

MIGRANT TRAGEDY OFF LIBYA COAST

Death toll nears 100

AFP, Tripoli

A shipwreck off the Libyan coast has killed 20 people, Doctors Without Borders (MSF) said, just hours after news of a separate incident in which at least 74 migrants died.

MSF teams in northwestern coastal city of Sorman "assisted three women as the lone survivors of another shipwreck where 20 people drowned," the group said Thursday on Twitter.

"Rescued by local fishermen, they were in shock and terrified; they saw loved ones disappear beneath the waves, dying in front of their eyes," it added.

Earlier Thursday, the UN's International Organization for Migration reported "a devastating shipwreck which claimed the lives of at least 74 migrants today off the coast of Khoms," a port city 120 kilometres (75 miles) east of the Libyan capital Tripoli.

It said that 47 survivors had been brought back to shore and 31 bodies retrieved, adding that the boat was reported to be carrying more than 120 people.

The IOM said that so far this year, at least 900 people had drowned in the Mediterranean trying to reach European shores -- some due to delays in rescue.

More than 11,000 others have been returned to Libya, it said, "putting them at risk of facing human rights violations, detention, abuse, trafficking and exploitation".

AFP, Paris

Hailed this week as a pandemic game-changer, the new Covid-19 vaccine offered countries that had pre-ordered doses a potential escape from a cycle of lockdowns and new waves of sickness and death.

But while richer nations plan their vaccination programmes through the end of 2021, experts warn that poorer and developing countries face hurdles that could deny billions the first proven protection against the coronavirus.

Vaccine developers Pfizer and BioNTech plan to roll out the first doses within weeks, once they receive emergency use permissions from drug agencies. They expect to have 1.3 billion doses ready next year.

The results of phase 3 clinical trials showed their mRNA vaccine was 90 percent effective in preventing Covid-19 symptoms and did not produce adverse side effects among thousands of volunteers.

At the cost of \$40 per treatment, which consists of two separate shots, richer nations have rushed to order tens of millions of doses. But it is less clear what

poorer nations can expect.

Anticipating the outside demand for any approved vaccine, the World Health Organization formed the COVAX facility in April to ensure equitable distribution. COVAX brought together governments, scientists, civil society and the private sector -- though Pfizer is not currently part of the facility.

Rachel Silverman, a policy fellow at the Center for Global Development, said it was unlikely that much of the first vaccine batch would end up in poorer nations.

Based on advance purchase agreements signed with Pfizer, she calculated that 1.1 billion doses had been snapped up entirely by wealthy nations.

"There's not much left for everyone else," she told AFP.

Some countries that pre-ordered, such as Japan and Britain, are part of COVAX, so some doses are likely to reach less developed nations through their purchase agreements. Conversely, the United States, which has 600 million doses on order, is not a COVAX member, though this may change under a Joe Biden administration.



Ethics aside, epidemiological data underscores the need for equitable vaccine distribution. This month researchers at America's Northeastern University published research examining the link between vaccine reach and Covid-19 mortality.

They modelled two scenarios. The first, the "uncooperative allocation" scenario, hypothesised what would happen if 50 rich nations monopolised the first 2 billion doses of a vaccine.

The second saw the vaccine distributed based on a country's population rather than its ability to pay for it.

The researchers found that the rich nation stockpiling scenario reduced

Covid-19 deaths by 33 percent globally. The fair-share approach prevented 61 percent.

Even if finance for poorer nations materialises, the logistics of getting the new vaccine to everyone remains dizzying. Pfizer's vaccine is based on mRNA, which tricks the immune system to produce viral proteins itself that are then neutralised.

It appears to be effective at bestowing protection against Covid-19, yet is extremely fragile: it must be stored at -80 degrees Celsius or else it falls apart.

"Most freezers in most hospitals anywhere in the world are -20C," said Lang. Silverman said maintaining the vaccine's "ultra-cold chain" from factory to patients' arms constituted "an enormous logistical challenge even in the West".

There are currently more than three dozen other Covid-19 vaccine candidates in development, 11 of which are in or have completed phase 3 trials.

Most experts agree that the best route out of the pandemic would be to have several safe and effective vaccines that work in different ways, giving varying levels of protection.

NEWS IN brief

Mosque attack plot: 12 charged in Germany

REUTERS, Berlin

German prosecutors have charged 12 men with plotting well-funded, armed attacks on mosques in which they planned to kill or injure as many Muslims as possible, authorities said yesterday. Prosecutors said the suspects, 11 gang members and one accomplice, had met regularly to plan, with all but one of them pledging to contribute thousands towards a 50,000-euro (\$59,000) pot to finance the purchase of weapons. The suspects, aged between 31 and 61, are all Germans and all but one of them has been detained.

