

Japan declares atomic power emergency

UN to do everything to help Japan

AFP, Tokyo, United Nations

Japan said it was operating on an atomic power emergency footing but said no radiation leaks were detected among its reactors after an 8.9 magnitude earthquake struck yesterday, triggering a huge tsunami.

Prime Minister Naoto Kan declared the emergency to enable authorities to implement emergency measures. Residents living near plants were not required to take special action, Chief Cabinet Secretary Yukio Edano told a news conference.

"We have declared a nuclear emergency state to take every possible precaution," Edano said. "Let me repeat that there is no radiation leak, nor will there be a leak."

"We ask residents in the areas near power plants to act calmly."

A fire broke out in the turbine building of Onagawa nuclear plant in Miyagi Prefecture, but operator Tohoku Electric Power said there were no indications of a radioactive leak, Kyodo News reported.

Miyagi prefecture was one of the areas worst hit by the tsunami.

Meanwhile, UN chief Ban Ki-moon said the global body will "do anything and everything" to help Japan after a devastating 8.9-magnitude earthquake hit the country unleashing a Pacific-wide tsunami.

"We will do all to mobilise humanitarian assistance" and help with "risk reduction" efforts, Ban said at the UN headquarters.



PHOTO : AFP
Vehicles rest on a damaged road at a carpark in Yabuki (L), in southern Fukushima Prefecture and houses in flame (R), after being hit by a tsunami at Natori city in Miyagi prefecture, northern Japan yesterday. A massive 8.9-magnitude earthquake hit Japan unleashing a monster 10-metre high tsunami that sent ships crashing into the shore and carried cars through the streets of coastal towns.



More than 45 nations ready to help Japan

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations said yesterday that search and rescue teams from more than 45 countries were ready to head to quake and tsunami-hit Japan if the Asian state needs help.

"More than 68 teams from more than 45 countries are on standby," Elisabeth Byrs, spokeswoman of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) told AFP.

The search and rescue teams mobilised under a UN disaster response network are monitoring the situation and ready to help should Japan request aid, she explained.

"The UN stands ready to help," said Byrs.

Byrs told journalists that OCHA experts were in constant contact with their counterparts at Japan's disaster relief authority.

NEWS IN brief

Suspected Qaeda gunmen 'kill four Yemen police'

AFP, Aden

Suspected Al-Qaeda gunmen killed four Yemeni security personnel in an attack on a patrol in the southeast of the country, an official told AFP yesterday.

"Four policemen were killed when unknown gunmen attacked their patrol... east of Mukalla," capital of Hadramawt province, a security official said.

Yemen is a key US ally in the war against Al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), which has plotted several foiled attacks against the United States.

13 killed in Indonesia flash floods

AFP, Tangerang

Flash floods blamed on illegal logging killed 13 people and left six missing in Indonesia's Aceh province, officials and a resident said yesterday.

Thousands of people had to be evacuated as water surged through villages following hours of heavy rain on Thursday.

In another village, Alue Jambee, five people in one family were killed instantly by the flash flood as they tried to flee to higher ground.

Last year, flash floods in the remote area of Papua killed at least 148 people. The government denied the floods in Papua were caused by rampant defor-

Madrid confirms arrest of ETA military chief

AFP, Madrid

Armed Basque separatist group ETA's military commander Alejandro Zorbaran Arriola has been arrested in France, Spain's government confirmed yesterday.

French police arrested Arriola along with the outlawed outfit's logistical chief Mikel Oroz Torrea and two other suspected members, the Spanish interior ministry said in a statement.

The four suspects, whose identities had been confirmed by their fingerprints, were arrested late Thursday in the northeastern French hamlet of

Egypt frees two Sadat murder convicts

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's new military rulers have ordered the release of two Islamist prisoners jailed over the 1981 assassination of president Anwar Sadat, state television reported on Friday.

Cousins Tareq and Abbud al-Zomor, members of Egypt's Islamic Jihad, were convicted for their involvement in Sadat's murder but were never discharged from jail after their sentences expired.

Abbud, at the time a senior military intelligence officer, was due to be released in 2006 but was kept in prison, while Tareq was first ordered released in 2003 but was also kept behind bars.

UniCredit freezes Libyan share worth billions

AFP, Milan

Italy's top bank UniCredit said yesterday it had frozen a Libyan stake in the lender worth an estimated \$5.0 billion following the adoption of European Union sanctions.

"The exercise of rights relative to shares held will be frozen... following the decisions announced today by the European Union," UniCredit said.

The Libyan state is the biggest shareholder in UniCredit with a stake of 7.582-percent and Libya is

Libyan rebels fight back, West divided

AFP, Ajdabiya

Libyan rebels appealed for arms yesterday as they battled with Muammar Gaddafi's advancing forces, with a French and British call for targeted air strikes on the country highlighting EU divisions over how to deal with the crisis.

