

# WORLD

## Briefly

### BELARUS

#### Leader orders border with Ukraine closed

Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko ordered the country's border guard to completely close the border with Ukraine, the state news agency Belta reported on Friday. In a speech dedicated to the country's Independence Day, Lukashenko said he was "astounded by the number of weapons being smuggled from Ukraine to Belarus". That is why, he said, he "instructed the border guard to fully close the border with Ukraine", adding that only civilians will be able to enter Belarus.

### UNITED STATES

#### Condo to be razed, death toll now at 24

Search teams recovered two more bodies at the site of the collapsed Florida apartment block, bringing the death toll to 24, authorities said on Saturday. The search for victims was temporarily halted in the afternoon so demolition crews could prepare to bring down part of the building that was still standing. The razing took on special urgency as Tropical Storm Elsa churned in the Caribbean, following a path expected to bring it to Florida early this week. More than one week after the collapse, 121 people were still listed as missing.

### UNITED NATIONS

#### Chief expresses deep concern over Tigray

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres expressed his deep concern on Saturday over the situation in Ethiopia's Tigray. He said it is "essential to have a real cease-fire" to pave a way for dialogue in order to bring a political solution to Tigray. Guterres stressed that the presence of foreign troops is an aggravating factor of confrontation. According to media reports, food and fuel are running out in the capital of war-torn northern Tigray region. About 400,000 people are in famine condition and nearly 2 million are on the brink of famine.

### MOROCCO

#### Spain-bound migrants pulled from boats

The Moroccan navy rescued 244 Spain-bound migrants in 48 hours, the official news agency MAP reported on Sunday. The migrants, including women and minors, were mostly from sub-Saharan Africa, said the agency quoting a military statement. They were in several inflatable boats in the Strait of Gibraltar, which separates the African continent from Europe. Some of the migrants were taken back to various Moroccan ports.

XINHUA — AGENCIES



A Palestinian boy sleeps in the ruins of his family home that was destroyed by Israeli airstrikes in Gaza City on Friday. MOHAMMED ABED / AGENCE FRANCE-PRESSE

## No quick end seen to tensions in Gaza Strip

As new Israeli coalition comes to power, ties with Palestine 'hard to get any better'

By LIU XUAN

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The Gaza Strip came under renewed Israeli military attacks late last week, and analysts say it is possible that the standoff between Israel and Palestine could become even more tense with a new Israeli government taking office.

Israeli fighter jets on Saturday night carried out airstrikes on the Gaza Strip in response to incendiary balloons launched at southern Israel, according to Palestinian security sources.

The sources said that Israeli war jets fired two missiles at a military training post south of Gaza City that belongs to al-Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of the Palestinian Islamic Resistance Movement, or Hamas.

Several missiles also targeted various Hamas military posts in northern and western Gaza. No injuries were reported while there was severe damage at the Hamas military posts and facilities.

An Egypt-brokered cease-fire declaration took effect on May 21, ending 11 days of deadly fighting between Israel and Hamas. However, skirmishes continued despite the agreement.

On Saturday, Palestinian activists fired several incendiary balloons from the Gaza Strip at southern Israel, causing fires and damage.

Palestinians said the balloons aimed to pressure Israel to ease restrictions on the coastal enclave that were tightened during the fighting in May.

Israel has vowed to respond to even minor attacks, and Israel's army chief ordered forces to be ready "for a variety of scenarios including a resumption of hostilities", following an exchange of fire on June 18 just several days after Israel's new prime minister, Naftali Bennett, was sworn in.

Bennett, 49, who has succeeded Benjamin Netanyahu, used to be tough on Israel-Palestine issues, such as clearly and strongly opposing the establishment of a Palestinian state.

After the new government came to power, the situation between the two sides was "hard to get any better", said Shu Meng, a researcher at the Middle East Studies Institute of Shanghai International Studies University.

"Conflicts will continue to appear every two to three years, and skirmishes every two to three months," Shu said.

#### 'Unstable, fragmented'

The reason lies in the form of the new government, a diverse coalition of eight parties with representatives from many parts of the political spectrum.

"The governing coalition is unstable and fragmented, based on opposition to Netanyahu, containing multiple factions in both ideology and policy positions," Shu said. "The interests of those parties within the ruling coalition are inconsistent, and many are hard to reconcile."

Wang Shuming, a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social

Sciences, said the difficulties in forming the cabinet "have shown the sharp and complex contradictions" of the governing factions.

