

1430

Catholic Order of the Golden Fleece founded in Bruges in celebration of the prosperous and wealthy domains of Philip the Good, Duke of Burgundy

1475

Stephen III of Moldavia defeats the Ottoman Empire at the Battle of Vaslui

1839

First tea from leaves of indigenous plants of Assam, India arrives in the United Kingdom



1946

UN General Assembly meets for 1st time in London

# Polished, Unrest

as president of the resource-rich former Soviet republic, Nursultan Nazarbayev.

It has opened a rift in the ruling elite, with Tokayev fighting to consolidate his authority after sacking key officials and removing Nazarbayev from a powerful role as head of the Security Council.

The former intelligence chief and two-time prime minister Karim Massimov, seen as close to Nazarbayev, has been arrested on suspicion of treason but authorities have not disclosed any details of the allegations against him.

State television took the unusual step at the top of its hourly news bulletin of underlining that Tokayev was "the highest official of the state, the chairman of the Security Council. In this capacity he takes decisions independently."

## New Dutch finance minister Kaag tests positive for COVID-19 day before inauguration



Sigrud Kaag, Dutch minister for foreign trade and development cooperation

Reuters | Amsterdam

The Netherlands' new finance minister Sigrud Kaag will miss the ceremonial inauguration of the new Dutch government on Monday as she has tested positive for the coronavirus.

"I have tested positive for corona. It will be a slightly different start than I had hoped for", Kaag tweeted on Sunday.

"My installation will take place digitally. Luckily I feel fine."

Prime Minister Mark Rutte's fourth consecutive government is set to be installed by Dutch King Willem-Alexander on Monday, almost 10 months after the last election and a year since his previous administration stepped down.

Although the government coalition consists of the same four parties that have been in charge since 2017, it took a record of almost 300 days to bring them back together after the inconclusive March 17 elections made parties more reluctant than ever to compromise.

Their installation comes amid a sharp rise in coronavirus infections due to the Omicron variant, despite a broad lockdown that has kept most public places closed since mid-December.

Former United Nations diplomat Kaag served as foreign minister in the previous government and is the leader of the second-largest party in the coalition, pro-EU D66.

Besides missing the meeting with the king, she will also be absent from the traditional photograph of the new cabinet taken on the steps of the royal palace.

## Seven dead, 3 missing after rock face collapse at Brazilian waterfall

Reuters | Brasilia

At least seven people died and nine were seriously injured when a wall of rock collapsed on top of motor boats below a waterfall in southeastern Brazil on Saturday, the fire department said.

A tower of rocks suddenly broke away from the canyon wall and came crashing down on several leisure boats, sending out a huge wave over the lake at Capitolio, in Minas Gerais state.

Videos posted on social media showed tourists shouting as the column of rock crashed into the water, smashing two boats.

Authorities said three people were still missing after others feared lost were located by telephone. Divers searched the lake.

The people hurt in the ac-



Firefighters of Minas Gerais state search for victims after a wall of rock collapsed on top of motor boats below a waterfall in Capitolio, in Minas Gerais state, Brazil

cident had broken bones and one was in serious condition in hospital with head and facial injuries. Some 23 others were treated for light injuries, he said.

The region has been under

heavy rainfall for two weeks, which could have loosened the rock face. On Saturday, a dike overflowed at an iron ore mine 300 kilometers to the east, cutting off a major federal highway. r

## No concessions: Russia takes hard line before vital talks with US

Minister says diplomacy could fail after one session

US official says won't discuss limits on deployments

West threatening sanctions if Russia invades Ukraine

Reuters | Moscow

Russia said yesterday it would not make any concessions under US pressure at talks this week on the Ukraine crisis and its demands for Western security guarantees, and that there was a risk they might end quickly.

The hard line from Moscow underscored the fragile prospects for negotiations that Washington hopes will avert the danger of a new Russian invasion of Ukraine, at the tensest point in US-Russia relations since the Cold War ended three decades ago.

