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42 officials punished over deadly fire in China's Shanxi

Taiyuan: A total of 42 public servants have been punished over a fire that killed 26 people and injured 38 others at a coal mine company building in north China's Shanxi Province. In response to the negligence and dereliction of duty in this accident, the provincial discipline inspection and supervision organs have taken stern measures against 42 public servants from various departments and the governments at various levels, according to the investigation report released on Tuesday. Additionally, coercive measures have been taken against 18 individuals from the company by Shanxi police.

4 missing after vessel hits bridge

Beijing: A vessel on Monday night collided with a bridge in the city of Foshan, in south China's Guangdong Province, resulting in four people going missing. A preliminary investigation suggests that the accident may have been caused by incorrect operation of the vessel due to the influence of flooding from an upstream river, local authorities said on Tuesday. The ship, carrying over 4,900 tonnes of rolled steel, was travelling from Fuzhou, Fujian Province, to the city of Heshan, Guangdong, on Monday night.

More than 50,000 displaced by clashes

Nairobi: The number of people displaced by the armed clashes in northern Ethiopia has reached more than 50,000, said the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs late Monday, citing local authorities. The displaced population includes 42,000 in Kobo, North Wello, and 8,300 in Sekota, Wag Hamra zones. "The humanitarian situation is dire, with thousands of women and children in need of broad humanitarian support to survive," said the UN.

Rainstorm red alert in China's Shenzhen

Beijing: A red alert was issued on Tuesday in the southern Chinese city of Shenzhen for a rainstorm after 100 mm rain was received in three hours in several other districts. The highest level of warning was issued for rains expected according to the Meteorological Bureau of Shenzhen Municipality, rains swept the cities of Luohu, Nanshan, Futian, Baoan, Guangming, Longhua, and Longgang districts on Tuesday morning, with cumulative rainfall exceeding 100 mm in three hours. People have been advised to take precautions against heavy rainfall and potential urban waterlogging, flash floods, landslides, mudslides, and ground subsidence and to stay away from low-lying and flood-prone areas.

Nawaz Sharif heads to China on 'low-profile' visit

Islamabad: Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) supremo Nawaz Sharif embarked on a 'low-key' visit to China for five days, shrouded in secrecy as the ruling PML-N declined to disclose specifics regarding the purpose of his trip, Dawn reported. PML-N spokesperson Marriyum Aurangzeb and Information Minister Attaullah Tarar remained tight-lipped about Nawaz Sharif's "unannounced visit" to Beijing. "I have no idea," Tarar said when questioned by Dawn. Nevertheless, a PML-N minister confirmed to Dawn that the elder Sharif had departed for China on a "private visit."

Myanmar plans to cultivate 15 mln acres of monsoon paddy in FY 2024-25

Yangon: Myanmar plans to cultivate over 15 million acres of monsoon paddy in fiscal year 2024-25, with an increase of over 8,000 acres from the previous year, a Department of Agriculture official said on Tuesday. Of the total, 700,000 acres will be cultivated with support from the state economic promotion fund, the official told Xinhua. In the previous fiscal year, nearly 15 million acres of monsoon paddy were successfully cultivated. The monsoon paddy cultivation season in Myanmar typically runs from May to October.

UN rights chief 'horrified' by mass grave reports

Agencies, Geneva
U.N. rights chief Volker Turk said on Tuesday that he was "horrified" by the destruction of the Nasser and Al Shifa medical facilities in Gaza and reports of mass graves containing hundreds of bodies there, according to a spokesperson. Palestinian authorities reported finding bodies in mass graves at a hospital in Khan Younis this week after it was abandoned by Israeli troops. Bodies were also reported at the Al Shifa site following an Israeli special forces operation. "We feel the need to raise the alarm because clearly there have been multiple bodies discovered," said Ravina Shamdasani, the spokesperson for the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. "Some of them had their hands tied, which of course indicates se-



rious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, and these need to be subjected to further investigations," she said. She added that the U.N. human rights office was working on corrob-

orating Palestinian officials' reports that 283 bodies were found at Nasser and 30 at Al Shifa. According to those reports, the bodies were buried beneath piles of waste and included women and older people.

