

MORE NEWS

Three HK activists convicted over Tiananmen vigil

Jailed Hong Kong media mogul Jimmy Lai was among three democracy campaigners convicted yesterday for taking part in a banned Tiananmen vigil as the prosecution of multiple activists came to a conclusion. Lai, the 74-year-old owner of the now-shuttered pro-democracy Apple Daily newspaper, was found guilty of unlawful assembly charges alongside former journalist Gwyneth Ho and prominent rights lawyer Chow Hang-tung. Authorities had charged more than two dozen pro-democracy politicians and activists over a vigil last year, which commemorated the victims of Beijing's deadly Tiananmen crackdown in 1989 despite a police ban.

UK's Johnson welcomes 2nd child with wife Carrie

UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson yesterday became a father again, after his wife, Carrie, gave birth to a girl, Downing Street said. The "healthy baby girl" was born at a London hospital in the early hours and "both mother and daughter are doing very well", a spokeswoman for the couple said. "The couple would like to thank the brilliant NHS (National Health Service) maternity team for all their care and support," she added. The announcement comes as Johnson faces a backlash over the imposition of new coronavirus restrictions designed to curb the spread of the new Omicron variant. He is also under pressure from the public after claims that Downing Street staff held a Christmas party last year in defiance of restrictions.



India lawyer bailed after 3-yr detention on anti-terror law

An activist lawyer detained for more than three years without trial was freed on bail in Mumbai yesterday, in the latest case to highlight the Indian government's use of contentious anti-terror laws. Sudha Bharadwaj, 60, was arrested in August 2018 on accusations of inciting violence between different Indian castes and claims she had links to Maoist militants. A special court for India's National Investigation Agency has set over a dozen bail conditions for her release, including banning her from talking to the press. The court also directed her to stay in Mumbai and immediately inform it about her place of residence and contact numbers.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



Students hold light candles and posters to pay their tribute to India's defense chief General Bipin Rawat, who was killed with 13 others a day earlier in a helicopter crash, at their school in Amritsar, India yesterday. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh said that a tri-service inquiry will be conducted into the helicopter crash.

PHOTO: AFP

FIGHT AGAINST NEW COVID VARIANT

Wealthy nations may hoard shots again

Warns WHO's vaccine director

REUTERS, Geneva

Wealthy countries may start to hoard Covid-19 vaccines again, threatening global supplies as they seek to shore up stocks to fight the new Omicron variant of the virus, a senior World Health Organization official said yesterday.

The warning by the WHO's vaccine director, Kate O'Brien, comes as supplies to the COVAX dose-sharing programme run by the WHO and vaccine charity GAVI have increased in the past few months due to donations from wealthy countries and after India eased limits on exports of vaccines.

New Delhi's move has meant the Serum Institute of India has resumed shipments of the AstraZeneca vaccine it makes, mainly for COVAX.

"We have to make sure that it (higher shipments) continues," O'Brien said in a briefing.

"As we head into whatever the Omicron situation is going to be, there is risk that the global supply is again going to revert to high-income countries hoarding vaccine" as they seek to protect their ability to vaccinate their citizens, she said later.

Earlier in the briefing, she said a major problem for COVAX has been wealthy countries donating Covid-19 vaccines with a relatively short shelf life, while noting that wastage rates were also high in some wealthy countries.

COVAX has shipped 610 million doses of vaccines to 144 countries or territories since February, the GAVI website shows.

'We stand at an inflection point'

Biden rings the alarm on state of democracy worldwide

AFP, Washington

Democracy faces "sustained and alarming challenges" worldwide, US President Joe Biden said yesterday at the opening of a virtual summit on democracy with representatives from some 100 countries.

Biden said trends are "largely pointing in the wrong direction" and that democracy needs "champions." "We stand at an inflection point," Biden said. "Will we allow the backward slide of rights and democracy to continue unchecked?"

The two-day event, held by video link because of the coronavirus pandemic, was billed by the White House as US leadership in an existential struggle between democracies and powerful autocracies or dictatorships.

"Make no mistake, we're at a moment of democratic reckoning,"

DEMOCRACY SUMMIT



said Uzra Zeya, the Under Secretary of State for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights. "Countries in virtually every region of the world have experienced degrees of democratic backsliding."

The summit featured opening remarks from Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken, with representatives from some 100 governments, as well as NGOs,

private businesses, philanthropic organizations and legislatures attending.

But Biden went into the summit with the United States deep in its own democratic troubles.

His Republican predecessor Donald Trump continues a shocking campaign to disrupt US political norms and overturn the 2020 election in which he was defeated by Biden.

And there was also tension simply over who should be on -- and off -- the list of invitees.

China and Russia, which Biden sees as champions of the autocracies camp, were pointedly left out, something they say is stoking an ideological rift.

"No country has the right to judge the world's vast and varied political landscape by a single yardstick," wrote ambassadors Anatoly Antonov of Russia and Qin Gang of China in a joint essay last month.

China 'committed genocide' in Xinjiang

Uyghur tribunal in London rules

CNN ONLINE

A London-based independent tribunal has ruled that China committed genocide against Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in its western Xinjiang region, accusing China's senior leadership including President Xi Jinping of "primary responsibility" for acts perpetrated against Muslim minority groups.

