

News in brief

British trade minister arrives in India for talks



◆ Britain's trade minister arrived in India yesterday to begin talks as part of its efforts to sign its own trade deals following its departure from the European Union. Anne-Marie Trevelyan is due to meet officials in New Delhi before formally launching negotiations with her counterpart, Piyush Goyal, today, her office said. India and former colonial power Britain already share strong trade ties and more than a million people of Indian origin live in Britain after decades of migration..

◆ A man in China has been sentenced to seven years in jail for setting internet equipment ablaze after becoming enraged over a slow connection, authorities have said. The man, surnamed Lan, was at an internet cafe in southern Guangxi province last June when his frustration with the connection speed spilled over. He responded by destroying a public box containing optical fibre network cables, a local court said in a statement on Monday.

Chinese man jailed for setting 'slow' internet cables on fire

Pakistan court orders golf course shut in rare ruling against military



◆ A golf club belonging to Pakistan's military was closed yesterday after a court ruled it encroached on national park land in the capital and breached environment regulations. In a rare ruling against the country's powerful armed forces, judge Athar Minallah said Tuesday that the navy had "illegally" established Margalla Greens Golf Club, an 18-hole course adjacent to the country's top military university.

Russia laid out its demands for security guarantees in Europe to NATO's 30 allies yesterday but insisted they were not ultimatums following intense talks with the United States in Geneva that failed to break the deadlock.

'No ultimatums': Russia sets out security demands at NATO meeting



NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg received Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Alexander Grushko at allied headquarters to try to defuse the worst East-West tensions since the Cold War over Russia massing troops near its border with Ukraine. Moscow has dismissed concerns expressed by the United States that it may be planning to invade its neighbour and Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov said live-fire exercises on the Ukraine border on Tuesday were not linked to the NATO talks.

Judge asked to delay Therasos founder sentencing to September



◆ Attorneys asked a judge to delay the sentencing of fallen biotech star Elizabeth Holmes, who was found guilty of defrauding investors in her blood-testing startup Therasos. Holmes is a rare example of a tech exec being brought to book over a company flaming out, in a sector littered with the carcasses of money-losing businesses that once promised untold riches.

North Korea's Kim urges more 'military muscle' after hypersonic missile test

Kim officially at test for first time since March 2020

AFP | Seoul

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Kim Jong Un personally oversaw the successful test of a hypersonic missile, state media said yesterday, and urged North Korea to press ahead with building more "strategic military muscle" despite international sanctions over its nuclear weapons programme. Pictures in state media showed Kim using binoculars to observe the second missile launch by the nuclear-armed nation in less than a week.

Hypersonic missiles are listed among the "top priority" tasks for strategic weapons development in North Korea's five-year plan.

After the launch, Kim said North Korea must "further accelerate the efforts to steadily build up the country's strategic military muscle both in quality and quantity and further modernize the army", according to KCNA.

The Tuesday test, which came as the UN Security Council met in New York to discuss Pyongyang's weapons programme, sparked swift condemnation, with the US State Department branding it a "threat... to the international community."

It was the third reported North Korean test of a hypersonic gliding missile. The first, which took place four months



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, right, looks at the monitors as a test launch of a missile

YOU KNOW WHAT

Hypersonic weapons fly at five times the speed of sound, could pose a crucial challenge to missile defense systems because of their speed and maneuverability

ago, was followed by one last week. North Korea's state news agency KCNA said the most recent test demonstrated "the superior manoeuvrability of the hypersonic glide vehicle". It also claimed it accurately hit a target some 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) away.

South Korea's military, which had cast doubt on Pyongyang's initial claims, said the missile launched on Tuesday had reached hypersonic speeds and showed clear signs of "progress" from last week's test. The missile flew 700 kilo-

metres (435 miles) at an altitude of about 60 kilometres (37 miles) at Mach 10 speed, Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said. Hypersonic missiles travel at speeds of at least Mach 5 -- five times the speed of sound -- and can manoeuvre mid-flight, making them harder to track and intercept.

