



Portraits of people who disappeared during the last dictatorship (1973-1985) in Uruguay are held by people taking part in the Marcha del Silencio (March of Silence) in Montevideo, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

MONKEYPOX
WHO calls emergency meeting

REUTERS, London

The World Health Organization was holding an emergency meeting yesterday to discuss the recent outbreak of monkeypox, a viral infection more common to west and central Africa, after over 100 cases were confirmed or suspected in Europe.

In what Germany described as the largest outbreak in Europe ever, cases have been reported in at least nine countries – Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom – as well as the United States, Canada and Australia.

First identified in monkeys, the disease typically spreads through close contact and has rarely spread outside Africa, so this series of cases has triggered concern. However, scientists do not expect the outbreak to evolve into a pandemic like Covid-19, given the virus does not spread as easily as SARS COV-2.

Monkeypox is usually a mild viral illness, characterised by symptoms of fever as well as a distinctive bumpy rash.

There is no specific vaccine for monkeypox, but data shows that the vaccines used to eradicate smallpox are up to 85 percent effective against monkeypox, according to the WHO.

Biden, S Korea’s Yoon
vow to deter N Korea

Offer aid, vaccines; US president says any meeting with Kim Jong Un would depend on sincerity



REUTERS, Seoul

President Joe Biden and his new South Korean counterpart yesterday agreed to hold bigger military drills and deploy more US weapons if necessary to deter North Korea, while offering to send Covid-19 vaccines and potentially meet Kim Jong Un.

Biden and Yoon Suk-yeol said their countries’ decades-old alliance needed to develop not only to face North Korean threats but to keep the Indo-Pacific region “free and open” and protect global supply chains.

The two leaders are meeting in Seoul for their first diplomatic engagement since the South Korean president’s inauguration 11 days ago. The friendly encounter between allies was clouded by intelligence showing North Korean leader Kim Jong Un is prepared to conduct nuclear or missile tests.

Yoon had sought more assurances that the United States would boost its deterrence against North Korean threats. In a joint statement, Biden reaffirmed the US commitment to defend South Korea with nuclear weapons if necessary.

The two sides agreed to consider expanding their combined military drills, which had been scaled back in recent years in an effort to lower tensions with the North.

The United States also promised to deploy “strategic assets” – which typically include long-range bomber aircraft, missile submarines, or aircraft carriers – if necessary to deter North Korea, according to the statement.

Both leaders said they were committed to denuclearising North Korea and were open to diplomacy with Pyongyang.

“With regard to whether I would meet with the leader of North Korea, it would depend on whether he was sincere and whether he was serious,” Biden told a joint news conference.

He said Washington had offered Covid-19 vaccines to China and North Korea, which is combating its first acknowledged outbreak. “We’ve got no response,” Biden said.

North Korea reported more than 200,000 new patients suffering from fever for a fifth consecutive day yesterday, but the country has little in the way of vaccines or modern treatment for the pandemic.

The US-South Korea alliance, which dates to the 1950-1953 Korean War, must further develop to keep the Indo-Pacific “free and open”, Biden said.

He said the alliance was built on opposition to changing borders by force – an apparent reference to Russia’s war in Ukraine and China’s claims over Taiwan.

US slams UN rights chief’s China trip

AFP, Geneva

The UN rights chief came under fire for announcing a visit next week to China’s Xinjiang, with the United States saying she was failing to stand up for the region’s Uyghur community.

After years of requesting “meaningful and unfettered” access to far-western Xinjiang, Michelle Bachelet will finally lead a six-day mission to China starting Monday, her office said.

The visit, at the invitation of Beijing, marks the first trip to China by a UN rights chief since 2005.

The United States, in forceful criticism, said it was “deeply concerned” that Bachelet, a former president of Chile, was going ahead without guarantees on what she can see.

“We have no expectation that the PRC will grant the necessary access required to conduct a complete, unmanipulated assessment of the human rights environment in Xinjiang,” State Department spokesman Ned Price told reporters, using the acronym for the People’s Republic of China.

Price also voiced alarm that Bachelet has not released a long-anticipated report on Xinjiang, where the United States and several other Western nations say Beijing is carrying out “genocide” against the Uyghurs and other mostly Muslim, Turkic-speaking people.

