

ETHIOPIA CIVIL WAR

Rebels to unite to defeat govt

AFP, Addis Ababa

Nine rebel groups battling Ethiopia's government will "collaborate and join forces", they said in a statement announcing the alliance, which comes as fears grow of Tigrayan fighters advancing on the capital.

The alliance, due to be signed in Washington later yesterday, includes the Oromo Liberation Army (OLA) and the Tigray People's Liberation Front (TPLF), which has been locked in a year-long war against PM Abiy Ahmed's government.

The TPLF said Wednesday that its fighters had reached the town of Kemissie in Amhara region, 325 kilometres northeast of the capital, and were running "joint operations" with the OLA, which predicted Addis Ababa could fall in a matter of weeks.

The nine groups said they were forming a united front "to reverse the harmful effects of the Abiy Ahmed rule on the peoples of Ethiopia... and in recognition of the great need to collaborate and join forces towards a safe transition in the country".

It is unclear whether the alliance, named the United Front of Ethiopian Federalist and Confederalist Forces, will affect the trajectory of the conflict, which Abiy's government has termed "an existential war".

The TPLF and the OLA, which the government officially designated as terrorist groups in May, are well-known, but the alliance's other seven members are obscure.

Abiy sent troops into Tigray in November 2020 to topple the TPLF, promising a swift victory. But by late June the rebels had retaken most of Tigray and expanded into the neighbouring regions of Afar and Amhara.

The escalating conflict has sparked alarm among the international community. Thousands have been killed and hundreds of thousands forced into famine-like conditions, according to the UN.



Demonstrators march in Washington, DC on Thursday, marking the one-year anniversary of the Ethiopian government's decision to deploy troops into the country's northernmost Tigray region.

PHOTO: AFP

US to sell advanced missiles to Saudi Arabia

AFP, Washington

The US State Department announced the approval Thursday of the sale of \$650 million worth of air-to-air missiles to Saudi Arabia to help the country protect itself from drone attacks.

The approval will allow the Saudis to buy up to 280 of the AIM-120C advanced medium-range missiles and related equipment, replenishing an existing supply of the missiles, the department said.

A State Department spokesperson said the Saudis have already been able to use the missiles to intercept unmanned aircraft that threatened both Saudi and US forces inside the country, mainly from Yemen.

The sale comes as President Joe Biden's administration takes a cautious approach to supporting the Saudis, out of concern over their harsh tactics towards the Houthis as well as human rights violations.

TENSION ACROSS TAIWAN STRAIT

China vows no mercy for independence 'diehards'

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday vowed to punish "diehard" Taiwan politicians, saying it would ban several from visiting the mainland, as tensions between Beijing and Taipei spiked to their highest level in years.

China claims Taiwan as its territory -- to be seized one day, by force if necessary -- and has intensified efforts in recent years to isolate the self-ruled island on the international stage.

Yesterday, the Taiwan Affairs Office in Beijing warned that "the mainland will pursue criminal responsibility for Taiwan independence diehards in accordance with the law, to be effective for life".

The statement by spokeswoman Zhu Fenglian named Taiwanese Premier Su Tseng-chang, parliament speaker Yu Shyi-kun and Foreign Minister Joseph Wu as among a minority of independence supporters.

She added that Beijing has prohibited them and their family members from entering the mainland, Hong Kong or Macau.

Their affiliates would also be restricted from cooperating with mainland organisations and individuals, she said, without giving more details.

The nationalist Kuomintang party fled to Taiwan in 1949 after losing the Chinese civil war. The island of 24 million people has since transformed into a vibrant democracy and major tech hub, leading many -- including President Tsai Ing-wen -- to assert Taiwan's distinct identity, which Beijing attacks as separatism.

"Those who forget their ancestors, betray their motherland and split the country will not come to a good end," Zhu said.

The comments came a day after the head of a visiting European Parliament delegation to Taipei called Taiwan's democracy "a treasure" to be protected, promising to stand with the island.

Israel troops kill teen in West Bank

AFP, Jerusalem

A 13-year-old Palestinian was shot and fatally wounded yesterday by Israeli troops in the occupied West Bank, the Palestinian health ministry said.

It said Mohammed Daadaa died in hospital after being shot in the stomach during clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli forces in Deir al-Hatab village, east of Nablus.

Two other Palestinians were injured in yesterday's clashes in Beita, another West Bank village.