"Strong hostility from the right-wing opposition could be a gunpowder keg that may trigger serious political conflicts and crises at any time."

Whether the new government can effectively handle such differences may determine how long it governs, he said.

With such a diverse range of opinions inside the government, Shu said that members of the coalition are likely to go all out to avert disagreements to guarantee their political survival.

With a shaky coalition, it might be best for the government to continue to follow Netanyahu's path, such as exaggerating security issues, creating external enemies and taking measures to worsen the external environment to promote internal cohesion and support.

"For some time to come, Bennett's government will continue to follow such policy inertia in the post-Netanyahu era," said Shu, adding that it will continue holding "hard-line and expansionary policies" on Israeli-Palestinian issues.

Palestine on Thursday complained that Israel's collecting Palestinian taxes and customs duty have limited the government's scope for investment.

"Israel keeps its control over the borders, crossing points, and areas under Israeli military occupation in the West Bank," said Palestinian Finance Minister Shukri Bishara in the West Bank city of Ramallah.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

## Yellow whistle the weapon of choice against race hate

By MINLU ZHANG in New York  
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In the United States, yellow has been the hue of racism and xenophobia against Asians for more than a century, and used to fuel fears of the so-called yellow peril. Now, a group of Asian Americans is reclaiming the color and turning it into a symbol of self-protection and solidarity.

The national Yellow Whistle Campaign is distributing whistles to Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders as violence against Asians is on the rise across the country.

"When you're in danger, blow the whistle," said Li-En Chong, one of the co-founders of The Yellow Whistle Campaign. "If you want to help, but you can't help because you're old, or you're scared, blow the whistle. If you hear the whistle, you see people blowing the whistle because they need help, call 911. Police are here to protect us. They know about this campaign."

Anti-Asian hate incidents rose 164 percent in the first quarter of 2021, compared with the same period a year ago, in 22 large US cities and counties, according to new data from the Center for the Study of Hate & Extremism at California State University, San Bernardino, while overall hate crimes fell 7 percent in 2020.

The total number of incidents reported to police in the first quarter this year was 95, compared with 36 in the first quarter of 2020, the center said, though many or most such incidents are believed to have gone unreported.

To defend themselves, many Asian Americans have bought guns and pepper spray. However, in some states, the use of many tools of self-defense is restricted or outright illegal.

Fred Teng, president of the America China Public Affairs Institute, said Asian Americans want to get guns, knives and tasers. But there is a legal issue whether they can possess, buy or use such things.

"The beauty of a whistle is that it is perfectly legal to own one, and it's perfect to blow a whistle. You will not be arrested for blowing a whistle."

#### Exceeding expectations

The Yellow Whistle Campaign was not expected to get this big. Founders expected to hand out a few hundred whistles. However, after its launch in April, the project has grown from an original goal to distribute 10,000 whistles to now 500,000 nationwide.

The first yellow whistles went to groups that serve the elderly in Manhattan's Chinatown, and then more than 100 organizations across nearly all 50 states, including Alaska and Hawaii, joined the campaign.

Each whistle comes attached to a coiled wrist cord, not a lanyard. This is intentional, given the risk of an assailant wrapping a lanyard around a victim's neck.

More than 100 whistles were handed out at the Chinese-American Planning Council's Open Door Senior Centre in Manhattan's Chinatown late last month as part of the campaign.

## Ransomware attack in US targeted 1,000 businesses

STOCKHOLM, Sweden — One of the largest ransomware attacks in history potentially targeted 1,000 businesses on Saturday, forcing the Swedish Coop grocery chain to close all 800 of its stores because it could not operate its cash registers.

The shutdown of the major food retailer came after an unusually sophisticated attack on US tech provider Kaseya on Friday. The ransomware gang known as REvil is suspected of hijacking Kaseya's desktop management tool VSA and pushing a malicious update that infected technology management providers serving thousands of businesses.

Huntress Labs, one of the first to sound the alarm on the infections, said on Saturday that thousands of companies may have been hit.

Miami-based Kaseya said it was working with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and that only about 40 of its customers were directly affected. It did not comment on how many were providers that in turn spread the malicious software to others.

The FBI said it was investigating the case together with the US Cyber-

security and Infrastructure Security Agency.

"We encourage all who might be affected to employ the recommended mitigations and for users to follow Kaseya's guidance to shut down VSA servers immediately."

The businesses affected had files encrypted and were left electronic messages asking for payments of thousands or millions of dollars.

