

Turkey ruling party veterans criticise Istanbul vote re-run

AFP, Ankara

Two former heavyweights of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's ruling party have criticised a decision to re-run the Istanbul mayoral election, expressing concern the decision would damage the state's reputation.

They have added their voices to a chorus of criticism from abroad.

Former prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu on Tuesday said the decision to annul the results of the March 31 election, which was won by the main opposition, "caused damage to one of our fundamental values".

"The biggest loss for political movements is not losing elections but the loss of moral superiority and social conscience," he wrote on Twitter.

The top election body on Monday ordered a replay of the Istanbul mayoral election. The shock victory of the main opposition in the election was a blow to the ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP).

Abdullah Gul, former president and co-founder of the AKP, also criticised the ruling, saying it showed the party had not "made any headway" since past constitutional spats.

Both men have fallen out with Erdogan since their time in office and there have been persistent rumours over the years that they may set up their own parties.

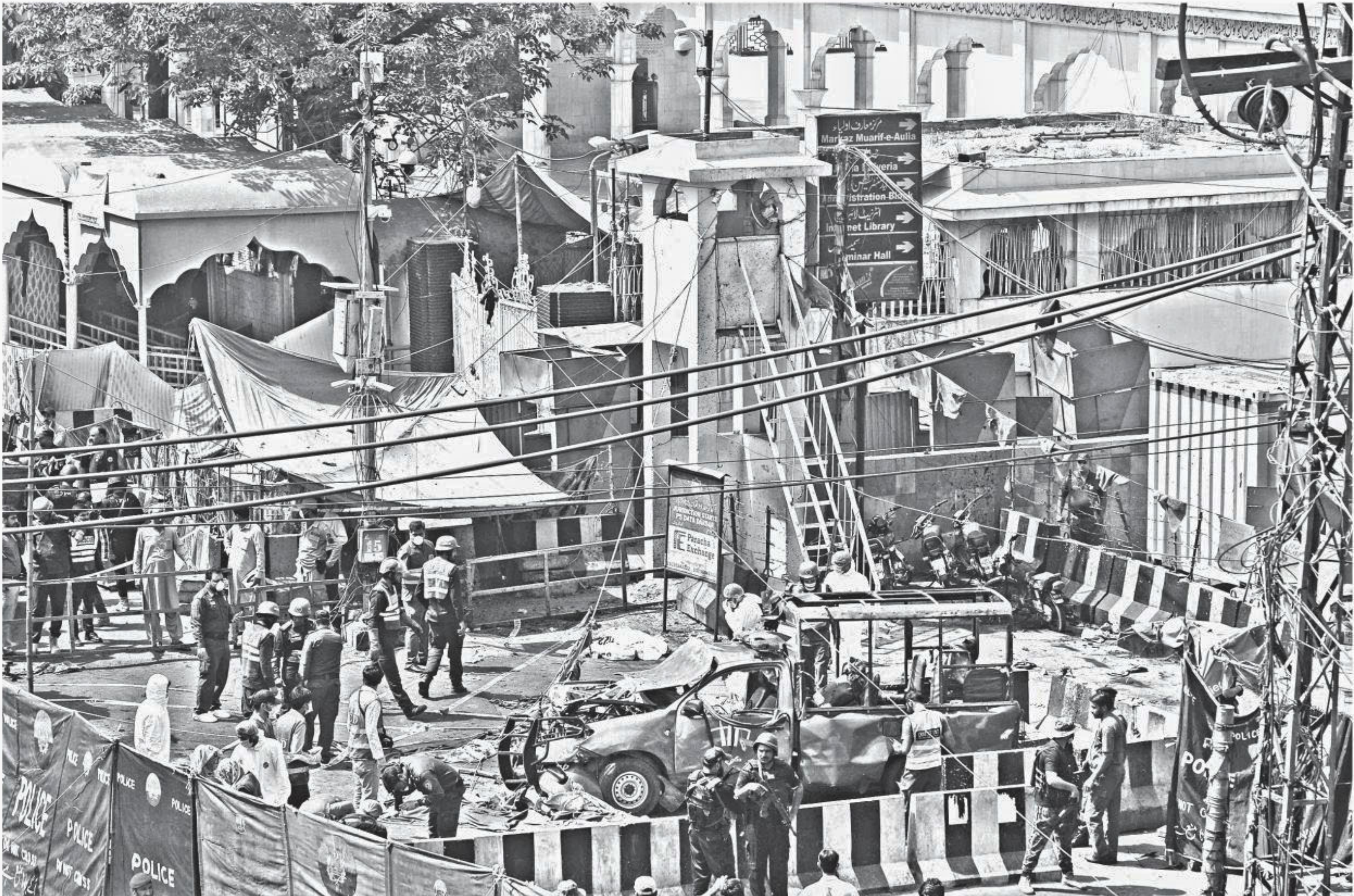
Gul, who has lately kept his distance from daily politics, compared the situation to a 2007 ruling by the country's top court that prevented him from becoming president without a two-thirds majority in parliament.

