up to 120 people have been arrested in Pakistan after a Sri Lankan factory manager was beaten to death and set ablaze by a mob who accused him of blasphemy, officials said yesterday.

The vigilante attack has caused outrage, with Prime Minister Imran Khan calling it a "day of shame for Pakistan".

The incident took place on Friday in Sialkot, a district in central Punjab province, about 200 kilometres southeast of Islamabad. Zulfikar Ali, a police official in the area, told AFP: "Rumour spread in the factory that the manager had torn down a religious poster and thrown it in the dustbin."

Police spokesman Khurram Shehzad said up to 120 people had been arrested, including one of the main accused.

France, Europeans working to open Afghan joint mission

REUTERS, Doha

Several European countries are working on opening up a joint diplomatic mission in Afghanistan that would enable their ambassadors to return to the country, French President Emmanuel Macron said yesterday.

Western countries have been grappling with how to engage with the Taliban after they took over Afghanistan in a lightning advance in August as US-led forces were completing their pullout.

The United States and other Western countries shut their embassies and withdrew their diplomats as the Taliban seized Kabul, following which the militants declared an interim government whose top members are under US and UN sanctions.

"We are thinking of an organisation between several European countries... a common location for several Europeans, which would allow our ambassadors to be

present," Macron told reporters in Doha before heading to Jeddah in Saudi Arabia.

The United States, European countries and others are reluctant to formally recognize the Pashtun-dominated Taliban, accusing them of backtracking on pledges of political and ethnic inclusivity and to uphold the rights of women and minorities.

"This is a different demarche than a political recognition or political dialogue with the Taliban ... we will have a representation as soon as we can open," he said, adding that the still needed to iron out security issues.

In a statement following talks with the Taliban a week ago, the European Union suggested it could open a mission soon.

"The EU delegation underlined that the possibility of establishing a minimal presence on the ground in Kabul, which would not entail recognition, will directly depend on the security situation," it said.

Conspiracy theories take root in Italy

REUTERS, Rome

One out of 10 Italians think astronauts never set foot on the moon while 5.8% believe the earth is flat, according to a poll published on Friday, which said conspiracy theories had taken root in Italian society.

The Censis research institute survey, which questioned 1,200 people, also showed that 19.9% of the adult population thought 5G wireless technology was a sophisticated way of controlling people's minds.

Almost two years after the coronavirus was first discovered in Italy, the poll said 5.9% of respondents did not believe the virus existed, 10.9% said vaccines were useless and 12.7% said science did more harm than good.

"Rationality ... gives way in many cases to an unreasonable readiness to believe in the most improbable fantasies," Censis said in a statement accompanying the survey.

Some 64.4% of Italians thought big multinationals were "responsible for everything that happens to us".

Advertisement for Bangladesh Rural Electrification Board (BREB) containing details of an e-Tender/Re-Tender Notice (OTM) for construction work. Includes logo, board name, memo number, date, and a table with columns for Sub-package/lot No, Description of Works/Goods, Tender/Re-Tender ID No, Closing Date, and Closing Time.