



Volunteers in personal protective equipment (PPE) carry on a stretcher the body of a person who died due to the Covid-19, at a cremation ground in New Delhi, India, yesterday. With 247,417 new infections, India yesterday reported the highest number of daily cases since late May. The country also reported 380 Covid-19 deaths in the last 24 hours. Experts said new infections in Indian cities could peak next week after rising rapidly.

PHOTO: AFP

### HRW: Leaders failing to defend democracy

REUTERS, United Nations  
Human Rights Watch yesterday criticised US President Joe Biden and other Western leaders for a weak defense of democracy and for failing to meet challenges from the climate crisis and Covid-19 pandemic to poverty, inequality and injustice.

In contrast to what Human Rights Executive Director Kenneth Roth described as former US president Donald Trump's "embrace of friendly autocrats", Biden took office in January 2021 with a pledge to put human rights at the center of his foreign policy. "But he continued to sell arms to Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, and Israel despite their persistent repression," Roth wrote in Human Rights Watch's annual World Report, released yesterday. "Other Western leaders displayed similar weakness in their defense of democracy," Roth wrote, naming French President Emmanuel Macron and former German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Roth also said that during key summits Biden "seemed to lose his voice when it came to public denunciation of serious human rights violations." "If democracies are to prevail in the global contest with autocracy, their leaders must do more than spotlight the autocrats' inevitable shortcomings. They need to make a stronger, positive case for democratic rule," Roth said.

## Heartfelt enough?

### UK PM's future uncertain after lockdown party apology

REUTERS, London

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's premiership was in the balance yesterday as he faced calls from within his Conservative Party to resign after he admitted attending a party at his official residence during a coronavirus lockdown. Johnson on Wednesday issued "heartfelt apologies" for attending the gathering at Downing Street in May 2020, telling parliament he understood the public's rage at the revelations. Senior ministers rallied around to offer support to their leader, who won a landslide election victory in 2019, although media said the backing of finance minister Rishi Sunak,



regarded as a potential successor to Johnson, appeared lukewarm. Others were more direct. The Conservatives' leader in Scotland, along with a handful of other prominent lawmakers, called for Johnson to resign, saying his position was untenable. "The mood isn't great," Conservative member of parliament Jake Berry told BBC radio. "There is a lot of concern amongst my colleagues about the damage that these revelations are doing to the Conservative Party. But I think yesterday there was a bit of a turning point of opinion." Johnson admitted for the first time on Wednesday he had joined a gathering held in the garden of Downing Street on May 20, 2020, saying he had stayed for about 25 minutes to thank staff at what he thought was a work event. He said he regretted his action. Media reports have said tables in the garden were set out for food and wine, while an invitation sent to around 100 people suggested

taking advantage of the lovely weather. "Bring your own booze", it said. At the time, social contact was limited to a bare minimum and many people were furious that they had been unable to visit loved ones on their deathbeds or attend funerals. In response to opponents' demands for his resignation, Johnson said people needed to wait for the outcome of an internal investigation being carried out by senior civil servant Sue Gray, whose report is expected in the next two weeks. The revelation about the party follows similar allegations about rule-breaking by Johnson and his officials earlier in May 2020 and during a Christmas lockdown at the end of that year.

### West-Russia talks so far 'unsuccessful'

REUTERS, Moscow

The Kremlin yesterday gave a bleak assessment of Russia's security talks with the United States and Nato this week, describing them as "unsuccessful" and saying there was disagreement on fundamental issues. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov also said Moscow viewed a sweeping sanctions bill unveiled by US Senate Democrats "extremely negatively" and that its timing meant it looked like an attempt to put pressure on Moscow. Peskov said two rounds of talks so far this week between Russia and the West had produced some "positive nuances" but that Moscow was looking for concrete results, not nuances. The talks, which moved to Vienna yesterday for a meeting of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, are centred around an array of security demands that Moscow has made of the West, while building up forces near Ukraine. Moscow wants legally binding promises that Nato will never allow former Soviet Ukraine to become a member and that the alliance will pull back troops from former Communist states in central and eastern Europe. The proposed sanctions legislation, backed by the White House, would target top Russian government and military officials, including President Vladimir Putin, and key banking institutions if Moscow engages in hostilities against Ukraine.

