

News in brief

Myanmar's Suu Kyi moved to solitary confinement in prison



Ousted Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been moved from house arrest to solitary confinement in a prison compound in the military-built capital Naypyidaw, a junta spokesman said yesterday. "In accordance with criminal laws... (Aung San Suu Kyi) has been kept in solitary confinement in prison" since Wednesday, Zaw Min Tun said in a statement. Suu Kyi had on Wednesday been "transferred to prison", a source with knowledge of the case said.

Strikes crippled Britain's rail network yesterday as union bosses, train operating firms and the government faced off over demands that workers' pay increases keep pace with surging inflation.

Strikes cripple Britain's railways, unions warn of more to come



A spike in the cost of food and fuel is pushing many household budgets to the brink and is driving trade unions to demand higher pay increases for their members. The government has urged wage restraint to avoid an inflationary spiral. Unions formed picket lines around rail stations for the second day this week and warned of more industrial action unless a deal can be reached to improve pay and avoid redundancies.

India to support crisis-hit Sri Lanka's economic recovery

India's top diplomat held talks with Sri Lanka's president and prime minister

yesterday as India signalled its willingness to go beyond the \$4 billion in loans, swaps and aid that it has already provided its cash-strapped neighbour. Indian Foreign Secretary Vinay Kwatra, accompanied by other Indian officials, held talks with President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe on providing further financial assistance to the country, the president's office said in a statement.

Eight medical personnel are to stand trial accused of criminal negligence in the death of legendary Argentinian footballer Diego Maradona.

Medical staff to face trial for Maradona's death



A judge has ordered a culpable homicide trial after a medical panel found Maradona's treatment was rife with "deficiencies and irregularities". Maradona died in November 2020 of a heart attack in Buenos Aires, aged 60. He had been recovering at home from surgery on a brain blood clot earlier that month.

UK's Johnson defends migrant deal on Rwanda visit

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson defended his controversial migrant deal



with Rwanda on a visit to the country yesterday, telling critics to "keep an open mind". On the first day of a trip to Kigali -- which is hosting a Commonwealth summit this week -- he also heaped praise on Rwandan President Paul Kagame and the achievements of the east African country, despite widespread concerns about its human rights record. Johnson told reporters: "The critics need to keep an open mind about the policy."

EU to grant Ukraine candidate status in 'signal to Moscow'

Ukraine takes step toward EU membership as Russian forces tighten vise on Donbas cities

Zelenskiy urges West to speed up heavy weapons deliveries

Reuters | Kyiv

Ukraine is set to be accepted as a candidate to join the European Union yesterday, a move that boosts the country's morale as Russian assaults wear down the defenders of two cities in the eastern Donbas region.

Although the approval of the Kyiv government's application by EU leaders meeting in Brussels is just the start of what will be a years-long process, it marks a huge geopolitical shift and will anger Russia as it struggles to impose its will on Ukraine.

The expected green light "is a signal to Moscow that Ukraine, and also other countries from the former Soviet Union, cannot belong to the Russian sphere of influence," Ukraine's ambassador to the EU, Vsevolod Chentsov, told Reuters.

Friday will mark four months since Russian President Vladimir Putin sent troops across the border in what he calls a "special military operation" partly necessitated by Western encroachment into what Russia considers its sphere of influence.

The conflict, which the West sees as an unjustified war of aggression by Russia, has killed thousands, displaced millions and destroyed cities as well as having ramifications across much of the world as food and energy exports have been curtailed.

Russia has focused its campaign on southern and eastern Ukraine after its advance on the capital Kyiv



Ukrainians living in Belgium protest outside the European Council building

in the early stages of the conflict was thwarted by Ukrainian resistance.

The war of attrition in the Donbas - Ukraine's industrial heartland - is most critical in the twin cities of Sievierodonetsk and Lysychansk, which sit on opposite sides of the Siverskyi Donets River in Luhansk province.

The battle there is "entering a sort of fearsome climax", said Oleksiy Arestovych, an adviser to Zelenskiy.

Hot summer

Russian forces were trying to encircle Ukrainian troops defending Lysychansk, senior Ukrainian defence official Oleksiy Gromov said in a briefing yesterday.

Luhansk Governor Serhiy Gaidai said separately that all Lysychansk was within reach of Russian fire and the Ukrainian troops there might retreat to new positions to avoid being trapped.

Ukrainian forces were defending Sievierodonetsk and the nearby settlements of Zolote and Vovchoyrovka, Gaidai said, but Russian troops had captured Loskutivka and Rai-Oleksandrivka to the south.

