

Finland, Sweden to join Nato together Say countries' PMs

REUTERS, Helsinki

Finland and Sweden will join Nato at the same time, their prime ministers said yesterday, presenting a united front to Turkey.

The Nordic neighbours asked to join the alliance in May in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, but ran into objections from Turkey which accused the two of harbouring groups it deems terrorists.

Finnish PM Sanna Marin yesterday said she would not leave Sweden behind in the process.

"It is very important for us, of course, that Finland and Sweden would join Nato hand in hand," Marin told reporters at a joint press conference in Helsinki with her Swedish counterpart.



This handout photo shows the destruction brought by heavy rains caused landslides in Parang town in the southern Philippines' Maguindanao province.

PHOTO: AFP

Protests flare again in Iran

Demonstrators call for death of country's top leader; UN voices concern over treatment of detainees

REUTERS, Dubai

The UN human rights office yesterday voiced concern at Iran's treatment of detained protesters and said authorities refused to release some of the bodies of those killed, as demonstrators again called for the death of the country's top leader.

The Islamic Republic has been gripped by protests since the death of 22-year-old Kurdish woman Mahsa Amini in police custody last month. The unrest has turned into a popular revolt by Iranians from all layers of society, posing one of the boldest challenges to Iran's clerical leadership since the 1979 revolution.

Video footage on social media showed protesters in the city of



Zahedan, close to Iran's southeastern border with Pakistan and Afghanistan, yesterday calling for the death of "dictator" Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei and the Basij militia, which has played a major role in the crackdown on demonstrations.

Dozens of people were killed in clashes in Zahedan four weeks ago during anti-government protests.

Rights groups have said at least

250 protesters have been killed and thousands arrested across the country.

"We've seen a lot of ill treatment ... but also harassment of the families of protesters," Ravina Shamsdani, spokesperson of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, told a Geneva press briefing, citing multiple sources.

"Of particular concern is information that authorities have been moving injured protesters from hospitals to detention facilities and refusing to release the bodies of those killed to their families," she said.

Shamsdani added that in some cases, authorities were placing conditions on the release of bodies, asking families not to hold a funeral or speak to the media.

FLOODS IN PHILIPPINES At least 42 killed, dozens missing

REUTERS, Manila

Philippine search and rescue teams pulled bodies from water and thick mud yesterday, bringing to 42 the death toll from flooding and landslides triggered by a storm, with dozens more feared buried.

Eleven bodies were retrieved in the southern province of Maguindanao, which was hit hard by approaching tropical storm Nalgae, said an official.

Rescue and retrieval operations are temporarily suspended overnight and will resume today, he said, as more people were feared still trapped under mud and flood waters, particularly in the town of Datu Odin.

"Based on the assessment on the ground, at that specific site, there were many (who got buried). The number might hit 80, but we are hoping it won't reach that number," Sinarimbo said via phone.

Authorities have evacuated thousands of people out of the path of Nalgae, which was predicted to make landfall yesterday night in Samar province in central Philippines, disaster officials said.

MYANMAR PEACE PLAN

Junta warns Asean against 'pressure'

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's junta has warned a regional bloc working to defuse its political crisis that setting a timeframe for a peace plan could lead to "negative implications".

Myanmar has been in chaos since a coup in February last year, with more than 2,300 killed in the military's brutal crackdown on dissent, according to a local monitoring group.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) has led so far fruitless efforts to solve the bloody impasse. The bloc's foreign ministers met in Jakarta on Thursday to discuss the crisis. The junta was not represented after it declined an invitation to send a non-political figure.

A peace plan agreed by Myanmar and Asean last year -- which the former has largely ignored -- was a "process", the junta's foreign affairs ministry said in a statement late Thursday.

"Inserting additional pressure by setting a timeframe will create more negative implications than positive ones."

It also accused Asean of "discrimination" for not inviting the junta-appointed foreign minister to the Jakarta meeting.

Asean has said it is "gravely concerned" over escalating human rights abuses in the country.

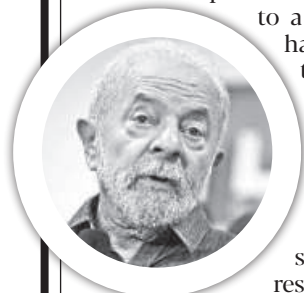
Lula's lead widens ahead of Brazil runoff

AFP, Brasilia

Leftist challenger Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva's lead over far-right incumbent Jair Bolsonaro has widened slightly three days from Brazil's polarizing presidential runoff election, according to a poll published Thursday.

