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President Putin wishes Russian Muslims Happy Eid al-Adha Holiday

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin on Friday wished the country's Muslims a happy and peaceful Eid al-Adha holiday, according to a message published by the Kremlin's press department. "This significant religious holiday for every Muslim is a symbol of loyalty to the spiritual ideas of piety, justice, mercy, and love for one's neighbors, which are the basis of the Holy Quran. I would like to underline that by supporting centuries-old Islamic traditions, Muslims make a significant contribution to the preservation of our country's cultural diversity, which strengthens the inter-ethnic harmony of our society," the message read. The important Muslim holiday began on Thursday evening and will run through Monday.

Chinese President Xi Jinping officially announces launch of BeiDou-3 navigation system

Beijing: Chinese President Xi Jinping officially announced on Friday the launch of China's BeiDou-3 global navigation system. The launch ceremony took place in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. On June 23, China successfully placed into the orbit the 55th satellite for the BeiDou-3 system, completing the system's array and paving the way for the launch of the navigation service. BeiDou is expected to compete against the US-made GPS system and Russia's Glonass service. The system is expected to become fully operational by the end of the year.

Oregon Governor Says Federal Troops Preparing Withdrawal From Portland

Moscow: Oregon Governor Kate Brown said that federal troops are preparing to leave Portland after weeks of tensions in the west coast city. The Democratic governor's statement comes days after reports circulated that local authorities had agreed with the withdrawal with Washington. "I think we've had enough political grandstanding from DC... today, federal troops are preparing to leave downtown Portland," Brown said in a tweet. Meanwhile, footage from central Portland showed a swell of protesters peacefully gathering and chanting Black Lives Matter slogans on Thursday night. No security incidents have yet been reported. Governor Brown and Portland Mayor Ted Wheeler have said the federal police presence in the city has inflamed tensions amid nationwide protests following the May 25 death of African-American George Floyd while being restrained by police.

Airport of Russia's Khabarovsk evacuated over false bombing threat for 4th time in 2 weeks

Khabarovsk, Russia: Passengers and staff of the airport of Russia's Far Eastern city of Khabarovsk were evacuated on Friday over a false bombing threat in the fourth such incident in two weeks, a spokesperson for the airport told Sputnik. "As of 8:45 a.m. [22:45 GMT on Thursday], a message warning about the bombing threat has been received via the official website of the airport of Khabarovsk. Passengers and staff were promptly evacuated. At 10:20 a.m., all the operational activities were completed, no threats have been found," the spokesperson said. The airport is working normally now, according to the spokesperson, who added that the incident made passengers of two flights - from Moscow and Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk - wait for some time in the planes.

Afghan civilians killed in Pakistani shelling

Kabul (UNI): At least nine Afghan civilians were killed and 50 others injured by Pakistani artillery fire in the border province of Kandahar, Afghanistan's Defense Ministry announced on Friday. The Defense Ministry said Pakistani artillery shelling hit residential areas of Spin Boldak district of the Kandahar province on Thursday. Tolonews quoted Afghan Army's Chief of Staff Gen. Yasin Zia as directing all Army corps to be ready for similar actions against Pakistani military and ensure that Afghan troops are stationed along the Durand Line and are well equipped.

COVID-19: S Korea records 36 more cases

Seoul (UNI)

South Korea registered 36 more cases of COVID-19 during the past 24 hours taking the total number of infections in the far eastern nation to 14,305 said the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (KCDC) on Friday.

The daily caseload doubled compared to the previous day due to imported cases and small cluster infections.

Yonhap news agency quoted the KCDC saying that out of the new cases, 22 were imported from overseas taking the tally from imported cases to 2,396.

This is the 36th consecutive day since June 26 when imported cases have grown in double figures.

Apart from this the past 24 hours also saw one patient succumbing to the virus taking the over all death toll to 301.

South Korea's fatality rate currently stands at 2.10 percent.

The past day saw 51 more patients being discharged from quarantine after making recovery, taking the number of people who have recovered from the disease to 13,183. The total recovery rate stands at an impressive 92.16 percent.

Over 1,400 new COVID-19 cases registered in Kazakhstan: Interdepartmental Commission

Nur-Sultan: Health authorities in Kazakhstan have detected 1,414 new COVID-19 cases over the past day, bringing the overall total to 89,078, the country's interdepartmental commission on the coronavirus said on



Friday. "We have registered 1,414 new cases of the coronavirus infection, including 787 people with symptoms and 627 without symptoms," the commission said on its Telegram channel.

The death toll from COVID-19 in Kazakhstan stands at 793 people, while more than 59,500 people have recovered.

The plurality of newly detected cases was registered in Almaty (218), and Nur-Sultan (232) and the East Kazakhstan Region (187).

The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11.

To date, more than 17.2 million people have been infected with the coronavirus worldwide, with over 671,000 fatalities, according

Number of COVID-19 cases in Argentina rises by record 6,377 to 185,373: Health Ministry

Buenos Aires: Argentina has confirmed 6,377 new cases of the coronavirus across the country within the past 24 hours marking the largest daily increase since the start of the outbreak, with the total number of people infected with COVID-19 having reached 185,373, the national Ministry of Health said.