"What I felt in 2007... that is what I felt yesterday when another high court, the Supreme Electoral Council, took its decision. It is a pity that we have not made any headway," he tweeted.

Before last year's presidential and general elections there was speculation that Gul would run against Erdogan, but he never did.

As well as protests from the country's opposition, a number of countries have expressed concern at the court's decision.

Germany Foreign Minister on Tuesday described the decision as "incomprehensible", and the European Union has asked for an explanation.



Pakistani security officials cordon off the site of a bomb blast outside a Sufi shrine in Lahore on May 8, 2019. A blast at one of Pakistan's oldest and most popular Sufi shrines killed at least 10 people and wounded 24, police said.

PHOTO: AFP

Mexico confirms 13 dead in luxury jet crash

AFP, Monterrey

Mexican authorities found Tuesday human remains that confirm the death of the 13 people on board a luxury jet that crashed over the weekend in the north of the country.

The private plane took off Sunday from Las Vegas and was traveling to the Mexican city of Monterrey but crashed in a mountainous area difficult to access, where forensic experts had to arrive by helicopter.

The experts "recovered all the bodies -- there are 13 of them," Coahuila state attorney general Gerardo Marquez said.

He explained that seven of the bodies were "practically intact" but burned, while the other six were "reduced to very small fragments" due to the impact.

The remains were identified thanks to the positions in which the bodies were found among the debris of the aircraft. Further identification will take place by analyzing teeth and bone fragments.

Air-traffic controllers said they lost contact with the Bombardier Challenger 601 jet late Sunday, after it abruptly lost altitude over Coahuila.

Only the wings and the tail were left intact while the fuselage was badly charred and shattered.

Aboard the plane were two executives of the Mexican oil services company Typhoon Offshore, along with eight relatives, according to a company statement. The group had come to Las Vegas to attend a fight in which Mexican boxer Saul "El Canelo" Alvarez defeated Daniel Jacobs of the United States.

On Twitter, the athlete expressed sorrow over the incident, saying "my prayers are with their relatives."

The other three people who died were the crew of the plane, a twin-engine Bombardier Challenger 600 series.

Coahuila Undersecretary of Civil Protection Francisco Martinez pointed to changing weather, with storms, hailstorms and strong winds as a possible cause of the crash.

First grader

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afternoon, said, the victim lost a huge amount of blood and was so sick that she could not narrate the incident properly.

The victim's father later filed a rape case accusing the teenager.

In Gazipur, a twelve-year-old girl, who gave birth last December after being raped by a man in whose house she worked, was raped again on Tuesday in Sreepur upazila.

The victim's family and locals said, the girl and her parents live in a rented house in Gilarchala village.

Sreepur Police Station's OC (inspector) Sheikh Sadi said the victim's family alleged that last year, Jahirul, the son of the owner of the house the girl worked at, raped her after which she became pregnant.

In December, she gave birth. Jahirul and his family members, however, refused to take responsibility and denied the identity of the child.