Lula has 53 percent voter support to 47 percent for Bolsonaro, according to the poll from the Datafolha institute -- up from a four-point gap (52 percent to 48 percent) the previous week. The figures exclude voters who plan to cast blank or spoiled ballots -- five percent of respondents, Datafolha estimates.

Undecided voters represented just two percent. Lula, the charismatic but tarnished ex-president who led Brazil from 2003 to 2010, won the first round of the election on October 2 with 48 percent of the vote, to 43 percent for former army captain Bolsonaro. The candidates was scheduled to face off in a final debate Friday night.



4 more lives

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Mosharrarf Hossain, OC of Zakiganj Police Station, said the bodies were sent to Sylhet MAG Osmani Medical College morgue for autopsies and police were looking for the truck driver.

[Our Tangail and Sylhet correspondents contributed to this report.]

5 die from

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authorities to conduct extensive drives identifying clusters of Aedes mosquitoes immediately.

They also suggested the authorities to take effective measures after the rain stops to destroy all breeding sources so that Aedes could not breed and spread further.

A monsoon survey of the DGHS, conducted between August 11 and 23, found the presence of Aedes mosquitoes in 13.4 percent of houses in Dhaka North City Corporation and 11.75 percent of homes in Dhaka South City Corporation.

For the survey, a total of 1,319 households of 40 DNCC wards and 1,830 households of 58 DSCC wards were surveyed.

The survey also found 13 wards in DNCC and 14 wards in DSCC to be highly risk-prone as the density of Aedes mosquitoes was found to be higher in those wards.

Russia a threat

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evacuation was continuing, with hospital and business equipment removed and extra Russian forces deployed in empty homes.

In Luhansk, Russian forces have tried to break through defences in Bilohorivka but were beaten back, regional governor Serhiy Gaidai told Ukrainian television.

Man sent to jail

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crimes, police said.

"Laxman initially did not confess, but later he admitted that he committed the crimes," ADC Nobel said.

Police produced him before the court yesterday afternoon, he further said.

Imran begins 'long march'

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Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's government, which he says was imposed on Pakistan by a "conspiracy" involving the United States.

"This nation is ready to make every sacrifice but it will not accept thieves. The objective of the march is that decisions should be taken by the people themselves," Khan told the crowd from the top of a shipping container.

Drug dealers

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Once these carriers notice any lax in monitoring by law enforcers or gaps during changes in duty, they give a signal to smugglers like blowing a whistle or flashing a light, he explained.

"Receiving the signal, the smugglers in Myanmar with a speedy small boat entre Bangladesh territory and return delivering the consignments," said Al-Ameen.

He said that these carriers were often found sitting on the bank of the river putting mud on their body to camouflage themselves. Some were seen sleeping on tree branches.

"But we can't take action against them often as we need proof or presence of drugs in their possession to arrest them," added Al-Ameen.

NO ARREST OF MYANMAR NATIONALS

On September 21, coast guard members recovered around 33,000 yaba tablets hidden inside a boat on the Naf river. No one was arrested, a common phenomenon in the Naf.

A high official of the coast guard said they often manage to arrest the boatmen but have to release them as they are Myanmar nationals.

"We have instructions not to arrest any more Myanmar nationals as we are already suffering with around 1.1 million Rohingya. If we arrest Myanmar nationals, they

Parts of his speech that addressed the heads of the military and intelligence services were censored by Pakistani television channels.

Khan, who has dodged multiple legal challenges, has already staged a string of well-attended rallies demonstrating his popularity, and earlier this month won six out of eight by-elections.

Sadia Mehmood, a 21-year-

[the Myanmar government] will not accept them as their citizens and we have to look after them," he said, requesting anonymity.

"For this reason, we keep the boat and drugs and ask the Myanmar nationals [boatmen] to swim back," the official explained.

SECONDTIER CARRIERS

On September 16, this correspondent hired a CNG-run auto-rickshaw to Teknaf from Cox's Bazar.

The driver identified himself as Abdul Kader and said he was from Cumilla and that he had returned home from abroad during the Covid-19 pandemic. He said that he earned good money in Cox's Bazar as there were many foreign tourists.

"Moreover, there is also scope for getting some easy money -- Tk 80,000 to Tk 1 lakh -- for a single trip from Teknaf to Cox's Bazar," he said.

Asked how, he said, "You just need to bring a single packet of yaba or ice from Teknaf to Cox's Bazar dodging the police checkpoints."

Kader elaborated that after bringing the packet someone will pick it up from Cox's Bazar auto-rickshaw station and it will be given to a staff member of a luxury bus or regular truck to transport to Dhaka.

He, however, refused to carry any consignments. Kader claimed he has not been lured into this trade despite many offers as he

old university student, told AFP she was marching to restore democracy.