The clashes come days after Israel announced it would advance plans for 3,000 more homes for Jewish settlers in the West Bank, despite international criticism.

Democracies need to set rules "as autocrats grow savvier in their attempts to control and manipulate people," she said.

"We need to help support a free and fair global press to hold leaders to account."

LAWSUITS TO SILENCE CRITICISM

US to financially assist overseas journalists

AFP, Washington

The United States will offer funding to help journalists overseas survive frivolous lawsuits meant to silence them, as part of a campaign to support democracy, USAID chief Samantha Power announced Thursday.

Power, herself a former reporter, said President Joe Biden's administration was setting up the "Global Defamation Defense Fund" to counter the "crude but effective tactic" increasingly used to silence journalists.

"We will offer the coverage to survive defamation claims or deter autocrats and oligarchs from trying to sue them out of business in the first place," she said at Georgetown University's School of Foreign Service.

Democracies need to set rules "as autocrats grow savvier in their attempts to control and manipulate people," she said.

"We need to help support a free and fair global press to hold leaders to account."

Power, administrator of the US Agency for International Development, did not outline how the fund would work or whether it would support journalists in countries allied with the United States.

Biden plans next month to hold a summit to back democracy, seeking to show a sharp change from his predecessor Donald Trump who embraced autocratic leaders, denounced the role of independent media and inspired a mob that attacked the US Capitol on January 6 in hopes of undoing Biden's victory.

Critics will likely point to Washington's continued efforts to extradite from Britain the WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange, who considers himself a journalist and faces the rest of his life in prison for the leak of classified US documents.

Asked if the United States could support democracy in light of its own record at home, Power pointed to the new fund for journalists and said, "In many cases, we're all they have."

MORE NEWS

US offers \$10m bounty for DarkSide hackers

The United States announced a \$10 million reward Thursday for help finding leaders of the high-profile ransomware gang DarkSide, authorities' latest try at combating spiking cyber-extortion attacks. Washington blamed the Russia-based group for the online assault that forced the shutdown of the largest oil pipeline in the eastern United States in May. Cyber-extortion heists involve breaking into a company or institution's network to encrypt its data, then demanding a ransom, typically paid via cryptocurrency in exchange for the digital key to unlock it. Washington also offered a \$5 million bounty for information leading to the arrest or conviction in any country of anyone who tries to join in an attack with DarkSide.

At least 69 dead in west Niger jihadist attack

At least 69 people, including a local mayor, have been killed in an attack in Niger's volatile "tri-border" zone with Burkina Faso and Mali, the interior ministry said on Thursday. The assault took place on Tuesday at Adab-Dab, a village about 55 kilometres from Banibangou in the western region of Tillaberi, but was only confirmed by the government on Thursday. A search was under way for the unidentified attackers. The government declared two days of national mourning from today. Local sources earlier blamed Islamic State in the Greater Sahara group for the attack.

France orders poultry lockdown due to bird flu

French farmers were yesterday ordered to keep their poultry indoors due to the heightened risk of bird flu being spread by migratory birds. The order published in the French official journal follows a similar measure adopted in the Netherlands last week after a case of the highly-contagious H5 strain of bird flu was discovered on a poultry farm and 36,000 birds were culled as a protective measure. The French agricultural ministry said separately that 130 outbreaks of bird flu in wild fowl and farm poultry have been discovered since August in Europe.

Indonesia flash floods kill at least eight

Indonesian rescuers scrambled yesterday to find survivors under mud-swamped hillsides after flash floods on Java island killed at least eight people, the disaster agency said. Torrential rains on Thursday unleashed flash floods in Malang and the highland city of Batu, inundating houses with mud and debris. Yesterday, teams raced to find several more people unaccounted for in Batu, according to Indonesia's national disaster mitigation agency, as the dead were placed in body bags.

SOURCE: AFP, REUTERS



A performer accompanying teachers perform a blowing flame stunt during a demonstration demanding higher pay outside the Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL) in Colombo, Sri Lanka, yesterday.

IMMINENT MYANMAR ARMY OFFENSIVE IN CHIN STATE

521 civil rights groups urge UN intervention

REUTERS

More than 500 civil rights groups have called for a United Nations Security Council meeting to stop escalating violence in Myanmar's Chin state, a volatile border region that has become a forefront of resistance against military rule.

Local media, witnesses and the UN have reported a buildup of heavy weapons and troops in Chin, suggesting an imminent army attack to flush out militia groups formed after a Feb. 1 coup.

