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We are worried. We don't want another Chernobyl. While continuing our efforts to find a solution, we remain on the side of our Ukraine friends.

Turkey President **Recep Tayyip Erdogan** over Zaporizhzhia nuclear plant shelling



Women relatives mourn during the funeral of Palestinian Salah Sawafta, who was killed earlier during a raid by Israeli forces, in the city of Tubas in the north of the occupied West Bank, yesterday. The 58-year-old Sawafta “died of critical wounds, sustained by live bullets from the occupation (Israeli military) in the head, in Tubas this morning”, the Palestinian health ministry said in a statement.

PHOTO: AFP

China tycoon jailed for 13 yrs for graft

AFP, Shanghai

A Chinese-Canadian tycoon who disappeared from a Hong Kong hotel five years ago has been sentenced to 13 years in prison and his company fined \$8 billion for embezzlement and bribery, a Shanghai court said yesterday.

Xiao Jianhua, one of China's richest people when he was allegedly abducted in 2017, reportedly had close connections to the upper echelons of the ruling Communist Party.

There had been no official word about Xiao -- who is a Canadian citizen -- until Ottawa confirmed in July that he was facing trial.

Xiao and his firm, Tomorrow Group, were found guilty of “illegally absorbing public deposits, breaching trust in the use of entrusted property... (and) illegal use of funds,” the Shanghai No. 1 Intermediate People's Court said in a statement.

It added that Tomorrow Group had committed the “crime of bribery.” It also fined Tomorrow Group 55.03 billion yuan (\$8 billion) and Xiao 6.5 million yuan (\$950,000).

Xiao and his company pleaded guilty and cooperated with the authorities in recovering what they had illegally acquired, the statement said.

Negotiations with Suu Kyi after her trial

Says Myanmar junta chief amid diplomatic pressure

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's military chief yesterday said the junta is open to negotiations with ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to end the crisis sparked by its coup after her trials in a junta-run court have concluded.

Suu Kyi, 77, has been detained since the generals toppled her government in a coup on February 1 last year and plunged the Southeast Asian nation into chaos.

She has been jailed for 17 years for a clutch of charges and faces decades more in prison if convicted on a raft of other charges she is battling in a closed junta court.

“After the legal processes against her according to the law are finished we are going to consider (negotiations) based on her response,” junta chief Min Aung Hlaing said in a statement.

Journalists have been barred from the proceedings, her lawyers gaged from speaking to the media, and the junta has given no indication of when her trials might conclude.

The military regime's cases against Suu Kyi were proceeding according to law, the junta chief said. He also cited the case of South Korean president Park Geun-hye who “was also sentenced according to the law” for corruption in 2018.

Park was later pardoned and released.

Other charges against Suu Kyi include seven counts of corruption, breaking electoral law and breaching the colonial-era official secrets law.

In July a junta spokesman told



AFP it was “not impossible” that the regime would enter into dialogue with Suu Kyi to resolve the turmoil sparked by the military's power-grab last year.

Suu Kyi remains a revered figure locally for her courageous opposition to a previous junta, despite her international reputation suffering after governing in a power-sharing deal with the generals when she won elections in 2015. She also faces criticism from rights experts and world leaders for backing the military amid accusations of mass killings, rape and expulsion of the Rohingya Muslim minority.

Diplomatic efforts by the 10-country bloc Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) -- of which Myanmar is a member -- have so far failed to halt the bloodshed.

Last year, the bloc agreed on a “five-point consensus”, which calls for a cessation of violence and constructive dialogue, but the junta has largely ignored it.

This week UN special envoy Noeleen Heyzer made her first trip to the country since being appointed last year and met Min Aung Hlaing and other top military officials.

But she was denied a meeting with Suu Kyi, and rights groups said they had little optimism her visit would persuade the military to end its bloody crackdown and engage in dialogue with opponents of its coup.

More than 2,200 people have been killed and over 15,000 arrested in the military's crackdown on dissent since it seized power, according to a local monitoring group.

Abandoned yacht sparks terror scare in Mumbai

AFP, Mumbai

An unmanned yacht carrying assault rifles and ammo triggered a brief security scare after it mysteriously washed up on the Indian coast, officials said.

Three AK-47 rifles and an ammunition cache were recovered from the Lady Han after it drifted ashore Thursday in a sparsely populated corner of western Maharashtra state, close to the location of a deadly seaborne terror attack in 2008.

Anti-terrorism investigators seized the UK-flagged boat after it was spotted by fishermen, but authorities established later that day the vessel belonged to an Australian couple who abandoned it at sea after an engine failure on July 26.

British maritime security company Neptune P2P Group claimed ownership of the weapons and said it had been engaged to protect the vessel against pirates.

The yacht had set off from the UAE and was slated to sail into the Mediterranean. After a storm in rough seas, the entire crew including security staff were forced to abandon the vessel and were rescued by a Korean navy warship which tried and failed to tow the boat, the Firm's statement said.

