Chinese troops seen withdrawing from flashpoint

AFP | New Delhi

Chinese troops have started removing tents and other structures from a contested Himalayan valley where they fought a deadly battle with Indian soldiers last month, Indian army sources said Monday.

Twenty Indian soldiers were killed in brutal hand-to-hand fighting on June 15 in the Galwan Valley in Ladakh, sending tensions soaring between the nuclear-armed neighbours. China has acknowledged it suffered casualties but not given figures.

The two sides have since held military and diplomatic talks and said they want a negotiated settlement.

China's People's Liberation Army soldiers were "seen removing tents and structures" and there was a "rearward movement" of military vehicles in the Galwan Valley, the Indian army source told AFP.

"Disengagement with the PLA has started as per agreed terms in the Corps Command-

Indian army sources said Chinese soldiers were seen dismantling tents and other structures in the contested Galwan Valley in Ladakh, the scene of deadly hand-to-hand fighting last month

ers' meeting," the source added.

The source said the Indian army was "verifying" how far back Chinese forces had withdrawn.

There was no comment on

whether there was a similar withdrawal by Indian troops.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told reporters in Beijing on Monday that both sides had made "positive progress... to disengage frontline troops and ease the border situation".
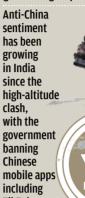
The Galwan Valley incident was the first time in 45 years that soldiers had died in combat on the Asian giants' long-disputed border.

India and China fought a war over the frontier in 1962.

Anti-China sentiment has been growing in India since the high-altitude clash, with the government banning Chinese mobile apps including TikTok.

YOU KNOW WHAT

◆ **The Louvre, the world's most visited museum, reopens after its coronavirus closure Monday, but with nearly a third of its galleries still shut.** The vast former palace of France's kings has lost more than 40 million euros ($45 million) in ticket sales during the near-four-month lockdown, and director Jean-Luc Martinez admitted it could have a few more lean years ahead as the world adapts to the virus.
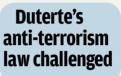
China detains professor who criticised Xi over coronavirus

◆ **Chinese authorities yesterday detained a law professor who published essays criticising President Xi Jinping over the coronavirus pandemic and accusing him of ruling "tyrannically",** according to friends of the man. Xu Zhangrun, a rare outspoken critic of the government in China's heavily censored academia, was taken from his home in suburban Beijing by more than 20 people, one of his friends said on condition of anonymity. Xu published an essay in February blaming the culture of deception and censorship fostered by Xi for the spread of the coronavirus in China.

◆ **Critics of a new anti-terrorism law in the Philippines called on the country's**

Duterte's anti-terrorism law challenged

highest court Monday to suspend the legislation, arguing it threatens human rights and freedom of speech. The law approved by President Rodrigo Duterte on Friday gives the security forces sweeping powers to go after terrorists, but critics fear it could be used to stifle dissent and target government opponents.

◆ **The world must stand in solidarity with Hong Kongers after Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law on the semi-autonomous city, activist Joshua Wong said** yesterday, vowing to continue campaigning for democracy. Wong, one of the city's most prominent young activists, was speaking outside a court where he and fellow campaigners were being prosecuted for involvement in civil unrest which rocked Hong Kong last year.

◆ **Bolivian Health Minister Eidy Roca has tested positive for COVID-19, becoming the third member of the cabinet to be infected in four days, interim President Jeanine Anez said on Sunday.** Anez expressed her support for Roca on Twitter as the country's rapidly worsening outbreak rose to 38,071 cases and 1,378 deaths.

◆ **Australia will effectively seal off the state of Victoria from the rest of the country, authorities said Monday, announcing unprecedented measures to tackle a worrying surge in coronavirus cases.** For the first time since the epidemic began, the border between Australia's two most populous states -- Victoria and New South Wales -- will be closed overnight Tuesday, officials from both states said.