A day earlier, Argentina recorded 5,641 new COVID-19 cases and 110 fatalities.

"Today, 6,377 new cases of COVID-19 have been confirmed," the ministry said in a daily bulletin on late Thursday.

The daily caseload doubled compared to the previous day due to imported cases and small cluster infections.

Beijing: Chinese health authority said Friday that it received reports of 127 new confirmed COVID-19 cases on the Chinese mainland Thursday, 123 of which were domestically transmitted.

Nur-Sultan: Health authorities in Kazakhstan have detected 1,414 new COVID-19 cases over the past day, bringing the overall total to 89,078, the country's interdepartmental commission on the coronavirus said on Friday.

The death toll has increased by 153 to 3,441 people within the same period of time.

The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11. To date, more than 17.1 million people have been infected with the coronavirus worldwide, with over 669,000 fatalities, according to Johns Hopkins University.

Chinese mainland reports 127 new confirmed COVID-19 cases

Beijing: Chinese health authority said Friday that it received reports of 127 new confirmed COVID-19 cases on the Chinese mainland Thursday, 123 of which were domestically transmitted.

Of the domestically transmitted cases, 112 were reported in

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region and 11 were in Liaoning Province, the National Health Commission said in its daily report. No deaths related to the disease were reported Thursday, the commission said.



Mexico's death toll rises 46,000

Mexico City: Mexico registered 639 deaths in the past 24 hrs taking the death toll of the country to 46,000, Director of epidemiology at the Health Ministry, Jose Luis Alomia said

He also said on late Thursday that the number of confirmed coronavirus cases had also increased by 7,730 to 416,179 within the same period of time. On Wednesday, the Latin American nation recorded 5,752 new cases of the virus while 485 people lost their lives due to the pandemic. The World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on March 11. As per the Johns Hopkins University, till date more than 17.2 million people have been infected with the coronavirus worldwide, with over 671,000 fatalities.

Trump denies intention to delay Presidential polls

Washington (UNI)

US President Donald Trump has said that he doesn't want to delay the November election hours after raising the possibility on Twitter.

"Do I want to see a date change? No, I don't want a delay. I want to have the election," he said during a press conference at the White House on Thursday, local media reported.

"But I don't want to see a crooked election," he further said while criticising mail-in voting.

"I also don't want to have to wait for three months and then find out that the ballots are all



missing and the election doesn't mean anything," the US President told reporters.

"Mail-in ballots will lead to the greatest fraud," he stated.

In a tweet on Thursday morning, Mr Trump claimed, without providing

any proof or evidence, that mail-in voting, will be "the most inaccurate & fraudulent election in history."

"It will be a great embarrassment to the USA," he wrote.

"Delay the Election until people can properly, securely and safely vote???" he added.

BRICS new development bank to open office in Moscow 'In Near Future': Vice President

Agencies, Moscow: The New Development Bank (NDB) is poised to make an announcement regarding the opening of its Moscow office, which was first revealed at the 2019 BRICS meeting, the bank's vice president and chief financial officer Leslie Maasdorp told Sputnik.

"The bank is well on course to open a regional office in Moscow in the near future. In due course, an announcement will be made in this regard," Maasdorp said, adding that the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the bank's original plans.

Despite the epidemiological crisis, the NDB has been able to maintain full functionality through remote working, and the bank has successfully distributed financial aid and launched new projects.

"Despite COVID-19, the NDB has been able to function optimally from an operational perspective ... The bank has been able to fully execute on all its functions from remote locations. This includes our core activities such as identifying new projects, disbursing on existing projects, conducting our fundraising activities in both local currency as well as USD.

NDB was able to launch its debut \$1 billion benchmark bond issue in a virtual format," Maasdorp said. Commenting on the proposal to increase the share of BRICS national currencies in NDB's financing, which has been raised by the Russian President Vladimir Putin, Maasdorp said that the bank has already been providing loans in national currencies and will continue to do so. "In short, NDB has the necessary infrastructure in place to raise funding in the currencies of our member countries. We will continue to offer loans in USD, which is the dominant currency of our loan portfolio."



Pilgrims scale Mount Arafat for peak of pilgrimage

Agencies, Saudi Arabia

Masked pilgrims scaled Saudi Arabia's Mount Arafat on Thursday to pray and repent in the climax of this year's Haj, the smallest in modern times after massive crowds in previous years due to the coronavirus.

A tight security cordon was erected all around the foot of the rocky hill outside the holy city of Makkah, also known as Jabal Al Rahma or Mount of Mercy, for the high point of the annual ritual.

Pilgrims, donning masks and observing social distancing as Saudi authorities enforce tough restrictions to prevent a coronavirus outbreak, embarked on the climb to the summit for Holy Quran recitals and prayers to atone for their sins, state television showed.

Sprayed with water sprinklers to beat the desert heat, the pilgrims raised their palms skywards as they climbed the slopes of the hill where Muslims believe Prophet

Muhammad (PBUH) gave his last sermon. "I am so happy to be chosen among millions for the Haj this year," Saudi pilgrim Wedyan Alwah said before setting off.