Putin, Xi to join Bali G20 summit

AFP, Jakarta

Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping will attend the upcoming Group of 20 summit, the leader of host nation Indonesia said in an interview published Friday.

The pair's attendance would set the stage for showdown talks with US President Joe Biden at a time when Washington is at odds with both of the rival powers, particularly over crises in Ukraine and Taiwan.

It has been unclear whether Putin and Xi would turn up to the November talks on the Indonesian resort island of Bali. Moscow is isolated after its invasion of Ukraine, while the Chinese leader is limiting foreign trips because of Covid-19.

But President Joko Widodo, in an interview with Bloomberg, said both leaders would attend the G20 summit in person.

“Xi Jinping will come. President Putin has also told me he will come,” Widodo said, according to the report.

Kremlin officials said in June that Putin had accepted Widodo's invitation to the summit.

Indonesia currently holds the rotating G20 presidency, putting it at the centre of global affairs as war rages in Europe and with tensions at their highest level in years in the Taiwan Strait, where China lately conducted its largest-ever military drills.

Jakarta has come under Western pressure to exclude Putin from the G20 gathering after announcing in April he had been invited. But Indonesia has maintained a neutral position and called for a peaceful resolution to the months-long conflict in Ukraine, with Widodo visiting both Kyiv and Moscow earlier this year.

Indonesia has also invited Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky to the summit.

India firm to develop Nepal hydropower plant left by China

AL JAZEERA ONLINE

Nepal has signed a pact with an Indian company to develop a hydroelectric plant in the west of the nation years after a Chinese firm backed out over terms, officials said. Nepal has opened its rivers, which it sees as having a combined potential to generate more than 42,000 megawatts of hydroelectric power, to foreign players to develop its economy and export electricity to narrow the trade deficit of more than \$13b. Officials said India's NHPC Ltd signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) on Thursday allowing it to study details like feasibility, environmental effects, inundation of land and construction costs for two projects -- West Seti (750 megawatts) and SR 6 (450 megawatts).

‘Sharia will decide foreign engagement’

REUTERS



The Taliban will deal with the international community in line with sharia law, Haibatullah Akhundzada, the supreme leader of the hardline Islamist group said, according to a copy of his speech given to around 3,000 tribal leaders and shared by the information ministry yesterday. “This meeting is called

to think about the freedom we received by the blessing of Allah, which we achieved from the blood of our mujahideen (fighters),” he said in the speech. “We will deal with the international community as per Islamic Sharia ...if Sharia doesn't allow it, we will not deal with any other country,” Akhundzada said.

Ex-Briton ‘IS Beatle’ sentenced to life in prison

REUTERS, Alexandria

A member of an Islamic State cell found guilty in April for his role in a hostage-taking plot that led to the beheadings of American journalists and aid workers was sentenced to life in prison by a US federal court yesterday.

US District Court Judge TS Ellis sentenced El Shafee Elsheikh, 33, during a hearing in a federal courtroom in Alexandria, Virginia.

Four months ago a jury found the former British citizen guilty of charges that included lethal hostage-taking and conspiracy to commit murder.

After a six-week trial in April and hours of deliberation, the jury concluded that Elsheikh was part of an Islamic State cell, nicknamed “The Beatles” for their English accents, that beheaded American hostages in Iraq and Syria.

Elsheikh, who was born in Sudan and raised in London, was accused of conspiring to kill four American hostages: James Foley, Steven Sotloff, Peter Kassig and Kayla Mueller.

Foley and Sotloff, both journalists, and Kassig, an aid worker, were killed in videotaped beheadings. Mueller was raped repeatedly by the group's leader at the time, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, before her death in Syria, US officials have said.



The deaths of Foley, Sotloff and Kassig were confirmed in 2014; Mueller's death was confirmed in early 2015.

The charges against Elsheikh, whose British citizenship was withdrawn in 2018, carried a potential death sentence, but US prosecutors had previously advised British officials that they would not seek the death penalty.

Another cell member, Alexandra Kotev, was sentenced to life in prison by a US judge earlier this year. Kotev was held in Iraq by the US military before being flown to the United States to face trial. He pleaded guilty last September to the murders of Foley, Sotloff, Kassig and Mueller.

A third member of the group, Mohammed Emwazi, died in a US-British missile strike in Syria in 2015.

Some former hostages, released by the cell after protracted negotiations, testified during trials about the torture they endured. Family members of those killed also testified.

At the peak of its power from 2014-2017, Islamic State ruled over millions of people and claimed responsibility for or inspired attacks in dozens of cities around the world.

Its leader, al-Baghdadi, declared a caliphate over a quarter of Iraq and Syria in 2014, before he was killed in a raid by US special forces in Syria in 2019 as the group's rule collapsed.



Flood-affected residents of a low-lying area on the banks of the River Ganges move their belongings to drier ground on a boat at Daraganj area in Allahabad, India, after water levels rose following monsoon rains.

PHOTO: AFP