



PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

Apparently four members of a family travel on a motorbike near Jatrabari in the capital. The family crammed on to the vehicle meant for only two people. Only the rider has a helmet on.

S Sudan ceasefire monitors needed urgently: Envoys

AFP, Addis Ababa

Monitors of South Sudan's fragile ceasefire must deploy immediately, top diplomats warned yesterday, as regional leaders met to bolster peace efforts for the war-torn young nation.

Clashes continue despite the deal signed last week by government and rebels, brokered by the East African bloc, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD).

IGAD teams are meant to ensure the warring sides honour their deal, but many fear the unarmed observers will struggle to monitor loose frontlines between multiple forces in a vast country with few roads.

Leaders of Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia and Sudan met on the sidelines of the final day of an African Union summit, where the bloodshed in South Sudan has been a key focus.

Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn warned on Thursday South Sudan faced "falling into the abyss" without urgent action.

IGAD special envoy Seyoum Mesfin urged leaders to set up ceasefire monitoring teams within 48 hours, and called on rival sides to ensure a "progressive withdrawal" of forces from frontlines.

Both UN special envoy Haile Menkerios and US special envoy Donald Booth said it was "critical" monitoring teams be put swiftly in place to report on any violations, including by foreign forces.

Teams must be "provided with the necessary political and logistical support as well as unfettered access," Haile said.

Thousands are believed to have been killed in the fighting pitting forces loyal to President

Salva Kiir against a loose coalition of army defectors and ethnic militia nominally headed by sacked vice president Riek Machar, a seasoned guerrilla fighter.

Both government and rebels accused each other of violating the deal but insist they are committed to ending a bloodshed in which thousands have killed and more than 800,000 forced from their homes.

"Those who might seek to undermine the peace process should know that we are all watching, and that there will be consequences for such would-be spoilers," Booth added.

Uganda, a key IGAD member, sent in troops to back President Salva Kiir days after fighting broke out, while rebels from Sudan's war-torn Darfur region are also reported to have taken part in battles.

Uganda Foreign Minister Sam Kutesa told reporters there were "no plans yet" to withdraw troops.

"We are not advancing ourselves, we have just stopped the rebels from advancing southwards," he said.

South Sudan's Vice President James Wani Igga said that Uganda would not withdraw from the country as it was a "long battle", although said that forces would "progressively" pull back from frontlines.

Rebel spokesman Lul Ruai Koang claimed fresh clashes on Saturday, reports dismissed as false by army spokesman Philip Aguer.

While South Sudan released seven detainees accused of involvement in an alleged failed December 15 coup bid that triggered the bloodshed, it has also vowed to put on trial seven other key leaders -- three who are on the

KSA launches crackdown

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Pakistani, Indian and Yemeni nationals among the detainees, who either had forged documents or criminal charges against them, Saudi police said.

Saudi police have been conducting the raids in cooperation with various security and government agencies including the passport department.

When contacted, Noor Mohammad Masum, first secretary (labour) of Bangladesh embassy in Riyadh, yesterday said they had information of some Bangladeshis having been detained but could not confirm the number.

"We have received information that some

Relieved, finally

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in the arms smuggling, were released later on directives from the then ex-state minister for home Lutfozzaman Babar, the court said.

Villagers alleged 14 innocents, mostly small contractors of the jetty, were named in the charge sheet only to divert the case.

According to the first charge sheet, the accused from this village supplied labourers for offloading the arms and ammunition.

However, after a decade of trial, the Chittagong Metropolitan Special Tribunal-1 on Thursday acquitted 38 people and handed down death penalty to 14 others, including the 11 bigwigs.

The 14 villagers whom the court acquitted are Sanwar Hossain Chowdhury, Dilder Hossain Chowdhury, Mariam Begam, Jasim Uddin, Abdul Aziz, Mohammad Akhter, Mohammad Jahangir, Nurul Afsar, Arju Mia, Ejhar Mia, Mojibur Rahman Bhulu, Sheikh Mohammad, Fazal Ahmad Chowdhury and Akbar Ali.