"My lifetime dream has come true."

The scene was strikingly different to last year's ritual when a sea of pilgrims ascended Mount Arafat, marshalled by tens of thousands of stewards in a bid to prevent any crushes.

Pilgrims were earlier ferried in buses from neighbouring Mina and underwent temperature checks before attending a sermon in the local Namira mosque, which state media said was translated into 10 languages.

After sunset prayers, they made their way down Mount Arafat to Muzdalifah, another holy site where they will sleep under the stars to prepare for the final stage of Haj, the symbolic "stoning of the devil".

'Father of Taiwan's democracy' passes away

Taipei (UNI)

Former Taiwanese President Lee Teng-hui, considered the "father of Taiwan's democracy" passed away after a prolonged illness.

He was 97.

Lee died on Thursday from septic shock and multiple organ failure in Taipei, local media reported.

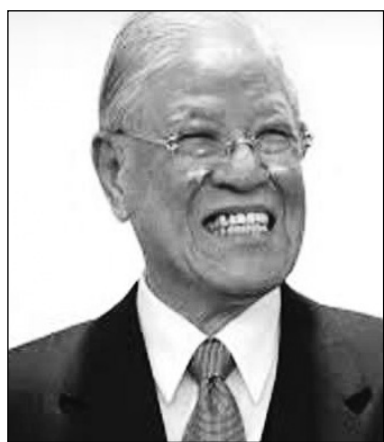
He served as president of the Republic of China, Taiwan, from 1988 to 2000.

He became president in 1988 after the death of predecessor, Chiang Ching-kuo.

Lee was credited with ending autocratic rule in favour of pluralism and democracy.

During his time in office he led constitutional changes towards a more democratic political layout, including direct presidential elections.

Current President Tsai Ing-wen said "he laid the foundation of a democracy built on pride and our own identity".



Lee thrived on defying China's drive to absorb the island and hoped for Taiwan to be "a country of democracy, freedom, human rights and dignity." In 1996 - the first direct presidential election in Taiwan - he was democratically elected for a second term with a landslide victory

US senators introduce bill to authorise \$300Mln in Ukraine Military assistance: Statement

Agencies, Washington

A bipartisan group of US senators have introduced a bill that would authorize \$300 million each year in military aid to Ukraine, including lethal assistance, the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee said in a press release.

"Key provisions of the senators' legislation: Authorizes up to \$300 million per year of foreign military financing to Ukraine, subject to certifications, including the authority to provide Ukraine with lethal military assistance," the release said on Thursday.

The measure was introduced by US Senators Jim Risch, Bob Menendez, Rob Portman, Chris Murphy, John Barrasso, and Jeanne Shaheen.

The measure would require the Defense and State Department to report on the capability and capacity requirements of Ukraine's armed forces, a plan to supply US security assistance to Ukraine, in addition to

providing any recommendations, the release said.

The legislation would also require a report on US diplomatic support for Ukraine over the next five years, the release said.

The bill would also provide \$4 million each year to train Ukrainian military officers through the Institute of Marine and Environmental Technology, the release said.

Moreover, the release said the bill would encourage the establishment of a working group on Ukraine with other relevant European countries and it would also require the US administration to appoint a special representative for Ukraine to serve as a liaison for the Normandy Format peace talks and to facilitate talks between Black Sea countries.

Earlier on Thursday, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the Trump administration support a boost in US lethal aid to Ukraine.

In June, the US Congress approved \$250 million in security assistance to Ukraine.

China ready to respond if US implements Hong Kong Autonomy Act: Ambassador to Russia

Agencies, Moscow

China is firmly opposed to the United States' Hong Kong Autonomy Act, which was recently adopted by Congress and signed into law by President Donald Trump, and Beijing stands ready to respond with measures of its own should Washington implement the legislation, the country's ambassador to Russia Zhang Hanhui told Sputnik in an interview.

The Hong Kong Autonomy Act, which was signed into law by President Trump on July 14, would introduce sanctions on individuals who are involved in the implementation of China's new security law in the special administrative region.

Zhang said that Washington's reaction is unacceptable and constitutes a violation of both international law and the basic norms of international relations.

"The Chinese government strongly opposes the so-called Hong Kong Autonomy Act adopted by the US Congress. China strongly condemns the US for malicious libel against

the national security law of Hong Kong, for threatening to impose sanctions against China, for serious violations of international law and the basic norms of international relations, for gross interference in Hong Kong and China's domestic affairs," the ambassador said.

Zhang reiterated China's commitment to fully implement the new security law and urged the United States to reconsider its decision to enforce its own legislation before Beijing takes retaliatory measures.

"The US attempt to prevent the implementation of the National Security Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will never succeed. We urge the US to correct its mistakes, not to implement the so-called Hong Kong Autonomy Act, and not to interfere in China's internal affairs, including issues related to the Hong Kong SAR. If the US insists, China will certainly take all necessary measures and respond firmly," the ambassador commented.