Ukraine launches military charm offensive as conscription flags

Agencies, Dnipro, Ukraine
Far from the trenches, at orderly new centres across Ukraine, civilian recruiters armed with laptops and info packs offer patriotic volunteers opportunities to join the war. As Ukraine's efforts to conscript enough men to fight Russia are stymied by public scepticism, defence officials and military units are embarking on a multi-pronged charm offensive to recruit a citizens' army to resist the invasion. This softer call-up is being conducted on job-search sites and outreach centres, as well as billboards and social media, and offers a wartime novelty: an element of choice. Candidates can select their precise unit and roles suiting their skills, for instance, as well as how long they will serve. On city streets, billboards of Ukrainian soldiers implore citizens to join up and defend their homeland, offering QR codes for conve-



nience. Online, the 93rd Mechanised Brigade assures countrymen that "Everyone can do it!" in a glossy video campaign showing civilians, such as a chef and tractor driver, switching to analogous army roles as battlefield cook and tank driver. Natalia Kalmykova, a deputy defence minister, said military planners recognised that in a democratic country, giving people some choice could be key in attracting them to the military.

Dubai Airports back to normal operations

Dubai: After the heaviest rainfall the UAE experienced in 75 years, Dubai Airports is making remarkable strides in restoring and normalizing operations at Dubai International Airport (DXB). Paul Griffiths, CEO of Dubai Airports, said that since Sunday, ahead of its recovery schedule, DXB has returned to its normal flight schedule and is back to operating around 1,400 flight movements a day. With roads in and around the airport 100 per cent clear of water accumulation, our manpower, logistics and facilities are operating as usual again. To have the airport back up and running is no small feat. Also, 2,155 flights were cancelled, and 115 were diverted. "I'm continuously amazed by the unwavering dedication of our Dubai Airports employees, airline partners, government agencies, commercial partners and service partners. It has been the most challenging adverse weather event we've had to navigate, and our people and partners worked tirelessly to keep the operation running and to assist our guests."

Migrants drown in Channel, Sunak says nothing will stop Rwanda policy

Agencies, Paris/London
At least five people, including a child, died in an attempt to cross the English Channel from France, hours after Britain passed a bill to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda to try to deter the dangerous crossings. The deaths of one child, a woman and three men occurred on an overcrowded small boat carrying around 110 people attempting to cross one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world. The French coastguard was still searching for survivors. "After becoming initially stranded on the shore, the boat set out to sea again. A crowd movement apparently occurred in the overloaded boat, causing several victims," a coastguard official said. Neither the coast guard nor po-



tion that will allow the government to send asylum-seekers to Rwanda rather than stay in Britain for processing. Stopping the flow of migrants is a priority for British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's government, which says the Rwanda plan will act as a deterrent. Human rights groups and other critics say it is inhumane. "These tragedies have to stop," Britain's interior minister James Cleverly said of the migrant deaths at sea. Sunak, speaking after the bill passed in parliament, said the focus was now on getting flights to Rwanda off the ground. The bill is expected to receive Royal Assent this week, meaning it has passed into law, and Sunak has said he expects flights to depart within 10 to 12 weeks.

Pakistan, Iran decide to ban terrorist organisations

Islamabad: Pakistan and Iran decided in principle to ban terrorist organisations in their respective countries, the Pakistani Interior Ministry said. The decision to the effect was taken here in a meeting between Pakistani Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi with his Iranian counterpart Ahmad Vahidi and Iran's Justice Minister Amin-Hossein Rahimi, the ministry said in a late night statement. The two sides agreed on a joint plan of action to deal with the menace of terrorism being a common problem with further improving mutual support and exchange of intelligence information, said the ministry. It was decided to sign a security agreement in that regard at the earliest, it added. Both sides also agreed to waive the fines imposed on their nationals imprisoned in each other's country, the statement said.

DPRK top leader guides simulated nuclear counterattack drill



Seoul (UNI)
Kim Jong Un, top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) oversaw a simulated nuclear counterattack drill on Monday, the official Korean Central News Agency

(KCNA) reported Tuesday. "The artillerymen of super-large multiple rocket launchers fired in salvo," with the projectiles tipped with simulated nuclear warheads accurately hitting the island target within 352 km range, according to the report. The drill was specifically designed to "demonstrate the reliability, superiority, might and diverse means of the DPRK's nuclear force and to strengthen the nuclear force both in quality and quantity," it said. It also served as a clear warning on the latest round of military confrontation by the United States and South Korea, said the report.

Taiwan rattled by more than 200 quakes, but no major damage

Taipei: Taiwan's quake-hit eastern county of Hualien was rattled by dozens of aftershocks late on Monday and early on Tuesday, but only minor damage was reported, with no casualties and major chipmaker TSMC said it saw no impact on operations. Largely rural and sparsely populated Hualien was hit by a 7.2 magnitude earthquake on April 3 that killed at least 17 people, and there have been more than 1,000 aftershocks since. Buildings across large parts of northern, eastern and western Taiwan, including in the capital, Taipei, swayed throughout the night, with the largest quake measuring a 6.3 magnitude.