Abdul Aziz and his two brothers -- Akhter

Jamaat calls hartal

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hatching conspiracy to kill the Jamaat chief with false allegations, he added.

A Chittagong court on Thursday handed down the death penalty to 14 people, including ex-ministers Lutfozzaman Babar and Nizami and former top intelligence officials, for smug-

gling 10 truckloads of arms into the port city during the last BNP-led government's tenure.

The 14 convicts were also given life sentences for possessing illegal firearms and ammunition in another case filed over the largest-ever arms haul in the country about a decade ago.

Turkey purges

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of a "coup plot" against his government in a crucial election year.

But Erdogan's purges, coupled with legislation aimed at increasing government control on the judiciary and the Internet, have raised deep concern at home and abroad about the state of democracy in the majority Muslim country.

Erdogan's AK Party has won three elections since 2002. A hitherto weak opposition sees local elections next month and a presidential poll later this year as an opportunity to make inroads into his vote.

Murdered for protesting

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"My husband and sons were tied to a tree and beaten up mercilessly before my eyes," wailed Maloti Rani, wife of the deceased, as she was sitting beside his husband's body.

"They tortured my husband and my sons. They screamed for help. But nobody came," Maloti went on.

The two sons-- Pares Chandra Roy, 20, and Madhab Chandra Roy, 22-- are still undergoing treatment at the RMCH.

Subol's brother Dhoneswar Chandra Roy has filed a murder case against Gazi Miah and his gang members.

Gazi and the others accused in the case have fled the village after Subol's death and police were on the hunt for the culprits, said Aslam Iqbal, officer-in-charge of Aditmari Police Station.

Thai polling stations may close over polls day trouble

REUTERS, Bangkok

Thai authorities might close polling booths if violence erupts during Sunday's disputed election which could further undermine the credibility of a vote that is deemed incapable of restoring stability in the polarised country.

The government has vowed to push ahead with the general election despite threats by anti-government protesters, camped out at major intersections in Bangkok, that they will disrupt the polls in an attempt to stop Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra's Puea Thai Party from returning to power.

The anti-government protesters took to the streets in November in the latest round of an eight-year conflict that pits Bangkok's middle class, southern Thais and the royalist establishment against the mostly poor, rural supporters of Yingluck and her brother, former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, who was ousted in 2006.

The main opposition Democrat party, which backs the anti-government protests, is boycotting the election, which Yingluck's party is bound to win but without enough members to achieve a quorum in parliament.

The prospect of polling stations having to close early because of trouble on the streets will only add to doubts about the vote's legitimacy.

Puchong Nutrawong, secretary-general of the Election Commission, said it was concentrating on security in Bangkok and the south, where the opposition is strong, after hundreds of thousands of people were prevented from casting their ballot during early voting last Sunday when protesters obstructed polling venues.

"We're focusing our security efforts in Bangkok and in the south. I've asked commission officials to call polling venues in southern

Thailand today to ensure we are as prepared as we can be," Puchong told Reuters.

"If any polling station faces a security threat it can shut down."

The protesters say they want to rid the country of the Shinawatra family's political influence and accuse Yingluck, who swept to power in the last election in 2011, of being Thaksin's puppet.

The protesters say the self-exiled Thaksin is a corrupt crony capitalist who commandeered Thailand's fragile democracy, using taxpayers' money to buy votes with costly populist giveaways. Thaksin has been abroad since 2008 to avoid a jail term for graft.

He or his allies have won every election since 2001. His passionate supporters say he was the first Thai political leader to keep campaign promises to help the poor.

FEAR OF BLOODSHED

Protest leader Suthep Thaugsuban led a march in Bangkok on Friday, part of a three-day push to show opposition to the vote. He wants political reforms, including the setting up of a "people's council" of notable worthies, before another election is held.