On Tuesday, the girl was raped again by Sejan, 19, who is Jahirul's neighbour, when her parents were not home, he added.

Blast

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been the target of bloody attacks in Pakistan by Islamist militants -- including the Islamic State group -- who consider Sufi beliefs and rituals at the graves of Muslim saints as heresy.

Senior police official Muhammad Ashfaq told a press conference that the security personnel at the shrine were targeted.

Three police officials, two security guards and five civilians including a child were among the dead, Punjab province chief minister Usman Buzdar said.

BUSY SHRINE
Pakistan's push against extremism was stepped up after the country's deadliest ever attack, an assault on a school in Peshawar in 2014 that left more than 150 people dead -- mostly children.

Since then, security has dramatically improved but militants retain the ability to carry out major attacks.

Major urban centres such as Lahore, Pakistan's second largest city and the provincial capital of its wealthiest province, Punjab, are not immune.

An attack in the city in March last year left nine people dead, while

9th grader

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Abdul immediately informed the matter to the villagers who contacted Faruk Ahmed, a member of Shamsheernagar Union Council.

"After they approached me, I communicated with Shamsheernagar station master and relevant public works department officials right away," Faruk told this paper yesterday.

Shamsheernagar Stationmaster Kabir Ahmed said he then informed about the broken fishplate to Monir Hossain, senior deputy assistant engineer at the railways' public works department in Sreemangal.

"Monir and his team rushed to the spot and replaced the broken fishplate with a new one. Everything was fixed by 11:45pm. The train later plied as usual," he said. "Abul Hossain's conscious attitude saved many lives."

'It's magic'

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British throne, was calm, had the sweetest temperament and was sleeping well.

"He's just been the dream so it's been a special couple of days," she said.

The Duke and Duchess of Sussex have named their newborn son Archie Harrison Mountbatten-Windsor.

The baby was born in the early hours of Monday morning, weighing 7 lb 3oz (3.26 kg), but few other details have been given about the birth.

"It's great, parenting is amazing," Harry said. "It's only been two-and-a-half days, three days, but we're just so thrilled to have our own little bundle of joy, to be able to spend some precious time with him as he slowly starts to grow up."

The couple said they were about to visit 93-year-old Elizabeth, the world's longest-reigning monarch, at the castle to allow her to meet her eighth great-grandchild.

Meghan's mother Doria Ragland is staying with the couple at their home Frogmore Cottage, on the castle's estate.

"It will be a nice moment to introduce the baby to more family

a major blast targeting Christians celebrating Easter in a park in 2016 killed more than 70 people.

Critics have long argued the military and government crackdown has not addressed the root causes of extremism in Pakistan, where hardline Muslim groups often target religious minorities.

The Data Darbar complex contains the shrine of Saint Syed Ali bin Osman Al-Hajvery, popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh. Originally from Afghanistan, he was one of the most popular Sufi preachers on the subcontinent.

Tens of thousands of pilgrims visit the shrine each spring to mark his death anniversary, while it is also crowded weekly with worshippers listening to qawwali, a traditional form of Islamic devotional music.

PCJSS man

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criminals picked up Binoy from his relative's house in the union and shot him publicly around 9:45pm.

Seeking anonymity, a witness said that the criminals were speaking Arakan and Marma language.

Uchow Mong Marma, president of Bandarban district unit PCJSS-MN Larma, alleged that Arakan Liberation Party was involved in the murder. He also demanded immediate arrest of the culprits.

"Some ruling party men have been sheltering Arakan Liberation Party men and using them to harm locals, mostly targeting PCJSS men, since the 11th parliamentary election," Uchow Mong added.

Contacted, Yeasir Arafat, additional police super of Bandarban Sadar circle, said they had information about Arakan Liberation Party, locally known as Mogh Bahini.

About the death of PCJSS-MN Larma man, Yeasir said, "We are conducting drives to arrest the culprits."

Kwe Shwe Hla, president of Bandarban district Awami League, however, denied commenting in this regard.

and my mum's with us as well," Meghan said.