"The tribunal is satisfied that the PRC [People's Republic of China] has affected a deliberate, systematic and concerted policy with the object of so-called 'optimizing' the population in Xinjiang by the means of a long-term reduction of Uyghur and other ethnic minority populations to be achieved through limiting and reducing Uyghur births," Geoffrey Nice, who chaired

the tribunal, said yesterday as he read out the verdict.

He added that the tribunal was "satisfied that President Xi Jinping, Chen Quanguo and other very senior officials in the PRC and CCP [Chinese Communist Party] bear primary responsibility for acts in Xinjiang."

While the "perpetration of individual criminal acts that may have occurred, rape or torture, may not have been carried out with the detailed knowledge of the President and others, but the tribunal is satisfied that they have occurred as a direct result of politics, language and speeches promoted by President Xi and others..." he said.

The judgment follows a series of tribunal hearings in London this year, during which a panel of jurors reviewed evidence and testimony.

US-led anti-IS coalition ends Iraq combat mission

Shifts to training, advisory and capacity building role

AFP, Baghdad

The US-led coalition against the Islamic State group has finished its combat mission in Iraq and will shift to a training and advisory role, Iraq's national security adviser said yesterday.

The change of the mission for around 2,500 American troops stationed in the war-battered country by the end of the year was first announced by US President Joe Biden in July when he hosted Iraqi Prime Minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi.

The Iraqi government has been under pressure from powerful pro-Iranian political groups with armed wings that have vehemently demanded all US troops leave the country.

"We are officially announcing the end of the coalition forces' combat mission," national security adviser Qassem al-Aaraji wrote on Twitter.

"The relationship with the international coalition continues in the areas of training, advising and capacity building" of Iraqi forces, he added.

Aaraji was speaking after a meeting between the coalition and the Joint Operations commanders of the Iraqi

security forces.

In effect, the about 2,500 US and 1,000 other coalition troops deployed in Iraq will remain there. They have been acting as advisers and trainers since mid-2020.

IS established a so-called caliphate across swathes of Syria and Iraq from 2014.

It was defeated in Iraq in 2017 after offensives by Iraqi forces with the support



of the coalition that has included more than 80 countries, among them Britain, France and several Arab nations.

Even though Iraq declared victory against the IS jihadists in December 2017, the group's remnants still carry out attacks against security forces and civilians and in recent weeks killed several Kurdish fighters in northern Iraq.

ASSURANCES FROM GOVT

Indian farmers end year-long protests

REUTERS, New Delhi

Indian farmers called off a year-long protest yesterday after the government conceded a clutch of demands, including assurances to consider guaranteed prices for all produce, instead of just rice and wheat, union leaders said.

The move comes after Prime Minister Narendra Modi said last month he would roll back three farm laws, seeking to end the longest-running farmers' protest that galvanized millions of growers who remained resolute in opposing the legislation.

Despite the government's climbdown, thousands of farmers had continued to camp out on major highways leading to New Delhi to press for other demands such as the guaranteed prices, as well as for legal action against protesters to be dropped.

"We have received a letter from the government which has conceded to our requests," said Balbir Singh Rajewal, a senior farm union leader.

Farmers' leaders would meet on January 15 to review progress on the government's assurances, Rajewal told a news conference.

"We will resume our protests if the government moves away from the assurances," said Gurnam Singh Charuni, another farmers' leader.

The government will set up a panel of growers and government officials to find ways of ensuring Minimum Support Prices (MSP), as the guaranteed rates are called, for all farm produce, according to the letter seen by Reuters.



Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa takes a selfie with the Nobel Committee and co-prize winner Dimitrij Muratov after a press conference at the Norwegian Nobel Institute in Oslo yesterday, the day before the awarding ceremony of the Nobel Peace Prize.

PHOTO: AFP

Advertisement for North South University, Center of Excellence in Higher Education. Admission - Spring 2022 MS in Biotechnology. Application Deadline: 22nd December 2021. Admission Test: 24th December 2021 10am. Eligibility: B.Sc in any discipline of Biological Sciences or Chemistry, MBBS, BDS, or Equivalent Healthcare Degree. Minimum CGPA Required: 2.75 out of 4*. Graduate Application Helpline: 01614271717. Program Features: 36-Credit Hours Program, Course Waiver, Evening & Weekend Classes, Classes conducted by PhD Holders. Career Opportunities: High acceptance in PhD, Research Organizations, Food and Pharmaceutical Industries. Apply Online: http://apply.northsouth.edu/

THIS DAY IN HISTORY DECEMBER 10. 1995 - Israeli soldiers quit the West Bank town of Tulkarm and a first contingent of PLO police moved in to Hebron as part of a handover to Palestinian rule. 1996 - President Nelson Mandela signed into law a new constitution for South Africa, legally entrenching racial equality and consigning apartheid to history's dustbin. 2000 - Former Pak PM Nawaz Sharif arrived in Saudi Arabia for an indefinite exile after being released from prison by army.

Advertisement for Bangladesh Bank (বাংলাদেশ ব্যাংক) regarding the withdrawal of the 2nd round of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy (কমন সার্ভিসেস ডিপিআইমেট-২). It lists various terms and conditions for the withdrawal process, including dates and locations. Source: Reuters.