"Everything about this test is a reminder that North Korea is all-in on a new military modernization campaign," Ankit Panda of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace said on Twitter yesterday.

"Kim's working his way down his 8th Party Congress wish list and is once again personally guiding tests," Panda said, referring to a recent meeting of high-level North Korean officials.

Russia, the United States and China have all reported successfully testing hypersonic glide missiles. Russia is generally seen as the world leader in the technology.

Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul, said the weapon was not ready for deployment.

"Nonetheless, Pyongyang's ability to threaten its neighbours continues to grow," he said.

Pope makes surprise visit to Rome record store, gets classical CD

Reuters | Rome

Pope Francis, a lover of classical music, slipped out of the Vatican on Tuesday evening to visit old friends who run a Rome record shop and came away with a gift of a CD.

The visit was to have remained private but Javier Martinez-Brocal, a reporter for the Rome Reports television news agency, was in the area by chance, filmed it with his smart phone, and posted it on Twitter.

Francis stayed inside the StereoSound record shop near the ancient Pantheon for little more than 10 minutes. A Vatican spokesman said Francis had gone there to bless the shop because it had been recently renovated.

Martinez-Brocal told Reuters the shop's owners told him that they had become friends with the pope years ago when he was Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, archbishop of Buenos Aires.

He would visit their shop to buy classical music records



A screen grab taken from a video shows Pope Francis walking out of a record shop in Rome

and CDs when he was in Rome on Church business and stayed at a nearby residence for visiting clerics.

They said they gave the pope a CD of classical music but declined to be more specific. Francis is known to like Beethoven, Mozart and Bach -- and even tango music from his native Argentina.

The video showed the pope, who shuns bulletproof cars leaving the shop and getting into a simple white Fiat 500 with Vatican number plates.

About 70 South Korean attendees at CES tech show test positive for COVID-19

Reuters | San Francisco

About 70 South Korean nationals who attended the giant CES tech trade show in Las Vegas last week tested positive for COVID-19, health authorities of the Asian country said yesterday.

These included some executives and staff of major South Korean companies, according to industry sources and one company.

About 20 people from Samsung Electronics and about six at SK



Attendees pass by a CES sign during CES 2022 Group, parent of energy firm SK Innovation and chipmaker SK Hynix, were among those who tested positive for the virus after attending CES, the sources said.

The cases risk dealing a blow to South Korea's COVID-19 control, after the country had just brought down daily number of infections from record highs in December by restoring tough social distancing rules and widely adopting vaccine passports at public locations.

“We are promptly contacting those who participated in the event and conducting epidemiological investigations, but we urge domestic businesspeople or those who are in Korea that attended the event to undergo PCR tests as soon as possible”

SON YOUNG-RAE, A SENIOR SOUTH KOREAN HEALTH MINISTRY OFFICIAL

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	63,777,680	865,166
2 India	36,312,486	484,740
3 Brazil	22,630,142	620,281
4 UK	14,862,138	151,007
5 France	12,934,982	126,305
6 Russia	10,702,150	318,432
7 Turkey	10,195,676	84,125
8 Italy	7,971,068	139,872
9 Germany	7,710,592	115,603
10 Spain	7,592,242	90,383
11 Argentina	6,533,635	117,595
12 Iran	6,212,387	131,972
13 Colombia	5,380,841	130,460
14 Indonesia	4,268,097	144,150

Global tally
316,149,798
Deaths
5,527,328
Recovered:
262,528,770
New cases
+2,086,127
New deaths
+5,901

Middle East Figures as of closing

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	394,740		22,014		328,957	43,769
Saudi Arabia	593,545	+5,362	8,899	+2	552,057	32,589
UAE	793,314	+2,616	2,181	+4	755,670	35,463
Kuwait	446,547	+4,548	2,473		415,608	28,466
Oman	309,588	+718	4,119		301,287	4,182
Qatar	282,904	+4,206	621		250,570	31,713