

Elevated metro line collapses in Mexico

At least 23 killed, dozens hurt

AFP, Mexico City

An elevated metro line collapsed in the Mexican capital on Monday, leaving at least 23 people dead and dozens injured as a train came plunging down, authorities said.

Carriages were seen hanging from the overpass in a tangle of twisted cables with the ends pointing towards the ground in a V-shape.

"Unfortunately there are 23 deceased," including minors, Mexico City Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum told reporters at the scene in the south of the capital.

Around 65 others received hospital treatment following the dramatic accident, one of the worst to strike the Mexico City metro since it was inaugurated in 1969.

Anxious relatives gathered at the site awaiting news of those believed to have been aboard the train.

Dozens of emergency workers were seen trying to rescue victims from the carriages.

The work had to be suspended because of fears the wreckage was too unstable, but it later resumed with the help of a crane.

A car was trapped under the rubble, but a person inside managed to get out alive, she said.

Sheinbaum promised a structural examination of the affected metro line, which will remain closed, and a full investigation into the causes of the accident.

"We will report the whole truth. Our support to all victims," Sheinbaum tweeted.

The Mexico City subway has 12 lines and carries millions of passengers each day.



Rescuers work at a site where an overpass for a metro partially collapsed with train cars on it at Olivos station in Mexico City, Mexico on Monday night. At least 23 people were killed and 65 were hospitalized when the railway overpass and train collapsed onto a busy road.

PHOTO: REUTERS

NEWS IN BRIEF

Netanyahu faces midnight deadline to form govt

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faced a midnight deadline yesterday to form a government, a daunting task that would likely require convincing the Jewish far right to cooperate with an Islamic party. Netanyahu was given a 28-day window to forge a majority coalition following a March 23 general election, Israel's fourth inconclusive vote in less than two years. The prime minister's right-wing Likud party won the most seats in the vote, but he failed to secure a majority in the 120-seat parliament. A coalition will require coming to terms with his estranged former protégé Naftali Bennett, leader of the hawkish Yamina party. It will also require persuading the far-right Religious Zionism alliance to tacitly cooperate with the Islamic conservative Raam party.

Biden to allow up to 62,500 refugees into US after row

President Joe Biden announced Monday, after coming under fierce criticism, that he was raising the maximum number of refugees allowed into the United States this year to 62,500 -- up from the 15,000 cap imposed by his predecessor Donald Trump. The change follows backlash from allies over Biden's earlier decision to keep the Trump-era limits -- a politically costly moment of confusion that stood out in a White House notable for its iron discipline in its first three months. The program is only for refugees selected by US security and intelligence agencies from United Nations camps around the world.

Twitter bans Kangana Ranaout for hateful posts



Twitter Inc says it has banned leading Bollywood actress Kangana Ranaut, known for her ardent support of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accusing her of violating its rules on hateful conduct and abusive behaviour. Following the election in by TMC over Modi's BJP, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's party was accused of violent attacks on its defeated opponents, which it denies. In her tweet, Ranaut called Banerjee an "unleashed monster" and urged Modi to "tame her". "We need super gundai (hooliganism in Hindi) to kill gundai... Modi ji (a honorific) please show your Virat roop (larger-than-life form) from the early 2000s," she posted, an apparent reference to 2002 Gujarat riots that took place when Modi was the state chief minister.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS

'People have shown the way'

Mamata says Bengal showed 'BJP can be defeated' as she dodges question on her possible PM bid in 2024

NDTV ONLINE

The Bengal election results have proved that the BJP can be defeated and people have shown the way, Mamata Banerjee said yesterday on her remarkable victory.

"They need political oxygen," she quipped in an exclusive interview to NDTV.

Defying most projections, Mamata Banerjee won 213 seats (total 292) in Bengal, limiting the BJP to double digits (77).

"The BJP can be defeated. At the end of the day it is a democracy and it is the people's choice that matters. People have shown the way. In a democracy you should not show audacity or ego. I will request the Election Commission to follow rajdharma and back not only the BJP but all parties," she told NDTV, bringing up her party's allegations about the poll body's bias and discrimination.



"The BJP is a communal party, they are trouble-mongers, they are creating fake videos, they are misusing their powers, they misuse agencies; they want to demolish federalism, bulldoze the federal character of the country."

People must come together to fight the BJP, she said.

"This kind of agency politics (using CBI, Enforcement Directorate) should come to an end and that will be the end of the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah era of politics. Even the old BJP members

reject the Narendra Modi-Amit Shah style of politics. The country cannot face this kind of politics anymore. There are many better candidates than Modi and Amit Shah."

But the firebrand politician, set for her third term as Bengal Chief Minister, was cautious on the possibility of emerging as the opposition's candidate to take on Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2024.

"Sometimes you cannot decide all the things right now. It is different during election time. There has to be a common minimum programme... Now is the time to fight the Covid battle. After the Covid battle is over, we will decide, we will set up an expert team also so that they can guide us. Automatically it will come up. Because the country cannot face this disaster. This BJP means disaster."

