

MORE NEWS

Lanka imposes price controls to tackle food shortages

Sri Lanka yesterday imposed price controls on key foods as the government stepped up the use of emergency powers to counter shortages. Queues formed outside state-run supermarkets even before they opened to sell sugar seized from private dealers at less than half the price being charged on the open market 24 hours earlier.

Islamic State 'Beetle' pleads guilty to murdering US hostages

A British-born man who was a member of a team of Islamic State militants in Syria nicknamed "The Beetles" and accused of beheading American hostages pleaded guilty on Thursday to eight US criminal charges including lethal hostage taking and conspiracy to support terrorists.



Thai PM faces confidence vote

Several thousand people gathered in Bangkok to call for the resignation of Prime Minister Prayuth Chan-ocha yesterday, one day before lawmakers hold a no-confidence vote over his government's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A man clears debris away from a friend's home that was damaged by a tornado in Mullica Hill, New Jersey on Thursday after record-breaking rainfall brought by the remnants of Storm Ida swept through the area.

PHOTO: AFP

Japan PM to resign over Covid response Sets stage for new leader

REUTERS, Tokyo

Japanese Prime Minister Yoshihide Suga yesterday said in a surprise move he would step down, setting the stage for a new premier after a one-year tenure marred by an unpopular Covid-19 response and sinking public support.



Suga, who took over after Shinzo Abe resigned last September citing ill health, has seen his approval ratings drop below 30% as the nation struggles with its worst wave of Covid-19 infections ahead of a general election this year.

Suga did not capitalise on his last major achievement - hosting the Olympics, which were postponed months before he took office as coronavirus cases surged.

His decision not to seek reelection as ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) president this month means the party will choose a new leader, who will become PM.

There is no clear frontrunner, but the popular minister in charge of Japan's vaccination rollout, Taro Kono, intends to run, broadcaster TBS said on Friday without citing sources.

Before Abe's record eight-year tenure, the country had gone through six prime ministers in as many years, including Abe's own troubled first one-year term.

He said he would hold a news conference as early as next week. He is expected to stay on until his successor is chosen in the party election slated for Sept. 29.

The winner, assured of being premier due to the LDP's majority in the lower house of parliament, must call the general election by Nov. 28.

'China our most important partner'

Taliban say they will rely on Beijing funds for economic recovery

AGENCIES

Taliban claim China to maintain embassy in Kabul, hail new Silk Road US has no plans to release billions in Afghan assets, Treasury says

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has told an Italian newspaper that the group will rely primarily on financing from China following the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan and its takeover of the country.

In his interview published by La Repubblica on Thursday, Mujahid said the Taliban will fight for an economic comeback with the help of China.

The Taliban seized control of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, on August 15 as the country's Western-backed government melted away, bringing an end to 20 years of war amid fears of an economic collapse and widespread hunger.

Following the chaotic departure of foreign troops from Kabul airport in recent weeks, Western states have severely restricted their aid payments to Afghanistan.

"China is our most important partner and represents a fundamental and extraordinary opportunity for us, because it is ready to invest and rebuild our country," the Taliban spokesperson was quoted as saying in the interview.

He said the New Silk Road - an



infrastructure initiative with which China wants to increase its global influence by opening up trade routes - was held in high regard by the Taliban.

There are "rich copper mines in the country, which, thanks to the Chinese, can be put back into operation and modernised. In addition, China is our pass to markets all over the world."

Another Taliban spokesman Suhail Shaheen announced that China promised to keep its embassy in Afghanistan open and to increase humanitarian aid to the war-ravaged country.

Abdul Salam Hanafi, a senior Taliban official in the group's political office in Doha, Qatar, "held a phone conversation with Wu Jianguo, deputy foreign minister of the People's Republic of China," Suhail Shaheen wrote on social media.

China also issued a statement saying that it "affirms" its ties with Afghanistan and that it wishes Afghans well as they rebuild their country.

Afghanistan desperately needs money, and the Taliban is unlikely to get swift access to the roughly \$10bn in assets here mostly held abroad by the Afghan central bank.

The Biden administration has no plans to release billions in Afghan gold, investments and foreign currency reserves parked in the United States that it froze after the Taliban's takeover, despite pressure from humanitarian groups and others who say the cost may be the collapse of Afghanistan's economy.