Rebels said fighting flared again in key eastern oil hub Ras Lanuf, the frontline in the uprising, after most of them were overwhelmed and driven out in a fierce battle on Thursday after occupying it for a week.

In the midst of a heavy-weapon duel, a warplane dropped bombs on a rebel checkpoint 10 kilometres (six miles) east of the town and on a nearby oil refinery, but no casualties were reported.

An AFP reporter saw flames and a massive plume of thick black smoke rising from the refinery, the second facility to be hit in the week's fighting.

Rebels had been sending trucks back to round up fighters and bring them forward to challenge for the town

but, shortly after the airstrike, around a dozen rebel trucks appeared to be pulling back.

It was not immediately clear whether they were regrouping or retreating.

One rebel commander earlier claimed his troops had already driven the army from Ras Lanuf, but a medic in contact with fighters on the ground said they were outgunned and down to isolated pockets of resistance.

On Thursday, state television said loyalists had "purged" Ras Lanuf, and Gaddafi's son Seif al-Islam, said victory was in sight.

But in Benghazi yesterday, up to 10,000 people poured onto the streets in a carnival-like atmosphere demanding Gaddafi to quit.

And the United Nations said more than 250,000 people had now fled the country since the revolt against Gaddafi started.

On Wednesday, Gaddafi's forces captured Zawiyah, the site of major oil installations 50 kilometres (30 miles) west of Tripoli, after several days of

fierce fighting.

With its fighters in retreat, the opposition appealed to the international community to intervene.

"The Libyans are being cleansed by Gaddafi's air force," Mustafa Abdel Jalil, the head of Libya's rebel national council, told the BBC. "We asked for a no-fly zone to be imposed from day one."

The appeal came as Western powers headed into crisis talks in Brussels yesterday, divided over how best to address the crisis in Libya, but agreed on one thing -- that Gaddafi must relinquish power immediately.

French President Nicolas Sarkozy said ahead of an EU summit that France and Britain favour targeted strikes if Gaddafi uses chemical weapons or air strikes against his people.

But he and British Prime Minister David Cameron were "ready on condition that the UN wishes, that the Arab League accepts and the Libyan opposition agrees, for targeted actions if Gaddafi uses chemical weapons or air strikes against peaceful citizens."

Gaddafi fires up propaganda machine

AFP, Tripoli

Muammar Gaddafi's government issued yesterday an SMS to Libyans boasting that the insurrection in the country's east is on the verge of defeat, the latest salvo in a propaganda blitz by his regime.

The army on Thursday declared victory over Zawiyah, a centre for anti-regime protests just west of Tripoli, Ras Lanuf, an oil town and the frontline in Libya's rebel uprising, and the eastern hamlet of Bin Jawad.

It dealt a tough blow for the rebels who for nearly a month have been threatening the foundations of Gaddafi's regime.

The government's propaganda machine has been using state television and texting through mobile phone networks to spread its triumphalist declarations.

Early yesterday, as Muslim worshippers prepared for weekly prayers, Libyans received a series of SMS claiming that forces loyal to Gaddafi would soon flood into Benghazi, Libya's second city and stronghold of the rebellion.

"The Benghazi loyal to Muammar Gaddafi will soon embrace the revolution" launched by the Libyan leader who led a bloodless coup overthrowing the monarchy nearly 42 years ago, the message said.

"Let the sad people of Benghazi rejoice. The day of liberation is near," said another SMS.

State television also trumpeted claims of military gains and beat the same drum as Gaddafi by blaming the insurgency on Al-Qaeda.

US drone strike kills 5 militants in Pakistan

AFP, Miranshah

At least five militants were killed in two US drone attacks in Pakistan's northwestern tribal region near the Afghan border yesterday, security officials said.

The first drone fired two missiles targeting a suspected militant vehicle in Khaisor town, about 30 kilometres north of Miranshah, the main town in the North Waziristan region, they said.

The attack left three militants dead, one official said. Another security official put the death toll at four.

Two more missiles followed about 15 minutes after the first strike, killing two militants, local officials said.

The second strike came as militants were engaged in rescue work after the first attack, a security official said.

Another official in Peshawar confirmed a total of five militants were killed in the two attacks.

The lawless tribal region is known as a hub of Taliban and Al-Qaeda linked militants fighting across the border in Afghanistan.

The United States does not confirm drone attacks, but its military and its Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) operating in Afghanistan are the only forces that deploy them in the region.

The covert US strikes cause anti-American hostility among the Pakistani public, who see foreign military action on Pakistani soil as a violation of national sovereignty.

Missile attacks doubled in the tribal areas last year as the campaign was stepped up, with more than 100 drone strikes killing over 670 people in 2010 compared with 45 strikes that killed 420 in 2009, according to an AFP tally.

India tests two nuclear-capable missiles

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

India tested two short-range nuclear-capable missiles along its eastern coast yesterday, an official said, as part of the nation's efforts to build up its nuclear deterrent.