Britain's royals attract huge fascination and there is particular interest in Harry and former US actress Meghan.

Given their worldwide popularity, the birth of their first child has attracted particular attention, especially as the new child is first mixed race child to be born into a senior position in British royalty in recent history.

He is also entitled to hold US citizenship while also automatically being a British national.

However, the baby will not automatically be a prince or a princess, or be known as "His Royal Highness", unless the queen issues a specific decree.

"Thank you all so much, and thank you everybody for all the well-wishes and the kindness, it just means so much," Meghan said.

Harry could not resist cracking a joke as he pulled back the blanket to allow cameras to get a better look at his son.

"He's already got a little bit of facial as well - wonderful," joked the bearded prince.

Crafting

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built a sturdy brick home, thanks to the collective earning of the family members including his wife.

"My wife, daughter-in-law and daughter all make handicrafts at home. Together, they earn at least Tk 20,000 a month," he said.

Nargis Akter, 37, another resident of Hapunia village, said she gets Tk 8,000 to Tk 10,000 a month. She has been working at the factory of BD Creation, one of the six companies, for the last ten years.

"More than 95 percent of the women of this village are involved in making handicrafts."

Zosna Begum, 35, said she learnt this craft when she was just a little girl. Women here never go to Dhaka to look for work in garment factories as there are plenty of work opportunities in these villages, she added.

Rarid Hasan, area manager of BD Creation, said, "We have over 500 home artisans and 200 factory workers, who are mostly women. The home artisans collect the raw materials from us and sell the finished products back to us."

He said there are six companies -- Sun Trade, Classical Handmade Products BD, Dhaka Handicraft, ASK Handicraft, Crafts Village and Creative BD -- that collectively produce handicrafts worth Tk 2 crore every month from Bogura.

Mostafa Ahmed Pias, managing director of BD Creation, said they produce 200 different items from Bogura and export those to countries like Australia, Germany, France, Italy, Brazil, Portugal, Sweden, Denmark, China, India, USA, and the Middle East.

"To bag orders, we participate in one fair in Germany and two in Hong Kong, where all the big buyers attend."

In Hapunia village alone, there are six factories -- two of BD creation, three of Classical Handmade and one of Sun Trade.

Rabiul Hasan, production manager at Classical Handmade, said, "We employ nearly 200 artisans in each factory in the village."

The first handicraft factory in this area was setup in 1980, he said. It has grown over the years due to the availability of raw materials and workers.

"The raw materials mostly come from nearby villages and the char areas of Jamuna River."

Chinese

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collect information on whether he was a member of any international smuggling group," said the commissioner.

The recovered gold will be deposited to the Bangladesh Bank, he said, adding that the detainee was handed over to Patenga Police Station and the process of filing a case against him was underway.

Earlier on March 24, two Chinese men were arrested at Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport (HSIA) on charges of trying to smuggle 96 gold bars, weighing about 11kg, into the country.

Ruan Jinfeng, 48, and Yonggang Zu, 45, were caught hours apart at the airport's green channel with the gold bars hidden inside portable lights.

Earlier on March 13, a preventive team of Dhaka Customs House seized 48 gold bars and detained two Chinese nationals at the HSIA.

The arrestees Chen Jifa, 29, and Ding Shousheng, 35, came to Dhaka on an Air Arabian flight, said customs officials.

Boko Haram kills nine in Nigeria

AFP, KANO

Boko Haram fighters have killed nine people in two separate attacks in northeastern Nigeria, looting and torching a village and ambushing three farmers, officials and local militia forces said yesterday.

Fighters packed in trucks stormed into the village of Molai just before sunset on Tuesday, when villagers were preparing to pray and break their fast for the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.

The jihadist gunmen, loyal to Boko Haram chief Abubakar Shekau, killed six people and burned dozens of homes.

Usman Kyari, who heads the state Emergency Management Agency, said six bodies were collected after the attack. All had been shot dead.

"The insurgents burnt around 40 homes and looted goods," Kyari said.