The funds are a key instrument for the West to pressure the Taliban to respect women's rights and the rule of law as the former insurgents have promised.

Any unfreezing of these assets may be months away, financial experts said.

Earlier this week, UN chief Antonio Guterres warned of a looming "humanitarian catastrophe" in Afghanistan and urged countries to provide emergency funding as severe drought and war have forced thousands of families to flee their homes.

Guterres expressed his "grave concern at the deepening humanitarian and economic crisis in the country," adding that basic services threatened to collapse "completely".

Quotes of the day



The sooner the Taliban will enter the family of civilised people, so to speak, the easier it will be to contact, communicate, and somehow influence and ask questions.

RUSSIAN PRESIDENT VLADIMIR PUTIN



It was carried out by an individual, not a faith, not a culture, not an ethnicity. He alone carries the responsibility for these acts.

NZ PM JACINDA ARDERN ON KNIFE ATTACK INCIDENT



SEPTEMBER 04

476 - Romulus Augustus, the last emperor of the Western Roman Empire, is deposed by Odoacer, a German barbarian who proclaims himself king of Italy.

1975 - Egypt and Israel signed an agreement in Geneva providing for Israeli withdrawal from Sinai and establishment of a new UN buffer zone.

SOURCE: WEBSITES



Relatives mourn during the funeral of Palestinian Ahmed Saleh, who was shot dead by Israeli troops during night clashes the Israeli-Gaza border fence, at Jabalia refugee camp northern Gaza Strip, yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Turning household waste into electricity

THOMSON REUTERS FOUNDATION

Until four years ago, garbage disposal meant one thing to Savitri Bai Patil - stinking, putrefied heaps of trash spread around her neighbourhood in Pune, in western India.

But now the streets of the Ashok Meadows housing complex where she lives are clear, with workers picking up garbage from residents' doorsteps each day and turning some of it into electricity.

Since 2017, the complex has fed its food waste into a digester that converts it into biogas used to light the area's streetlights, park, social club and gym.

"Clean energy from our rancid food leftovers, vegetable peels and other such throwaways? It is unbelievable how the concept of waste management has changed in

the past few years," Bai Patil, 62, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Biogas generators like the one used in Ashok Meadows are now installed in more than 75 locations across India.

Developed by Xeon Waste Managers (XWM), based in Pune, the EnergyBin systems let communities turn waste into free, renewable energy, said company president Jalaj Kumar Chaturvedi.

"It is a common sight to find overburdened landfills with garbage that grows by the day. But since these EnergyBins dispose of the waste at the source itself, the landfills are spared," he said.

According to Ashok Meadows resident Rishika Mahalley, the complex's system - operated and maintained by residents - has helped

solve the problem of how to dispose of the nearly a tonne of garbage produced each day by the complex's 550 homes and common areas.

Before the community bought the generator, which produces 50 kilowatt-hours of electricity each day, at the cost of 2.3 million Indian rupees (\$31,000), it struggled with unreliable municipal garbage collection, which often left waste piling up, Mahalley noted.

Mahalley said before the plant was installed the complex spend about 550 rupees (\$7.50) a day on electricity for streetlights and other common facilities - a cost that has now virtually disappeared.

It also saves the residents up to 6,000 rupees (\$82) every month on municipal garbage disposal costs, she said.

MYANMAR CRISIS 23 troops killed in clashes near China border

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar ethnic rebels have killed at least 23 government soldiers in days of fighting near the Chinese border, a spokesman for the group said yesterday, in the latest clashes likely to worry powerful neighbour Beijing.

The country has been in turmoil since a military coup in February, which sparked huge pro-democracy protests, a bloody crackdown and renewed fighting in ethnic border areas.

Clashes broke out in Mongko, Shan state, on August 28 when troops tried to seize a base from the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA), the group's spokesman and local media reports said.

Fifteen soldiers were killed on August 28 and eight more in renewed clashes on September 1, he said, adding one MNDAA fighter had been killed.

AFP has not been able to verify the casualty figures.

Myanmar has more than 20 ethnic rebel groups, many of which hold territory in the country's border regions.

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