More than 93,000 polling stations will be set up around the country on Sunday. The commission, which had wanted to postpone the vote because of the volatility, said it had authority to order troops and police to help ensure the election takes place.

"We don't want to use these powers because we don't want to see clashes that lead to bloodshed," said Puchong.

The protesters, members of the People's Democratic Reform Committee, forced polling stations in 49 of 50 districts in Bangkok to shut last weekend and voting could only go ahead in

Harassed for no offence

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me to accompany him to the Detective Branch office and talk about the arms haul. I agreed without any hesitation," said Mariam sitting at her home yesterday afternoon.

The woman in her 50s said she had no clue that she had been implicated in the cases already and that her name was in the charge sheet.

"I was first taken to the Detective Branch office in Chittagong, from there to Kotwali Police Station. They kept me over night at Double Mooring Police Station," she told The Daily Star.

The next morning she was again taken to the DB office for more interrogation.

"You are my sister. Please tell us the story of arms smuggling. You can also say that they [smugglers] promised you Tk 2 lakh but you never got it," she quoted an interrogator as telling her.

She knew nothing. She was not even home on the night of April 1, 2004, when police captured the arms at CUFL jetty. She was at Mohsen Aulia shrine in the upazila and had heard about the seizure the following day on reaching home.



PHOTO: PID

A number of BNP leaders and activists led by its secretary general and vice president of Pirganj upazila unit in Rangpur join the Awami League. They presented Awami League chief Sheikh Hasina with a boat-shaped bouquet at the Gono Bhaban yesterday.

Philippine typhoon survivors brace for new storm

AFP, Tacloban

Hundreds of people who survived Super Typhoon Haiyan are bracing for a new storm that is expected to hit the central Philippines late yesterday, officials said.

Tropical storm Kajiki, packing maximum winds of 100 kilometres (62 miles) per hour, is expected to hit the central island of Leyte before midnight, cutting through the archipelago as it heads towards the South China Sea, the government weather station said.

Although Kajiki is far weaker than Haiyan -- one of the strongest storms ever to hit land with winds reaching 315 kilometres (195 miles) per hour -- authorities are still warning it could bring new flashfloods and landslides to communities living in already rudimentary shelters.

Leyte suffered the worst casualties when Super Typhoon Haiyan struck in November,

flattening whole towns and leaving about 8,000 dead or missing.

In the island's still-ruined capital of Tacloban City, about 150 families living near the coast evacuated ahead of time before the storm hit.

The residents, who are still housed in tents after Haiyan destroyed their homes, fled to higher ground or took refuge with friends or relatives, said city administrator Tecson Lim.

Housewife Bising Alberta 55, said her family had decided to voluntarily flee "even before the government told us to evacuate," as she and her loved ones packed up to find shelter in a crowded boarding house.

During Haiyan's fury, her house was wiped out by large waves and she had to be hospitalised for her subsequent injuries.

"I am a survivor (of Haiyan). I am scared of water now. Even if it is just drizzling, I am already frightened," she said.

Water on Moon

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of intelligent mass — an experiment, a computer, something designed to accomplish some job or give us some capability," said lunar geologist Paul Spudis, with the Lunar and Planetary Institute in Houston.

The first in-space ISRU test is targeted for 2018, "Discovery News" reported.

Nasa plans to launch a mission called Resource Prospector that includes a rover with instruments to scout for telltale hydrogen, drill out samples, heat them and scan for water vapour and other volatiles on the moon.

Vapour also could be re-condensed to form a drop of water.

A second ISRU experiment is due to be aboard Nasa's next Mars rover, which is slated for launch in 2020.

The device, which is yet to be selected, would pull carbon dioxide from the planet's atmosphere, filter out dust and other particles and prepare the gas for chemical processing into oxygen.

The demonstration also could include actual oxygen production, the report said.