

world

Russia bids farewell to first man who walked in space

Mytishchi | Russia

Hundreds of people including Russian and US astronauts and top officials bid farewell yesterday to Alexei Leonov, a legendary Soviet cosmonaut who was the first man to perform a spacewalk.

Thomas Stafford, an 89-year-old retired NASA astronaut, Valentina Tereshkova, the first woman to travel into space, and Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu were among those gathered for a funeral with military honours just outside Moscow.

Fellow astronauts took turns praising the Soviet space icon next to a flag-draped casket that bore Leonov's body at the military memorial cemetery in Mytishchi.

Soviet cosmonaut Tereshkova called Leonov, who died in Moscow on Friday aged 85 after a long illness, a true friend.

"It's hard to come to terms with the fact that we have to say goodbye to you today," said the 82-year-old Tereshkova.

In his speech Stafford, who shared a historic handshake with Leonov in space

-- at the height of the Cold War in 1975 -- said he would never forget the Russian.

The two men took part in the groundbreaking Apollo-Soyuz mission that opened a new era of space cooperation between the Soviet Union and US. Leonov was commander of the Soyuz 19 spacecraft and Stafford commanded the Apollo. Leonov also helped Stafford adopt two Russian boys.

"A great patriot has left us," Russian cosmonaut Sergei Krikalev said at the memorial service. On March 18, 1965, at the age of 30, Leonov made history when he left a spacecraft during the Voskhod 2 mission for a spacewalk that lasted 12 minutes and nine seconds.

That spacewalk nearly killed him as his spacesuit became inflated due to the lack of atmospheric pressure. He had to bleed off some of the oxygen in his suit, risking oxygen starvation.

His return to Earth also nearly ended in tragedy when Leonov and pilot Pavel Belyayev were forced to crash-land deep in the Russian woods.



Former NASA astronaut Tom Stafford, assisted by Soviet cosmonaut Valentina Tereshkova, paid tribute to friend and colleague Leonov

85 civilians killed, 373 wounded during Afghan election campaign

● On polling day alone, 28 civilians were killed

● Children accounted for more than one-third of the victims

● Preliminary results are due Saturday

AFP | Kabul

Hundreds of people were killed or wounded in violence related to Afghanistan's recent presidential election season as the Taliban sought to undermine the democratic process, a UN agency said yesterday.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that 85 people were killed and another 373 wounded in election violence during the period from June 8 to September 30.

On polling day alone, 28 civilians were killed and 249 injured. Children accounted for more than one-third of the victims.

Despite the high toll, Afghan security forces said election day was a success because the Taliban failed to pull off any large-scale attacks that stole the headlines.

The majority of Taliban attacks involved the use of rock-



Twenty-eight civilians were killed and 249 injured on polling day alone in Afghanistan's presidential election

ets, grenades and mortars, as well as homemade bombs planted near polling centres, including schools, the report found.

On July 28, the same day as the election campaign started, militants targeted the office of Ghani's running mate Amrullah Saleh in Kabul, killing 21 people and wounding another 50.

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TADAMICHI YAMAMOTO

THE UN SECRETARY-GENERAL'S SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE FOR AFGHANISTAN

this important political process, freely and without fear," Tadamichi Yamamoto, the UN secretary-general's special representative for Afghanistan, said in a statement.

The casualty figures are actually a substantial improvement on the run-up to parliamentary elections held a year ago, when UNAMA tallied 226 deaths and 781 injuries.

Final election turnout figures have yet to be released but it appears participation in this year's first round presidential vote is at record low levels.

Voters stayed away, wary of repeated Taliban threats to attack polling stations and also despondent about the chances of their ballots being fairly counted in a country that has seen systemic and large-scale electoral fraud.

The Independent Election Commission however insists multiple safeguards including biometric verification will make this year's vote the cleanest yet.

Preliminary results are due Saturday, though officials have suggested this date will be pushed back a few days.

The race is seen as a two-horse steeplechase between President Ashraf Ghani and his top rival Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah.

If no one wins a majority of more than 50 percent, the elections will go to a second round.

High on ease, low on nutrition: instant-noodle diet harms Asian kids

● Indonesia was the world's second-biggest consumer of instant noodles, behind China, with 12.5 billion servings in 2018, according to the World Instant Noodles Association

● Sugar-rich biscuits, beverages and fast food also pose problems in these countries

Manila

A diet heavy on cheap, modern food like instant noodles that fills bellies but lacks key nutrients has left millions of children unhealthily thin or overweight in southeast Asia, experts say.

The Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia have booming economies and rising standards of living, yet many working parents do not have the time, money or awareness to steer clear of food hurting their kids.

In those three nations, an average of 40 percent of children aged five and below are malnourished, higher than the



Instant noodles are low on essential nutrients and micronutrients like iron and are also protein-deficient while having high fat and salt content, experts say

global average of one-in-three, according to a report out Tuesday from UNICEF, the UN children's agency.

"Parents believe that filling their children's stomach is the most important thing. They don't really think about an adequate intake of protein, calcium or fibre," Hasbullah Thabrany, a public health expert in Indonesia, said.

UNICEF said the harm done to children is both a symptom of past deprivation and a predictor of future poverty, while iron deficiency impairs a child's ability to learn and raises a woman's risk of death during or shortly

after childbirth.

To give some sense of scale to the problem, Indonesia had 24.4 million children under five last year, while the Philippines had 11 million and Malaysia 2.6 million, UNICEF data show.

Mueni Mutunga, UNICEF Asia nutrition specialist, traced the trend back to families ditching traditional diets for affordable, accessible and easy-to-prepare "modern" meals.

"Noodles are easy. Noodles are cheap. Noodles are quick and an easy substitute for what should have been a balanced diet," she said.



Instant noodles are big business in many parts of Asia

‘Poverty is key’

The noodles, which cost as little as 23 US cents a packet in Manila, are low on essential nutrients and micronutrients like iron and are also protein-deficient while having high fat and salt content, Mutunga added.

Indonesia was the world's second-biggest consumer of instant noodles, behind China, with 12.5 billion servings in 2018, according to the World Instant Noodles Association.

The figure is more than the total consumed by India and Japan put together. Nutrient-rich

fruits, vegetables, eggs, dairy, fish and meat are disappearing from diets as the rural population moves to the cities in search of jobs, the UNICEF report said.

Though the Philippines, Indonesia and Malaysia are all considered middle-income countries by World Bank measures, tens of millions of their people struggle to make enough money to live.

"Poverty is the key issue," said T. Jayabalan, a public health expert in Malaysia, adding that households where both parents work need quickly made meals. Low-income households in Malaysia depend largely on ready-made noodles, sweet pota-

toes and soya-based products as their major meals, he said.

Sugar-rich biscuits, beverages and fast food also pose problems in these countries, according to experts.

Rolling back the influence instant noodles have on the daily lives, and health, of people in southeast Asia will likely require government intervention, they said.

"Promotion and advertising is extremely aggressive," said Thabrany, the Indonesian public health expert.

"There is massive distribution. They (instant noodles) are available everywhere, even in the most remote places."