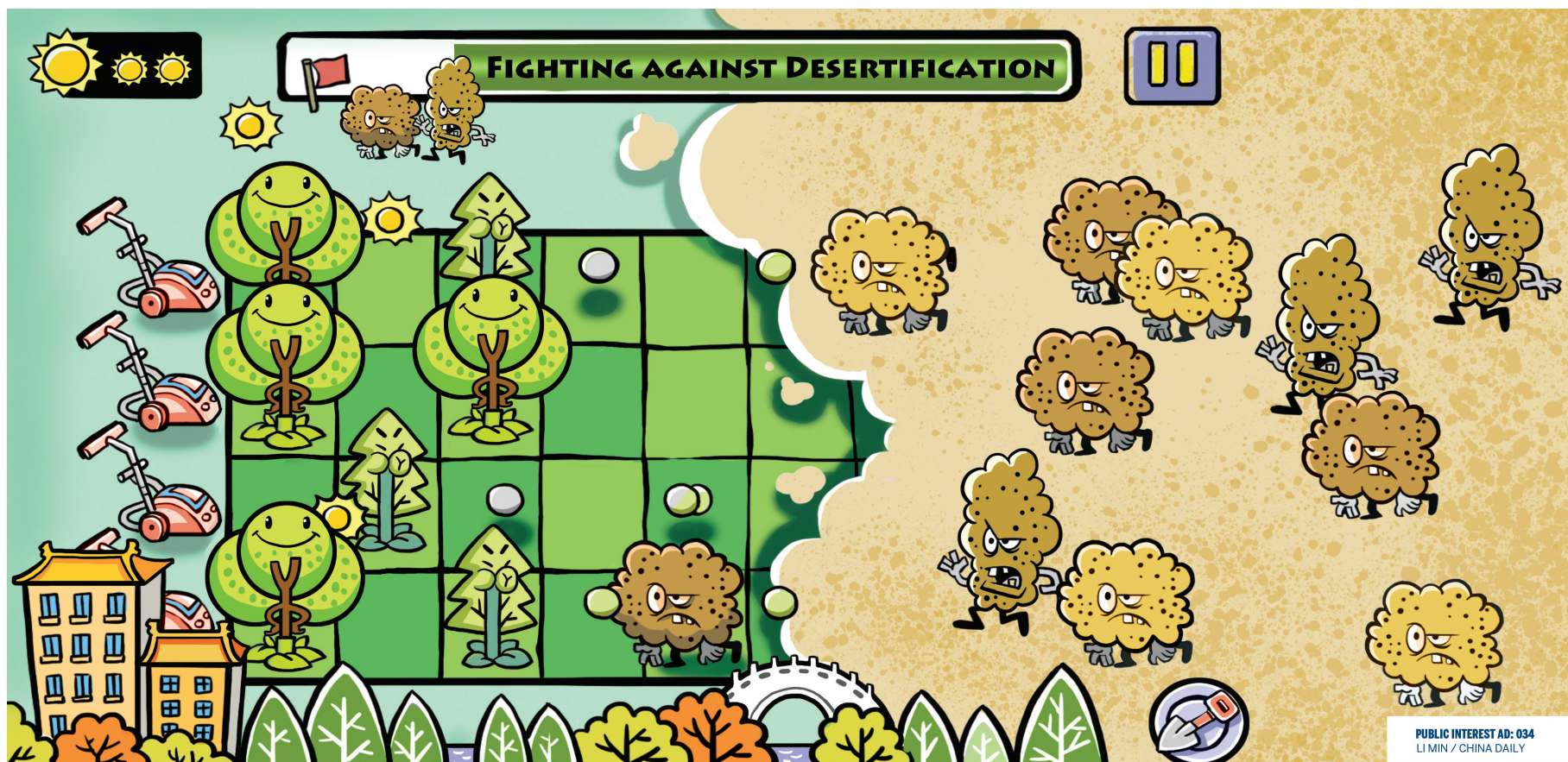
#### Tip of iceberg

Some experts said the timing of attack, which was on the Friday before a long holiday, was aimed at spreading as quickly as possible while employees were away from the job.

"What we are seeing now in terms of victims is likely just the tip of the iceberg," said Adam Meyers, senior vice-president of security company CrowdStrike.

US President Joe Biden had ordered a full investigation, and added that "the initial thinking was it was not the Russian government, but we're not sure yet."

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