US won't enforce TikTok ban: report

AFP, Washington

The US government has decided against enforcing its ban on Chinese-owned social media sensation TikTok to comply with a federal court ruling issued in the national security case, a media report said Thursday. The Wall Street Journal reported the US Commerce Department had decided to hold off on enforcing a Trump administration order to ban the video-sharing app owned by Chinese-based ByteDance.

Pompeo to visit Israeli settlement

AFP, Washington

Mike Pompeo next week will become the first US secretary of state to visit one of Israel's settlements on occupied Palestinian territory, which are considered illegal by most of the world, reports said Thursday. Pompeo will visit the Psagot winery in the West Bank and also be the first secretary of state to travel to the Golan Heights. The visit comes exactly one year after Pompeo said that the United States did not consider Jewish settlements on occupied Palestinian territory to be illegal, putting Washington at odds with UN Security Council resolutions and virtually all other countries except Israel.



People gather to mourn the death of anti-government protester Roman Bondarenko (inset) who they say was beaten by Belarusian security forces in Minsk, Belarus, on Thursday. Thousands of people took to the streets of Minsk and other Belarusian cities yesterday after Bondarenko's death.



PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

Suu Kyi's party wins absolute majority in Myanmar polls

AFP, Yangon

Aung San Suu Kyi's ruling party secured an absolute majority in Myanmar's election, official results showed yesterday, in a poll disputed by the military-aligned opposition and criticised by rights groups.

Her National League for Democracy (NLD) had already declared a landslide victory based on its own tallies, prompting street celebrations by supporters.

But official figures were still being returned five days after the ballot, only the second such polls since the nation emerged from outright military rule in 2011.

Results announced by the election commission yesterday showed the NLD had won 368 seats -- more than 50 percent of parliament, even taking into account the quarter of seats reserved for the military under the constitution. The party is on track to improve on its landslide win in 2015, despite widespread disillusionment in many ethnic minority areas.

"People clearly realised the need for the NLD to get enough votes to form a government on their own," NLD spokesman Myo Nyunt told AFP, adding this would help "minimise political conflict".

The military-aligned opposition Union

Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) has been trounced across the country, winning just 25 seats by Friday.

The party alleges the vote was neither free nor fair and is demanding that the Union Election Commission (UEC) step down and polls be re-run.

Japan, India and Singapore have already congratulated Suu Kyi and her party.

The vote left out 1.5 million voters, sparking grievances in already restive areas that the playing field had been tilted in favour of the NLD.

Tension is particularly high in western Rakhine state, where fighting between ethnic Rakhine militant group, the Arakan Army (AA), and the military has already displaced 200,000.

In unprecedented communication between the foes, the AA requested the army and government hold by-elections as soon as possible in areas where the vote had been cancelled -- a statement welcomed by the military.

Rights groups also condemned Sunday's vote, which left virtually all Rohingya Muslims disenfranchised, either languishing in Bangladeshi refugee camps or stripped of citizenship in Myanmar.



'Our divisions run deep'

Obama, in new book, says Biden's win encouraging, but one election isn't enough to mend the divide in US

AFP, Washington

Former president Barack Obama has said in the first volume of his upcoming memoir that the divisions in America "run deep" and the departure of Donald Trump from the White House would not be enough to bridge the divide.

In an excerpt from "A Promised Land," which goes on sale on Tuesday, Obama, America's first Black president, reflects on the four years since he left office.

"Our democracy seems to be teetering on the brink of crisis -- a crisis rooted in a fundamental contest between two opposing visions of what America is and what it should be," the 59-year-old Obama said in the excerpt published on Thursday in The Atlantic.

The crisis "has left the body politic divided, angry, and mistrustful," he said. It has also "allowed for an ongoing breach of institutional norms, procedural safeguards, and the adherence to basic facts that both



Republicans and Democrats once took for granted."

Obama said he was "encouraged" by the election victory of Joe Biden.

"But I also know that no single election will settle the matter," Obama said. "Our divisions run deep; our challenges are daunting."

"If I remain hopeful about the future, it's in large part because I've learned to place my faith in my fellow citizens, especially those of the next generation," he said.

In his memoir, the former president also addresses the "birther" lie peddled by Trump that Obama was not born in

the US, according to CNN, which also obtained a copy of the book.

"It was as if my very presence in the White House had triggered a deep-seated panic, a sense that the natural order had been disrupted," Obama writes. "Which is exactly what Donald Trump understood when he started peddling assertions that I had not been born in the United States and was thus an illegitimate president."

"For millions of Americans spooked by a Black man in the White House, he promised an elixir for their racial anxiety," he said.

Obama also likened Indian opposition figure Rahul Gandhi to a hapless student. In the book, Obama writes that Gandhi has "a nervous, unformed quality about him, as if he were a student who'd done the coursework and was eager to impress the teacher but deep down lacked either the aptitude or the passion to master the subject," according to a review in The New York Times.