One missile named Dhanush, which means "archer's bow" in Sanskrit, was fired yesterday morning from a naval ship in the Bay of Bengal off eastern Orissa state.

The second missile, the Prithvi II, or Earth, blasted off soon afterwards from a testing range at Chandipur-on-Sea, 200 kilometres (160 miles) northeast of Bhubaneswar, Orissa's state capital.

"The test of both missiles was successful and met all mission objectives," test range director SP Dash.

Yemeni police open fire on protesters, 14 injured

Saudi police in show of force to prevent protests

AFP, Aden

Police opened fire yesterday on anti-government protesters in Yemen, a day after embattled President Ali Abdullah Saleh offered sweeping political reform, witnesses said.

Despite Saleh's promises to protect the demonstrators, security forces used tear gas and live bullets to disperse thousands of people who marched toward Aden's Khor Maksar neighbourhood to demand democratic change.

At least 14 people were injured, including two who appeared to have been shot with live bullets, hospital staff said.

In the capital, a massive crowd of mourners attended the funeral of a protester who had been shot on Wednesday when police attacked student demonstrators near Sanaa University.

"The people want to overthrow the president," people chanted as they poured into a square near the university that has become the epicentre of anti-regime protests raging

since late January.

Saleh loyalists crowded into nearby Tahrir Square and police set up roadblocks to keep the two sides apart.

On Thursday he promised a referendum on a new constitution which would devolve power to parliament, but the offer was swiftly rejected by the opposition.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia launched a massive security operation yesterday in a menacing show of force to deter protesters from a planned a "Day of Rage" to press for democratic reform in the kingdom.

Illegal demonstrations were supposed to start after Muslim Friday prayers at noon but as the mosques emptied there were no signs of rallies, with security men manning checkpoints in key locations across several cities.

In the strategic Olaya commercial centre of the capital Riyadh, where protesters were urged to congregate, hundreds of security personnel surrounded the mosque and inspected motorists' identification documents.

A schoolgirl of 11 with an IQ of 162

THE DAILYMAIL ONLINE

She is 11 years old and enjoys swimming and playing the recorder. But while Victoria Cowie insists she is just like any other girl her age, in one respect she is very different.

The schoolgirl has just been admitted to Mensa after scoring 162 in an IQ test better than the 160 thought to have been achieved by Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawking and Bill Gates.

The result puts her in the top 1 per cent of the British population in terms of intelligence.

Victoria, who has been offered scholarships to four prestigious fee-paying schools, said: "When I got the results, I was really surprised."

"It's quite daunting to be compared to great minds, but it feels good also to be thought of as that clever."

"I really enjoy puzzles and working things out and I think I'll go on to study sciences, especially biology, when I'm older."

Victoria took the adult admission tests for Mensa, the society for people



with a high IQ.

As well as surpassing brilliant scientists and Microsoft founder Mr Gates, her score gives her a higher IQ than Sigmund Freud, who is thought to have had an IQ of 156, Napoleon Bonaparte, with 145, and Hillary Clinton, with 140.

Only those with an IQ of 148 and above the top 2 per cent of the population qualify for Mensa. The average IQ is 100.

Her mother Alison, 44, said she was proud of her daughter. "When she was at nursery she had the reading ability of a child twice her age and she won science awards at school," Mrs Cowie added.

"We always knew she was clever she was always in the top sets and her teachers always praised her but we never quite thought she'd be in Mensa."

I Coast's Ouattara seeks diplomatic backing

AFP, Addis Ababa

Ivory Coast's Alassane Ouattara was to head to Nigeria yesterday to muster more diplomatic support after winning African Union backing in his bitter leadership dispute with rival Laurent Gbagbo.

Ouattara, Ivory Coast's internationally recognised president, had travelled to Addis Ababa for a meeting with an AU heads of state panel tasked with ending the crisis sparked by the disputed November 28 presidential run-off results.

The panel on Thursday confirmed Ouattara's victory among other findings, sparking an immediate rejection by Gbagbo's camp.

Thai PM to dissolve parliament by early May

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's prime minister said yesterday he would dissolve the lower house of parliament by early May for what is expected to be a hard-fought election in the politically divided nation.

The move would pave the way for a vote in late June or early July as by law polls must be held between 45 and 60 days after house dissolution.

"It's about time for voters to decide what they really want," Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva told reporters.

"I believe that an election is crucial for people to decide the direction of politics," he said. "Many people do not want to see any more unrest and want to move ahead."

Thai society remains bitterly divided following the country's worst civil violence in decades last year.

Abhisit, the British-born, Oxford-educated head of the establishment Democrat Party, must call a vote by the end of this year, when his term finishes, but he has repeatedly said he favours early polls.

The head of the country's election commission, Apichart Sukhaggonond, told reporters yesterday he believed a June election would be best.