

News in brief

India “disturbed” by verdict against Myanmar’s Aung San Suu Kyi



◆ **India said yesterday it was deeply concerned by Myanmar’s conviction of deposed leader Aung San Suu Kyi** and called for the rule of law and democratic processes to be upheld. “We are disturbed at the recent verdicts. As a neighbouring democracy, India has been consistently supportive of the democratic transition in Myanmar,” foreign ministry spokesman Arindam Bagchi said in a statement.

◆ **Indirect US-Iranian talks on saving the 2015 Iran nuclear deal will resume on Thursday in Vienna**, Iranian news agencies reported yesterday. “We will continue the talks on Thursday ... and await practical steps by the West,” Iran’s top negotiator Ali Bagheri Kani was quoted as telling Iranian media during a visit to Moscow by the semi-official news agency ISNA.

Iran nuclear talks with world powers to resume on Thursday



Tasnim news agency earlier said Bagheri Kani finalised the date of the resumption of the talks after contacting European Union coordinator

Enrique Mora. The talks broke off on Friday as European officials voiced dismay at sweeping demands by Iran’s new, hardline government.

◆ **The United States will have to “pay a price” for its diplomatic boycott of the Winter Olympics in Beijing**, China said on Tuesday, just weeks after talks aimed at easing tense relations between the two sides.

China says US will ‘pay the price’ for diplomatic boycott of Olympics



The White House said on Monday US government officials would boycott the Winter Olympics because of China’s human rights “atrocities”, although US athletes were free to travel there to compete. China opposes the boycott and would take “resolute countermeasures”, foreign ministry spokesman Zhao Lijian told a regular media briefing in Beijing, host city of the 2008 Summer Olympics, on Tuesday.

◆ **Indonesian President Joko Widodo** promised on Tuesday to bolster evacuation efforts and repair damaged homes



Indonesia bolsters recovery efforts after volcano kills 34

after visiting the site of a volcanic eruption on Java that has killed at least 34 people. The 3,676-metre Mt. Semeru volcano erupted on Saturday sending a cloud of ash into the sky and dangerous pyroclastic flows into villages below. Thousands of people have been displaced and 22 remain missing, according to the disaster mitigation agency. After visiting evacuation centres and surveying the area by helicopter - getting an aerial view of villages submerged in molten ash - the president said recovery efforts would be bolstered now and in the months ahead. “I came to the site to ensure that we have the forces to locate the victims,” said the president, speaking from Sumberwuluh, one of the worst-hit areas.

Iraq puts on display ancient artefacts returned by US



Reuters | Baghdad

Ancient artefacts looted and smuggled out of Iraq after the US invasion in 2003 were put on display in Baghdad yesterday. Among the artefacts returned by the United States was a 3,500-year-old clay tablet bearing part of the Epic of Gilgamesh, the ancient Sumerian tale believed to be one of the world’s first pieces of literature.

The tablet, displayed at the Iraqi foreign ministry headquarters, was handed to the Iraqi embassy in Washington by the city’s Museum of the Bible.

“We returned nearly 17,916 artefacts from different countries including the US, UK, Italy, Japan and the Netherlands,” Iraqi foreign minister Fuad Hussein told a news conference.

US authorities seized the Gilgamesh tablet in 2019 after it was smuggled, auctioned and sold to an arts dealer in Oklahoma and displayed at a museum in Washington, DC. A court ordered its forfeiture in July.

Iraq’s ancient heritage has been decimated by conflict, destruction and looting, especially since 2003.

Biden to tell Putin sanctions yet if he

● **Putin and Biden to discuss Ukraine amid war fears**

● **US mulling drastic sanctions if Russia invades Ukraine**

● **Kremlin says it does not expect any breakthroughs**

● **Urges everyone to keep “a cool head”**



Russia’s President Vladimir Putin



US President Joe Biden

Reuters | Washington/Moscow

US President Joe Biden will tell Russian President Vladimir Putin in a video conference that Russia and its banks could be hit with the toughest economic sanctions yet if it invades Ukraine, US officials said.

They said the sanctions, which one source said could target Russia’s biggest banks and Moscow’s

ability to convert roubles into dollars and other currencies, were designed to dissuade Putin from using tens of thousands of troops massed near the Ukrainian border to attack its southern neighbour.

The Kremlin, which said before the meeting it did not expect any breakthroughs, has denied harbouring such intentions and has said its troop posture is defensive. But it has also said it is increasingly vexed by Western military

aid to Ukraine and what it calls creeping NATO expansion.