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Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh
Department of Environment
Ecosystem-based Approaches to Adaptation (EbA) in the Drought-Prone Barind Tract and Haor "Wetland" Area Project
(EbA Project)
2nd Floor, Room: 304, Poribesh Bhaban Old Building
E/16 Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207

Advertisement for Request for Expression of Interest (Eoi) for Selection of Individual Consultant (National)

1.	Ministry/Division	:	Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
2.	Agency	:	Department of Environment (DoE)
3.	Client (Procuring Entity) Name	:	Dr. Md. Sohrab Ali, Project Director, EbA project
4.	Client (Procuring Entity) Code	:	
5.	Client (Procuring Entity) District	:	Dhaka
6.	Expression of Interest for selection of	:	Individual Consultant (National)
7.	Eoi Ref No	:	22.02.0000.111.14.012.20-08
8.	Date	:	12 November 2020
Funding Information			
9.	Source of Funds	:	LDCF of Global Environment Facility (GEF)
10.	Development Partners	:	GEF-UNEP
Particular Information			
11.	Project Code	:	009869
12.	Project Name	:	Ecosystem-based Approaches to Adaptation (EbA) in the Drought-Prone Barind Tract and Haor "Wetland" Area Project (EbA Project)
13.	Eoi Closing Date and Time	:	30 November 2020, 02:30 pm
Information for Applicants:			
Package No.	Name of Position	Number of Position	Duration
SD-5	Project Manager (PM)	01 (One)	48 mm (4 years) Project duration
	Regional Manager (RM)- Haor area and Barind Tract	02 (Two)	(48 mm for each) (4 years)
	Climate Change and Natural Resource Management Expert (CCNRME)- Haor area and Barind Tract	02 (Two)	(48 mm for each) (4 years)
	Economist (Monitoring and Evaluation)	01 (One)	48 mm (4 years)
	Administration and Finance Officer (AFO)- PMU, Haor area and Barind Tract	03 (Three)	(48 mm for each) (4 year)
	Administrative Assistant	01 (One)	(48 mm for each) (4 year)
	Office Assistant- Haor area and Barind Tract	02 (Two)	(48 mm for each) (4 year)
Educational Qualifications and ToR*			
			Master's degree in Environment, Natural Resources Management, Agriculture, Forestry, Management, or a closely related field
			Master's degree in Environment, Natural Resources Management, Agriculture, Forestry, or a closely related field
			Master's degree in Environment, Natural Resources Management, Agriculture, Forestry, or a closely related field
			PhD/Master's degree in Economics/Agricultural Economics
			Master's degree in Commerce background or closely relevant subject
			Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) with at least 2 years of work experience.
			Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC)
Procuring Entity (Client) Details			
14.	Name of Official Inviting Eoi	:	Dr. Md. Sohrab Ali
15.	Designation of Official Inviting Eoi	:	Project Director, EbA Project
16.	Address of Official Inviting Eoi	:	Department of Environment 2 nd Floor, Room: 304, Poribesh Bhaban Old Building E/16 Agargaon Administrative Area, Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh
17.	Contact details of Official Inviting Eoi	:	Phone: 8181269, Email: sohrab@doe.gov.bd
18.	Place of submission of Eoi	:	Project Director's office (Director's office of DoE Dhaka Laboratory) EbA project, Department of Environment 2 nd Floor, Room: 304, Poribesh Bhaban Old Building E/16 Agargaon Administrative Area Sher-E-Bangla Nagar, Dhaka-1207, Bangladesh
19.	The Client (Procuring Entity) reserves the right to accept or reject all Eois.		

The Department of Environment is implementing EbA Project to increase capacity of government and local communities living in the Barind Tract and the Haor wetland area and to reduce the negative effects of climate change using Ecosystem-based approaches to Adaptation.

Project Director of the EbA Project now invites eligible applicants to express their interest in providing the services. *Terms of References (ToR) including scope of works, responsibilities, educational qualifications and experiences are available in the websites of DoE (www.doe.gov.bd) and CPTU (www.cptu.gov.bd). Applicants are advised to provide information indicating that they are qualified to perform the services in completed Curriculum Vitae (CV). Format of CV is available in the websites of DoE. The copy of ToR and Format of CV may also be obtained from the office mentioned above during office hours on all working days up to 30 November 2020, 01:00 PM.

One original and two copies of Expression of Interest (Eoi) must be submitted in the Project Director's office by post on or before 02 pm of 30th November 2020 in sealed envelope and be clearly marked the position for Expression of Interest. Applicants can send the Eoi through Email also at sohrab@doe.gov.bd.

Persons who are in service should submit application through proper channel, otherwise applications will be rejected. GD- 1819