Hundreds of civilians are trapped in a chemical plant in Sievierodonetsk while Ukraine and Russia dispute who controls the bombed-out city.

Moscow says Ukrainian forces in the city are surrounded. But Gaidai said on Wednesday the Russians did not yet have full control of Sievierodonetsk.

TASS news agency quoted Russian-backed separatists as saying Lysychansk was now surrounded and cut off from supplies after a road connecting the city to the town of Sieversk was taken.

On the southern front, Russian forces struck Ukrainian army fuel tanks and military equipment near

We must free our land and achieve victory more quickly, a leader said

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKIY

Mikolaiv with high-precision, Russia's defence minister quoted by the Interfax news agency.

A river port and ship-barracks just off the Black Sea has been a bastion against Russian efforts to push West toward the main port city of Odesa.

President Volodymyr Zelenskiy urged his country's allies to speed up shipments of heavy weapons to match Russia on the battlefield. "We must free our land more quickly," he said in a video message yesterday.

Later, Ukrainian defence minister Oleksii Hryshchenko said HIMARS multiple rocket launchers had arrived from the United States. With a range of 300 km, the systems can challenge Russian artillery batteries that have encircled Ukrainian cities from the north. "Summer will be hot for the occupiers. And the last of them," Defence Minister Reznikov tweeted.

Shield for the EU

As well as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia are also seeking to join the EU in what would be a major ambitious expansion since the end of the Cold War.

Russia has long opposed EU expansion, with links between Ukraine, EU and Russia.

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	88,451,152	1,039,802
2 India	43,347,597	524,941
3 Brazil	31,894,505	669,612
4 France	30,434,451	149,268
5 Germany	27,573,585	140,560
6 UK	22,558,085	179,783
7 Russia	18,409,651	380,711
8 S. Korea	18,305,783	24,488
9 Italy	18,071,634	167,967
10 Turkey	15,085,742	98,996
11 Spain	12,613,634	107,604
12 Vietnam	10,740,595	43,084
13 Argentina	9,341,492	129,016
14 Japan	9,191,098	31,077

Global tally

547,070,211

Deaths

6,346,455

Recovered:

522,486,420

New cases

+498,541

New deaths

+830

Middle East

Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	515,645		24,613		442,182	48,850
Saudi Arabia	789,296	+1,002	9,195	+1	770,077	10,024
UAE	933,688	+1,621	2,309		914,192	17,187
Kuwait	640,857		2,555		633,803	4,499
Oman	389,758		4,260		384,669	829
Qatar	378,176	+694	678		372,939	4,559

Rescuers scramble to reach Afghan quake survivors as forecast

The 5.9 magnitude quake destroyed thousands of buildings and left rescue teams scrambling through rubble for survivors

AFP | Kabul

Desperate rescuers battled against the clock and heavy rain yesterday to reach cut-off areas in eastern Afghanistan after a powerful earthquake killed at least 1,000 people and left thousands more homeless.

Wednesday's 5.9-magnitude quake struck hardest in the rugged east, downing mobile phone towers and power lines while triggering rock and mudslides which blocked mountain roads.

"Getting information from the ground is very difficult because of bad networks," Mohammad Amin Huzaifa, head of information for badly hit Paktika province, said yesterday, adding there was no



People search rubble for survivors in Spera

immediate update to the death toll.

"The area has been affected by floods because of heavy rains last night... it is also difficult to access the affected sites."

The disaster poses a huge logistical challenge for Afghanistan's new Taliban government, which has isolated itself from much of the world by introducing hard-line Islamist rule that subjugates women and girls.

The aid-dependent country saw the bulk of its foreign assistance cut off in the wake of the

Taliban takeover last August, and even before the earthquake the United Nations warned of a humanitarian crisis that threatened the entire population.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the global agency has "fully mobilised" to help, deploying health teams and supplies of medicine, food, trauma kits and emergency shelter to the quake zone.

'Like a tsunami'

Afghan government spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted yesterday that aid flights had landed from Qatar and Iran, while Pakistan had sent trucks carrying tents, medical supplies and food across the land border.

The earthquake struck areas that were already suffering the effects of heavy rain, causing rock-falls and mudslides that wiped out hamlets perched precariously on mountain slopes.

The UN humanitarian coordinator for Afghanistan, Ramiz Alakbarov, told reporters nearly 2,000 homes were likely destroyed -- a huge number in an

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MOHAMMAD AMIN HUZAIFA, HEAD OF INFORMATION FOR PAKTIKA PROVINCE