Molai, which is five kilometres (three miles) from Borno state capital Maiduguri, has been repeatedly attacked by the jihadists.

A member of a militia force, which fights alongside regular government soldiers, said the Boko Haram fighters were too many and they were overpowered.

"We all withdrew from the village," the militia soldier said.

Later, Nigerian aircraft bombed the area, and the jihadists retreated, he added.

In a separate attack, Boko Haram fighters killed three farmers near the town of Konduga, 38 kilometres (24 miles) outside Maiduguri, militia leader Ibrahim Liman said.

"The gunmen slit the throats of the

farmers and dumped their bodies," Liman told AFP.

The militants often kill farmers, loggers and herders, accusing them of passing information to the army.

Boko Haram's decade-long uprising to establish a hardline Islamic state in Nigeria's northeast has spilled into neighbouring Niger, Chad and Cameroon.

A regional military coalition is battling the Islamist group.

At least 27,000 people have been killed in Nigeria alone, and some two million others from their homes.

Seven feared dead in Siberia avalanche

AFP, Moscow

Seven hikers were missing and feared dead after an avalanche in Russia's Altai mountains, emergency officials said yesterday, as search parties were dispatched to the area.

Nine people were caught in the avalanche Monday in the so-called Chuya Alps of Russia's Altai republic in southern Siberia, close to Kazakhstan and China.

"Two people managed to get out" and informed authorities yesterday, said the head of Altai's emergency services, Andrei Burlakov.

"Since the avalanche is rather large, the search and rescue operations can stretch out to an indefinite amount of time," he said.

Wasa water

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that it had formed a four-member committee to examine the quality of the Wasa water.

Members of the committee are from the Ministry of Local Government, Rural Development and Cooperatives, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology, Dhaka University and International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research, Bangladesh to examine the quality of the water supplied by Wasa.

Dhaka Wasa stated in the report that it would examine the water at the laboratories of DU, BUET and icddr,b after getting the necessary funds.

The Wasa will take at least four months to get the Wasa water tested at the labs, DAG Motaher Hossain Sazu told The Daily Star.

The HC will pass further order on this issue on Monday, he said.

Following the same writ petition filed by Tanvir Ahmed, the HC on November 7 last year ordered Dhaka Wasa to form a four-member committee to test its water quality.

The court also issued a rule asking the authorities concerned of the government to explain why their failure to supply safe water should not be declared illegal, and why they should not be directed to do so.

In the writ petition filed on October 14, Tanvir Ahmed included a report published by The Daily Star on October 12.

The Daily Star report, based on a World Bank study, said 98 percent of Bangladesh's people had access to water from technologically-improved sources, but E coli contamination was found in 80 percent of the household tap water

across the country.

About two weeks ago, some residents of Jurain appeared at the Wasa Bhaban in Karwan Bazar with lemons, sugar, and a jar of murky tap water "supplied by Wasa".

As a means of protest, they wanted to "treat" Wasa MD Taqsem A Khan with sherbet. A few days prior to that, Taqsem had said Wasa water was completely safe for drinking.

On Tuesday, Movement for Safe WASA Water, a platform of sufferers, held a mass hearing where it showcased 22 bottles of water which they claimed to have collected from different households of Jurain, Shyampur, Kadamtali and Mirhajirbag areas under ward no 51, 52, 53, 54, 58, 59 and 60 of Dhaka South City Corporation.

Two of the bottles had blackish water while the rest contained water that was yellowish.

In a recent survey, Transparency International Bangladesh, said that about 91 percent of Wasa clients have to boil water before drinking, although it was already supposed to be safe for drinking.

On an average, this second layer of purification at the individual level costs natural gas worth Tk 332 crore every month.

However, WASA's Managing Director Taqsem binned the TTB report.

On April 20, Taqsem boasted that Wasa water "is 100 percent pure" while also admitting that sometimes he too boils the water at his home.

"I fail to understand why people would burn gas to boil supply water that is 100 percent pure and safe," he said at a press conference.