Talks are due in Geneva, Brussels and Vienna but the state-owned RIA news agency quoted Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov as saying it was entirely possible that diplomacy could end abruptly after a



Russia's Deputy Foreign Minister Sergei Ryabkov sits into a car after talks with U.S. Under Secretary of State Victoria Nuland in Moscow, Russia

single meeting.

"I can't rule out anything, this is an entirely possible scenario and the Americans... should have no illusions about this," he was quoted as saying.

"Naturally, we will not make any concessions under pressure and in the course of threats that are constantly being formed by the Western participants of the upcoming talks."

Interfax news agency quoted Ryabkov, who will lead the Russian delegation in Geneva, as saying Moscow was not optimistic going into the negotiations.

The comments from Ryabkov,

who has compared the situation to the 1962 Cuban missile crisis when the world stood on the brink of nuclear war, were consistent with the uncompromising line that Russia has been signalling for weeks.

Tens of thousands of Russian troops are gathered within reach of the border with Ukraine in preparation for what Washington and Kyiv say could be an invasion, eight years after Russia seized the Crimea peninsula from Ukraine.

Russia denies invasion plans and says it is responding to what it calls aggressive and provocative behaviour from the NATO military alliance and Ukraine, its former Soviet neighbour which has tilted towards the West and aspires to join NATO.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken has accused Russia of pushing a false narrative. "That's like the fox saying it had to attack the hen house because its occupants somehow pose a threat. We've seen this gaslighting before," he said last week.

Further complicating the picture, Russia sent troops into neighbouring Kazakhstan last week after the oil-producing former Soviet republic was hit by a wave of unrest. Its foreign ministry reacted furiously on Saturday to a jibe by Blinken that "once Russians are in your house, it's sometimes very difficult to get them to leave"

## ...ed to family

said he unsuccessfully tried to locate the baby's parents inside, he decided to take the infant home to his wife and children. Safi has three daughters of his own and said his mother's greatest wish before she died was for him to have a son.

In that moment he decided: "I am keeping this baby. If his family is found, I will give him to them. If not, I will raise him myself," he told Reuters in an interview in late November.

Safi told Reuters that he took him to the doctor for a check-up after he was found and quickly incorporated the child into his family. They called the baby Mohammad Abed and posted pictures of all the children together on his Facebook page.



...as they leave the house of Hamid Safi

## Stay away in event of accident with Olympics vehicle, Beijing police warn

Reuters | China, Shenzhen

People should stay away from the special vehicles used to ferry people to and from the Winter Olympic venues in the event of a traffic incident, Beijing's traffic management authority warned on Sunday.

Personnel involved in the Winter Olympics will be kept



in a "closed loop" operation and should avoid contact with people outside it, the Beijing Traffic

Management Bureau said in a post on its Twitter-like Weibo account.

If there is an accident with one of the vehicles, people should maintain a safe distance, avoid contact with those inside and wait for professionals to arrive at the scene, the post said.

On Wednesday organisers said they had begun the "closed

loop" operation, in which participants can only leave if they are exiting the country or undergo quarantine, to prevent a COVID-19 outbreak among Games participants from leaking into China's general public.

The 2022 Games, which open on Feb. 4, are set to take place as the world grapples with the highly transmissible Omicron.



TOP  
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TWEETS

01



Greetings to everyone, especially the Indian diaspora on Pravasi Bharatiya Diwas. Our diaspora has distinguished itself all over the world and has excelled in different spheres. At the same time, they have remained connected to their roots. We are proud of their accomplishments.

@narendramodi

02



Our fragile planet is hanging by a thread. Every fraction of a degree warming matters. We need maximum ambition - from all countries on all fronts - to keep the 1.5 degree warming goal of the #ParisAgreement alive. It's time to go into emergency mode.

@antonioгутerres

03



We built the Museum of the Future as a global hub for scientists, thinkers and innovators - it is the ideal headquarters to develop the potential of our region's finest minds. We will act as an incubator and accelerator for fostering Arab and global talent..

@HShkMohd

04



Harry Reid and I grew up on different sides of the country, but we came from the same place where certain values run deep. Loyalty. Faith. Resolve. Service. He was a dear friend, a great American, and a giant of our history. May he rest in peace.

@JoeBiden

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