Human Rights Watch released a statement on behalf of 521 international and domestic organisations that called on the Security Council to adopt a resolution and act before the offensive expands in Chin, which borders India.

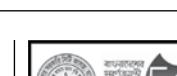
"It must convene an urgent meeting on the escalating attacks in Chin State and the overall deepening political, human rights and humanitarian crisis as a result of the Myanmar military leaders' search for power and greed that has caused immense suffering," it said.

Myanmar has been paralysed by protests and violence since the coup, with the junta struggling to govern and facing armed resistance from militias and ethnic minority rebels allied with a shadow government that it calls "terrorists".

Witnesses, aid groups and local media said houses and churches have been burnt in Thantlang town.

The junta has made no comment on the situation in Chin. Reuters has been unable to independently verify reports of an offensive in the region, where internet and other communications have been disrupted.

The UN humanitarian agency in a situation report on Wednesday said clashes between security forces and people's defence forces had intensified in Chin as well as in neighbouring Magway and Sagaing regions.



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Memo No.CEDP/JGCC/2021-22/G-15/704

Date: 03/11/2021

e-Tender Notice 01/2021-2022

e-Tender is invited in the National e-GP System Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) for the procurement of following package:

Sl. No.	Tender ID No.	Name of Supply	Last Date and Time of Tender Security Submission	Tender Closing Date & Time
1.	625419	Supply of AC, IPS and Ceiling Fan for smart classroom and lab (Package : G-15)	23-November-2021 01:00pm	23-November-2021 02:00pm

This is an online tender, where only e-Tender will be accepted in the National e-GP Portal and no offline/hard copy will be accepted.

To submit e-Tender, registration in the National e-GP Portal (<http://www.eprocure.gov.bd>) is required.

The fees for downloading the e-Tender documents from the National e-GP System portal have to be deposited online through any registered banks' branches up to 22 November, 2021 at 4:00 pm.

Further information and guidelines are available in the National e-GP System Portal and from e-GP Held Desk (helpdesk@eprocure.gov.bd).

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'I'm a woman, I can fight'

Nehru-Gandhi scion aims to revive India's Congress

REUTERS, Gorakhpur

At a recent election rally, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, the scion of India's Nehru-Gandhi family that dominates the opposition Congress party, strode on stage and asked the crowd to repeat after her: "I'm a woman, I can fight."

The slogan is at the heart of the party's bid to revive its fortunes in Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous state that goes to the polls early next year, by winning over women voters who have long been marginalised but are starting to find a voice.

The Uttar Pradesh result will offer a clue as to whether the Congress, which dominated Indian politics for decades, can mount a challenge to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the next general election in 2024.

Modi came to power in 2014 on promises of economic growth and a strong, modern India, and secured a convincing re-election victory in 2019.

His rise has come as the 136-year-old Congress has been mired in decline, in part because of leadership turmoil.

Rahul Gandhi, Gandhi Vadra's brother, was unable to fire up voters and quit as Congress chief in July 2019 after a general election mauling.

The party is now led by their mother, Sonia Gandhi, as interim president, compounding a perception held by some that it is old-fashioned and overly reliant on the Gandhis.

With its secular legacy, the Congress portrays itself as an inclusive national party and it will be hoping an appeal to women led by Gandhi Vadra, who only entered politics in 2019, will strike a chord as it presents an alternative to Modi's hardline Hindu agenda.

A spate of violence against women has alarmed voters across India, particularly in Uttar Pradesh, which according to government data faces the highest number of gender crimes in the country, and Gandhi Vadra promised women change.

"I want to tell the women that I will fight for

them, the Congress party will fight for them," Gandhi Vadra said on Sunday to cheers in the Gorakhpur stronghold of the state's chief minister, a Hindu monk and BJP stalwart, Yogi Adityanath.

In Uttar Pradesh, the well-organised BJP has been criticised for its handling of violence against women as well as the Covid-19 pandemic. It is also facing protests by farmers opposed to Modi's liberalisation of agriculture.

An unusually high proportion of women attended the Gorakhpur rally - about a quarter of the estimated 40,000 people - suggesting the Congress message may be getting through.

Voters had welcomed a Congress pledge to field women in 40% of the state's 403 assembly constituencies, said a party worker.

The party has also promised electric scooters and smartphones to female students, free rides on government buses to all women, three free cooking-gas cylinders per family a year, and gender-based job reservations.