Women TV presenters defy Taliban order

AFP, Kabul

Women presenters on Afghanistan’s leading TV channels yesterday went on air without covering their faces, defying a Taliban order that they conceal their appearance to comply with the group’s austere brand of Islam. Since surging back to power last year the Taliban have imposed a slew of restrictions on civil society, many focused on reining in the rights of women and girls. Earlier this month Afghanistan’s supreme leader issued a diktat for women to cover up fully in public, including their faces, ideally with the traditional burqa. The feared Ministry for Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice ordered women TV presenters to follow suit by yesterday. Previously they had only been required to wear a headscarf. However, broadcasters TOLONews, Shamshad TV and ITV all aired live programmes with women presenters’ faces on show. “Our female colleagues are concerned that if they cover their faces, the next thing they will be told is to stop working,” said Shamshad TV head of news Abid Ehsas. Mohammad Sadeq Akif Mohajir, spokesman for the vice ministry, said the women were violating the Taliban directive. The Taliban have demanded that women government employees be fired if they fail to follow the new dress code. Men working in government also risk suspension if their wives or daughters fail to comply. Television channels have already stopped showing dramas and soap operas featuring women, following orders from Taliban authorities.

BLOCKING NY STATE TAX PROBE
Donald Trump pays \$110,000 fine

AFP, New York

Former US President Donald Trump has paid a \$110,000 fine for obstructing a major tax evasion investigation led since 2019 by New York state authorities, a spokesperson announced Friday. Trump was ordered April 25 by New York state’s Supreme Court to pay \$10,000 a day for as long as he refused to provide accounting and tax documents as part of a civil investigation by the Attorney General of the state, Letitia James, against the Trump Organization family business. James and the Republican billionaire have been engaged in a fierce procedural battle for months. The Trumps – who accuse James of a “political witch hunt” – have appealed the ruling.

PALESTINIAN JOURNO’S DEATH
US lawmakers seek FBI probe

AFP, Washington



More than 50 US lawmakers have called on the FBI to investigate the killing in the West Bank of Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh, despite Israeli promises of

a probe. The 57 House members, largely left-leaning Democrats and led by Representative Andre Carson, noted that Abu Akleh held US citizenship and pointed to divergent accounts on how she died on May 11. Al Jazeera and Palestinians say Israeli forces killed Abu Akleh, a prominent journalist, as she covered an Israeli army raid in Jenin, in the north of the occupied West Bank. Israel says she may have been killed by Palestinian gunfire or a stray shot from an Israeli soldier.

9 Bangladeshis jailed for gang rape

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rape first went viral in Bangladesh and was then found to have been committed in Bengaluru.

Meanwhile, Indian authorities yesterday handed over to Bangladesh a woman who was raped and tortured in Bangalore last year.

A team of Tejgaon Division of Dhaka Metropolitan Police received her on the border at Benapole, Jashore, Biplob Kumar Sarker, deputy commissioner of

DMP, told The Daily Star.

A DMP official, requesting anonymity, said details of how she was trafficked and tortured will be presented before a court later and the woman will testify in the cases filed in Bangladesh.

After the video went viral in social media, Bengaluru police found out that the incident had taken place in Kanaka Nagar in Ramamurthy Nagar police limits of Bengaluru city and arrested all the accused and booked them under

IPC, Immoral Trafficking (Prevention) Act, IT Act and Foreigners Act.

The policemen who had arrested 12 persons found that 11 of them were illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and one turned out to be a local.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (east) Bheemashankar Guled said, “To deliver speedy justice, the investigation was taken up on war footing, using all scientific aids at disposal such as DNA analysis, electronic

evidence, mobile forensics, fingerprint evidence and voice sampling.

“The Government of Karnataka appointed Special Public Prosecutor Veeranna Tigadi to conduct the prosecution and a special trial monitoring team was constituted by the Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru City, to assist and monitor the trial process, ensuring no delays are caused.”

A total of 44 witnesses were examined by the judge, added Guled.

Australia ousts Conservatives

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celebrations, said he wanted to unite the country and “end the climate wars”.

“I think people want to come together, look for our common interest, look towards that sense of common purpose. I think people have had enough of division, what they want is to come together as a nation and I intend to lead that.”

Albanese said he aimed to be sworn in swiftly so he could attend a meeting of the Quad security grouping in Tokyo on Tuesday. He promised constitutional recognition and parliamentary representation for Indigenous Aboriginals, as well as the establishment of an anti-corruption commission.

In results so far, Labor had yet to reach the 76 of the 151 lower house seats required to form a government alone. Final results could take time as counting of a record number of postal votes is completed.

With 60 percent of the vote counted, Labor had 72 seats and Morrison’s coalition 55. Independents

and the Greens held 11, the Australian Broadcasting Corp projected. A further 13 seats remained in doubt.

The centre-left Labor had held a decent lead in opinion polls before the election, although surveys showed the Liberal-National government narrowing the gap in the final stretch of a six-week campaign.



The sisters of 17-year-old Palestinian Amjad Al-Fayed mourn his death, during his funeral in the refugee camp of Jenin, yesterday. The Palestinian teenager was shot dead by Israeli forces early yesterday during a raid in Jenin in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said.

PHOTO: AFP