Hundreds of drones light up Seoul sky with virus messages

AFP | Seoul

Hundreds of drones lit up the night sky in Seoul for a spectacular showcase of motivational and awareness messages as the world battles the coronavirus pandemic.

Three hundred unmanned aerial vehicles were programmed to form images above the Han river -- which runs through the South Korean capital -- for the eyecatching flash mob.

The show began with messages reminding people of key precautionary measures, including wearing masks, washing hands and keeping a two-metre distance from others.

The drones created images of a mask surrounded by coronavi-

300 unmanned aerial vehicles were programmed to form images above the Han river, but not advertised in advance in consideration of social distancing rules

rus particles, quickly shuffling to form two hands and water droplets against the dark night sky.

The 10-minute show shifted to messages of gratitude for medical personnel in the frontlines of the pandemic as well as all South Koreans for their collective efforts.

"THANKS TO YOU," the drones wrote in the sky next to a heart shape, then formed a silhouette of the Korean peninsula with the message: "Cheer up, Republic of Korea."

The government-organised event on Saturday night was not advertised in advance in consideration of social distancing rules, the transport ministry said.

Rain hampers rescue efforts after Japan floods

Kumamoto | Japan

Torrential rain hampered the efforts of tens of thousands of rescue workers in southwestern Japan yesterday as they hunted for survivors from deadly floods and landslides, with more downpours forecast.

Around 50 people were feared dead after heavy rain lashed areas of western Japan from early Saturday, causing rivers to burst their banks and flood low-lying regions.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe warned the weather front was heading across the country, predicting "heavy rain over a wide

The torrential rain destroyed roads and bridges, cutting off isolated rural communities

area" and urging people to "take action to protect their lives."

In the worst-affected region of Kumamoto, bad weather was preventing some rescue efforts, local officials said, with at least 13 people still unaccounted for.

"Because of the heavy rain, we were forced to cancel some emergency flights of helicopters over the disaster zone," local disaster management official Tsubasa Miyamoto said.

The floods washed away roads and bridges, cutting off many isolated communities cut off.

A local firefighter in the western region of Kagoshima told AFP they used boats to rescue 11 people, but conditions were

making it hard to reach others stranded.

"Calls came from people telling us that they wanted to flee their home but they could not do it on their own," he said.

"Some roads are submerged and you cannot drive through them."

In one of the hardest-hit areas, residents wrote out the words "rice, water, SOS" on the ground, while others waved towels and called for rescue and relief goods. At a nursing home for the elderly, 14 people were feared dead when water from a nearby river inundated the ground floor, leaving those in wheelchairs unable to reach higher ground.

Global

Covid-19 Cases:

11,641,115

Deaths

538,286

Recovered:

6,586,354

New cases

+90,573

New deaths

+1,841

Countries worst affected

	Country	Total cases	New deaths	Total Deaths
1	USA	3,003,898	+110	132,679
2	Brazil	1,604,585		64,900
3	India	719,401	+473	20,173
4	Russia	687,862		
5	Peru	302,718		10,589
6	Chile	298,557	+76	6,384
7	Spain	297,625		28,385
8	UK	285,768	+16	44,236
9	Mexico	256,848	+273	30,639
10	Iran	243,051	+160	11,731
11	Italy	241,819	+8	34,869
12	Pakistan	231,818	+50	4,762
13	Saudi Arabia	213,716	+52	1,968
14	Turkey	205,758		9,086

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases	Serious, Critical	Tot cases/1m pop
Egypt	75,253		3,343		20,726	51,184	41	735
Saudi Arabia	213,716	+4,207	1,968	+52	149,634	62,114	2,254	6,138
UAE	51,540		323		40,297	10,920	1	5,210
Kuwait	50,644	+703	373	+5	41,001	9,270	152	11,857
Oman	47,735	+1,557	218	+5	29,146	18,371	129	9,347
Qatar	100,345	+546	133	+5	93,898	6,314	164	35,738