It has likewise queried Ukrainian intentions and said it wants guarantees that Kyiv will not use force to try to retake territory lost in 2014 to Russia-backed separatists, a scenario Ukraine has ruled out.

“We’re looking for good, predictable relations with the United States. Russia never intended to attack anyone, but we have our

Early indications suggest Omicron more transmissible than Delta, UK PM

Reuters | London

Early indications suggest that the Omicron coronavirus variant is more transmissible than the earlier Delta variant, British Prime Minister Boris Johnson told his top team of cabinet ministers yesterday.

“The prime minister said it was too early to draw conclusions on the characteristics of Omicron but that early indications were that it was more transmissible than Delta,” Johnson’s spokesman told reporters.

Russia’s Navalny says he has become a ‘seamstress’ in prison

● **Navalny, 45, said on Instagram that the authorities in his prison camp required inmates to work**



Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny attends a court hearing in Moscow, Russia

Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny said yesterday he had joined a sewing workshop in prison and become a “seamstress”, joking that the experience had changed his attitude towards feminists.

Navalny, 45, said on Instagram that the authorities in his prison camp required inmates to work and gave them a choice between various roles including cooking, baking and sewing.

He said he had chosen to become what the prison management called a seamstress (“shveya” in Russian), even though the word is grammatically feminine and normally only used for women.

In his post, he joked that the word ought to have a masculine form in Russian. The experience had made him more sympathetic towards people he had previously mocked for demanding new feminine nouns such as “bloggerka” for

a female blogger. “Society, I am formally requesting a masculine form of the ‘seamstress’ profession,” he said.

Navalny, President Vladimir Putin’s most prominent domestic critic, began a two-and-a-half sentence at a prison camp east of Moscow in March for parole violations related to charges he says were trumped up to thwart his political ambitions.

His latest Instagram post appeared on the day when Putin is due to hold a video call with US President Joe Biden. The United States imposed sanctions on Russia in March over the poisoning of Navalny with a nerve agent last year, which Moscow denied carrying out.

India, R

Reuters | New Delhi

Russia and India signed a flurry of trade and arms deals during President Vladimir Putin’s visit to New Delhi talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday, including one that will see India produce more than 600,000 Kalashnikov assault rifles.

Putin travelled to India to discuss Russia’s defence and foreign ministers in a visit that reinforced the two countries’ ties with a military technical cooperation pact until 2031 and a pledge to boost annual trade to \$30 billion by 2025.

A joint statement published after the talks said Russia and India had “reiterated their intention to strengthen defence cooperation, including in joint development of production of military equipment.”

Man killed 1

Reuters | Berlin

A man who killed his wife and three young children before taking his own life faked a vaccination certificate and feared his children would be taken away from him when the forgery was discovered, a German prosecutor said yesterday.

Police found two adults, 40, and three children aged five, eight and 10 dead from gunshot wounds in a family home in Koenigs Wusterhausen south of Berlin on Saturday.

In a farewell note found

COVID-19 Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	50,149,325	810,254
2 India	34,648,383	473,757
3 Brazil	22,147,476	615,789
4 UK	10,560,341	145,826
5 Russia	9,864,845	283,644
6 Turkey	8,921,150	78,017
7 France	7,928,572	119,535
8 Germany	6,238,887	104,116
9 Iran	6,141,335	130,356
10 Argentina	5,343,153	116,680
11 Spain	5,202,958	88,159
12 Italy	5,134,318	134,386
13 Colombia	5,082,762	128,821
14 Indonesia	4,258,076	143,893

Global tally
267,018,681

Deaths
5,282,467

Recovered:
240,593,617

New cases
+293,062

New deaths
+4,558

Middle East

Country	Total cases	New cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	364,033		20,770		302,259	41,004
Saudi Arabia	549,997	+42	8,847	+2	539,141	2,009
UAE	742,438	+62	2,149		737,481	2,808
Kuwait	413,524		2,465		410,746	313
Oman	304,631	+19	4,113		300,050	468
Qatar	244,387		611		241,566	2,210

Figures as of closing

Kenyan “rogue” policeman kills six in rampage - police



A police officers fires tear gas at protesters

Reuters | Nairobi

A Kenyan police officer shot dead six people in a rampage in a neighbourhood in the capital Nairobi yesterday and then shot and killed himself, police said.

The officer first shot and killed his wife at their home before setting off with his service-issued AK-47 rifle to shoot dead another four people, the Directorate of Criminal Investigations said on Twitter.

It described the shooter as a “rogue officer”.

Francis Wahome, the officer in charge of Nairobi’s Dagoretti area, said another two people had been wounded in the incident. He declined to comment on what prompted the shooting.