"The army is already scared, and the criminals in Islamabad are worried and they should be worried," she said. "Their time is up."

The political wrangling has overshadowed relief efforts following the devastating floods that left a third of the country under water -- and a repair bill of at least \$30 billion.

considers it a "sin".

Hafizur Rahman, officer-in-charge of Teknaf Model Police Station, said many people in the guise of being involved in different professions are smuggling narcotics.

"We are conducting drives whenever we receive any specific information," he said.

23 POINTS OF ENTRY

The Daily Star spoke to three local drug mules, who divulged some entry points through which yaba or ice enters Bangladesh.

According to them, a piece of yaba is now sold for Tk 30 at Bandarban's Ghumdum and Konapara entry points and Tk 40 in Cox's Bazar and Teknaf.

While a kilogram of ice, which is also coming into Bangladesh with yaba, is now sold for Tk 5 lakh to Tk 6 lakh in Cox's Bazar.

Some major points in Cox's Bazar are: Anjumanpara, Palongkhali, Ulubunia, Damdania, Borotoli, Chowdhurypara, Leda, Noapara, KK Khal, Sbrang, Kerontoli, and Moniguma, according to law enforcers.

Drug smugglers are now also using the deep-sea routes to smuggle yaba and ice directly to Chattogram, law enforcers said.

Officials say that yaba is unloaded in Anwara's Gohira coastal area, Sitakunda coast, and Patenga's outer anchorages. It is also coming into the port city by fishing trawlers, they added.

Nasa lander

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InSight since it arrived on Mars in November 2018. Its scientific mission -- originally planned to last two years but subsequently extended for two more to this December -- is expected to be coming to an end because its solar panels are now covered in accumulating dust, depriving InSight of power.

Seismic waves generated by quakes and surface impacts vary in speed and shape when journeying through different material inside a planet. Data collected by InSight's seismometer instrument has helped scientists decipher the internal structure of Mars, including the size of its liquid metal core, nature of its mantle and thickness of its crust.

InSight also established that Mars is seismically active by detecting more than 1,000 marsquakes, the largest of which came in May of this year with a magnitude of 5.0 -- medium-sized compared to quakes on Earth.

"InSight has been successful beyond my expectations," said planetary geophysicist Bruce Banerdt of Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, the InSight mission's principal investigator and a co-author of the new research published in the journal Science.

"We are likely in the final phase of the mission." The three-legged InSight -- short for Interior Exploration Using Seismic Investigations, Geodesy and Heat Transport -- sits in a vast and relatively flat plain called Elysium Planitia, just north of the Martian equator.

Until now, InSight had obtained data on the structure of the Martian crust -- which consists mostly of fine-grained volcanic basalt rock -- only in the area beneath its actual landing site.

The earlier findings indicated that the crust at the landing site was composed of relatively soft material, less dense rock.

Address them

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registration, inspection and enforcement, and addressing acts of anti-union discrimination or unfair labour practices and violence against workers.

In the meeting, Fernandez committed to work with Bangladesh to further improve the labour sector and provide necessary assistance, said a foreign ministry statement.

According to a statement of the US State Department, the two sides discussed collaboration and assistance to Bangladesh as it takes further steps to implement the ILO roadmap and adhere to internationally recognised labour rights.

"The objective of the meeting was to support Bangladeshi implementation of commitments to improve labour rights protections and to further economic cooperation between

the United States and Bangladesh."

At the meeting, Salman F Rahman detailed the steps taken by Bangladesh in the labour sector and stressed that Bangladesh puts much importance on the labour-related recommendations forwarded by the US, European Union and ILO, said the foreign ministry statement.

He also highlighted Bangladesh's ratification of most UN conventions related to labour rights, including labour laws and acts on Export Processing Zones.

Fernandez appreciated Bangladesh's steps to improve labour rights and called upon Bangladesh to fully implement the ILO recommendations.

The US delegation raised the issues of amending labour law, rules and registration of trade unions after Bangladesh Labour Secretary Ehsan-E-Elahi apprised them of the steps

taken by the government.

Bangladesh delegation urged the US side to actively consider providing duty-free facility to Bangladeshi products to its market. It expected the US supports Bangladesh's transition from LDC status.

Bangladesh side also called upon the US side to consider funding under the International Finance Development Corporation, the statement added.

Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen said Bangladesh is aware of the needs to improve labour rights and that the government continues to make necessary reforms to that end.

He reiterated the determination to strengthen the US-Bangladesh economic partnership.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the US, Imran Ahmad, and US Ambassador to Bangladesh, Peter Haas, also attended the meeting.

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