## Global firms failing to protect forests: report

AFP, Paris

Global companies and financial institutions with the highest potential for curbing deforestation are largely failing to do so, undermining pledges to protect forests made at the COP26 climate summit in November, a report said yesterday. The Forest 500 analysis by non-profit research group Global Canopy graded 350 companies most responsible for producing, using or trading commodities that drive deforestation, along with the 150 biggest banks, investment firms and pension funds that finance them. One-in-three companies assessed had no forest commitments at all, and 72 percent addressed some but not all of the forest-related commodities in their supply chains. Even those with commitments keyed to specific commodities – especially soy, beef and leather – "are failing to provide evidence of how they are implementing them", the report concluded. Cargill, Colgate-Palmolive, Nestle Corp., Unilever and PepsiCo were among 15 companies sharing a favourable ranking, while many from China, Brazil and Argentina had the lowest score possible in the five-tier rating. Progress is even more halting among financial firms, which provide more than \$5.5 trillion every year to companies in forest-risk supply chains, according to the report. The Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use was signed during COP26 by 141 countries committing to halting and reversing forest loss and degradation by 2030.



## Russia-led troops begin pullback from Kazakhstan

AFP, Almaty

Over 2,000 Russia-led troops yesterday began withdrawing from Kazakhstan after being deployed when peaceful protests over an energy price hike turned into unprecedented violence claiming dozens of lives. "The peacekeeping operation is over ... the tasks have been fulfilled," said Russian General Andrei Serdyukov, commander of the CSTO contingent that saw troops from Russia, Belarus, Armenia, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan sent to the former Soviet republic on January 6. US Secretary of State Antony Blinken earlier warned Kazakhstan that "once Russians are in your house, it's sometimes very difficult to get them to leave".

## US lays out case against China maritime claims

AFP, Washington

The United States on Wednesday laid out its most detailed case yet against Beijing's "unlawful" claims in the South China Sea, rejecting both the geographic and historic bases for its vast, divisive map. In a 47-page research paper, the State Department's Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs said China had no basis under international law for claims that have put Beijing on a collision course with the Philippines, Vietnam and other Southeast Asian nations. Releasing the study, a State Department statement called again on Beijing "to cease its unlawful and coercive activities in the South China Sea." China hit back, claiming the report "distorts international law and misleads the public."



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**e-Tender Notice No. 1/2021-22**  
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) for procurement as follows:

Tender ID No.	Description	Tender document last selling date and time	Tender closing date and time	Tender opening date and time
646792	e-GP-7: Procurement of Computer, Laptop, Monitor etc.	26-01-2022 16:00	27-01-2022 12:00	27-01-2022 12:00
647923	e-GP-8: Procurement of Printer, Scanner, Multimedia Projector etc.	30-01-2022 16:00	31-01-2022 12:00	31-01-2022 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) is required. The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the e-GP Portal have to be deposited online through any branch of the banks registered in the e-GP System. Further information and guideline are available in the National e-GP System Portal ([www.eprocure.gov.bd](http://www.eprocure.gov.bd)) and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

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GD-87

### US democracy may collapse

Believe 58pc Americans

REUTERS, Washington

One year after the storming of the US Capitol by supporters of Donald Trump, six out of 10 Americans believe the country's democracy is in danger of collapse, according to a poll released Wednesday. Seventy-six percent of those surveyed in the poll by Quinnipiac University said they think political instability in the United States is a bigger danger than foreign threats. A majority of those polled – 58 percent – said they think the nation's democracy is in danger of collapse. Thirty-seven percent disagreed.

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**e-Tender Notice (OTM)**  
Memo No. 25.36.1500.112.07.443.13/100  
e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following works given below.  
Date: 13/01/2022 Eng.

Sl No.	Tender ID No.	Name of works	Tender closing date & time
01	646960	Construction of 3-Storeyed 800sft. Staff Quarter (4-unit each floor) with 10-storeyed foundation at Chattogram Central Jail	07-Feb-2022 12:00

This is an online tender, where only e-Tenders will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copies will be accepted. To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required. Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP help desk ([helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd](mailto:helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd)).

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GD-86