Two Malaysian military helicopters crash, 10 killed

Kuala Lumpur (UNI)
Ten individuals were killed following a mid-air collision involving two Malaysian military helicopters on Tuesday morning in Perak state. The helicopters collided and crashed at 9:32 a.m. local time over the Lumut Royal Malaysian Navy base while undergoing a flypast rehearsal, the Royal Malaysian Navy said in a brief statement. One helicopter carried seven personnel while the other had three on board. Agencies, add: "All victims were confirmed dead on site and the remains were sent to the [Lumut] Military Hospital for identification," said the Royal Malaysian Navy. It added that it would form a committee to investigate the cause

of the incident. One of the helicopters, a HOM M503-3 with seven people on board, is believed to have crashed onto a running track. The other, a Fennec M502-6 carrying the other three victims, crashed into a swimming pool nearby. The state's fire and rescue department said it was alerted to the incident at 09:50 local time (01:50 GMT). Malaysia's Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim said in a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, that "the nation mourns the heart-wrenching and soul-wrenching tragedy." "Condolences to all the families of the victims and prayers for strength to face this calamity," he said.

China-US relations stable despite US 'interference'

Agencies, Beijing
Relations between Beijing and Washington are stabilising despite U.S. actions that harm Chinese interests, a Chinese foreign ministry official has said ahead of a visit by U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken. In laying out goals for the visit, the unnamed official, described as director-general of the foreign ministry's department of North American and Oceanian affairs, said relations should stabilise and advance on a sustainable path. But he said Chinese interests and its "bottom line" must be safeguarded, the state news agency Xinhua re-



ported on Tuesday. "The United States stubbornly promotes the strategy of containing China, continuously adopts erroneous words and actions that inter-

fered in China's internal affairs, smear China's image, and harm China's interests," the official was quoted as saying. During Blinken's visit, China will focus on strengthening understanding and dialogue, managing differences and promoting mutually beneficial cooperation and shared responsibilities, the official added. The trip will be Blinken's first to China since June, when the United States was trying to restore high-level engagements after "spy balloon" incidents, and increased tensions around Taiwan were souring relations.

Biden faces pushback to Morehouse college commencement speech plans



Washington (UNI)
US President Joe Biden's tentative plans to deliver a commencement address at Morehouse College face pushback from some faculty members, NBC News reported, citing two people familiar with the matter and an email to faculty. Morehouse College, a historically black institution in Atlanta, is set to announce Biden as its 2024 commencement speaker later this week,

the report said on Monday. However, the college's administration received an inquiry from concerned faculty members about the plan, the email to faculty reportedly said. The college will hold a virtual meeting on April 25 to discuss the matter, the report said. Administrators are worried that faculty members will join students in protesting Biden's speech, the report said, citing one faculty member. Nevertheless, the administration does not intend to rescind its accepted invitation to Biden, according to the email to the faculty. The meeting comes amid pro-Palestine protests on college campuses around the United States, as well as pro-Palestine demonstrations at Biden events. The commencement speech would also occur in the midst of Biden's 2024 presidential reelection campaign, in which Biden may be seeking to bolster his support among black and college-age voters.

Elon Musk decries Australian court 'censorship' of X terror posts

Agencies, Sydney
Elon Musk lashed out at Australia's prime minister on Tuesday after a court ordered his social media company X take down footage of an alleged terrorist attack in Sydney, and said the ruling meant any country could control "the entire internet". At a hearing overnight, Australia's Federal Court ordered X, formerly called Twitter, to temporarily hide posts showing video of the incident a week earlier, in which a teenager was charged with terrorism for knifing an Assyrian priest and others. X said it had already blocked the posts from Australian users, but Australia's e-Safety Commissioner had said the content should be taken down since it showed explicit violence. "Does the PM think he should have jurisdiction over all of Earth?" Musk wrote in a post, referring to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.



The billionaire, who bought X in 2022 with a declared mission to save free speech, posted a meme on the platform that showed X stood for "free speech and truth" while other social media platforms represented "censorship and propaganda". Musk also wrote that "if ANY country is allowed to censor content for ALL countries, which is what the

Australian 'eSafety Commisar' is demanding, then what is to stop any country from controlling the entire Internet?" The pushback by the world's third-richest person sets up a new front in the battle between the world's largest internet platforms and countries and nonprofits seeking more oversight of the content hosted on them. Last month, a U.S. judge threw out a lawsuit by X against the hate speech watchdog, Center for Countering Digital Hate. In Australia, the e-Safety Commissioner fined X A\$610,500 last year for failing to cooperate with a probe on anti-child abuse practices; X is fighting that penalty in court. Albanese hit back at Musk, saying the country would "do what's necessary to take on this arrogant billionaire who thinks he's above the law, but also above common decency".