AFTERMATH OF US TROOPS PULLOUT

Thousands flee as clashes flare in Aghanistan

AFP, Kandahar

Thousands of Afghans were forced to flee their homes as fierce fighting erupted between government forces and the Taliban in a southern province after the US military began withdrawing its remaining troops from Afghanistan, officials said yesterday.

Afghan forces pushed back insurgent attacks on multiple checkpoints in the past 24 hours in the province of Helmand where the US military on Sunday handed over a base to government forces as part of its formal pullout that began on May 1.

About 1,000 families have fled their homes to escape the fighting that erupted on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand, and some other parts of the province, said Sayed Mohammad Ramin, the region's director for refugees.

He said the families had taken refuge in Lashkar Gah and had come from areas where fighting was intense in the past two days.

The defence ministry said government forces had killed more than 100 Taliban fighters in Helmand in the past 24 hours when the insurgents attacked some checkpoints on the outskirts of Lashkar Gah. Another 22 al-Qaeda fighters from Pakistan were also killed in the fighting, the ministry said.

Officials said the Taliban fighters initially captured some checkpoints but they were retaken by government forces who pushed back the insurgents. Taliban claimed to have killed dozens of Afghan forces.

CENTURIES OF 'TERRIBLE ABUSES'

Mexico apologizes to indigenous Maya

AFP, Mexico City

Mexico's government offered an official apology on Monday to the indigenous Maya people for the "terrible abuses" committed against them in the centuries since the Spanish conquest.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador presented the apology as part of a series of events this year marking the 500th anniversary of the conquest and the bicentennial of Mexican independence.

"We offer the most sincere apologies to the Maya people for the terrible abuses committed by individuals and national and foreign authorities in the conquest, during three centuries of colonial domination and two centuries of an independent Mexico," Lopez Obrador said.

He was joined by Guatemalan President Alejandro Giammattei at the ceremony in the southeastern state of

Quintana Roo.

Lopez Obrador referred in particular to the 1847-1901 Caste War, an indigenous rebellion in which around 250,000 people are believed to have died.

His government also recognized the racism and neglect that continue to afflict the ethnic minority.

"We apologize to the Maya people of Mexico... for the wrongs committed against them throughout history and for the discrimination that they are still victims of today," Interior Minister Olga Sanchez said.

Giammattei, whose country has a large Maya population, said that slavery and war have been replaced by other problems such as violence and migration.

"We continue to face the loss of human life -- now due to organized crime, malnutrition and the search for opportunities that so many people seek far away," he said.

Myanmar bans satellite TV

Charges Japanese journo over 'fake news' law

REUTERS

Myanmar's junta-controlled media announced a ban on satellite television receivers yesterday, saying outside broadcasts threatened national security and threatening to jail anyone caught violating the measure.

With mobile internet access largely cut off in a bid to quell anti-junta protests since the February 1 coup, Myanmar has increasingly appeared headed back to the state of isolation that preceded a decade of democratic reforms.

"Satellite television is no longer legal. Whoever violates the television and video law, especially people using satellite dishes, shall be punished with one year imprisonment and a fine of 500,000 kyat (\$320)," MRTV state television said.

Meanwhile, the junta has charged freelance reporter Yuki Kitazumi, a Japanese journalist, under a "fake news" law, a report said yesterday. He is one of 50 journalists currently held in Myanmar as part of the junta's crackdown on widespread protests against its February 1 coup.

Since the coup security forces have killed more than 760 civilians, according to a local NGO. The junta disputes the figure and projects a much lower toll.

Rickshaw 'ambulance' offers free oxygen to Covid patients

AFP, Bhopal

When Indian auto-rickshaw driver Mohammad Javed Khan saw people carrying their coronavirus-stricken parents to hospitals on their backs as they were too poor to afford an ambulance, he knew he had to help.

Khan, a 34-year-old driver in the central Indian city of Bhopal, sold his wife's jewellery and converted his three-wheeled vehicle into a small ambulance, fitting it out with an oxygen cylinder, an oximeter to measure oxygen levels in the blood, and other medical supplies.

As India grapples with a harrowing Covid-19 crisis that has seen infections skyrocket and the healthcare system stretched to breaking point, individuals like Khan have stepped forward to try and help their local communities.

"A critically ill patient cannot be brought to the hospital without oxygen support. So, I thought, why not turn my three-wheeler into an ambulance. It's not as spacious as an ambulance, but it can surely save lives," Khan told AFP.

"I see young people struggling without



oxygen. Even when they call ambulances, the ambulances are charging 5,000-10,000 rupees (\$70-140). How will a poor person be able to afford it?"

A donor provided him with a cylinder and another with the oximeter. A doctor taught Khan how to use the cylinder and oximeter to safely supply the lifesaving gas to patients as he drove them to a hospital.

Khan briefly ran into trouble with the authorities when police charged him for operating his auto-rickshaw without an emergency permit during ockdown, India Today reported. But after an outcry on social media, police withdrew the charges and issued him with a special pass, it added.



Jamilur Reza Chowdhury (1943-2020)

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