

SUDAN CONFLICT US, KSA call for extended truce

REUTERS, Dubai

Saudi Arabia and the United States yesterday called for the extension of a ceasefire deal that has brought some let-up in a six-week war between military factions but little humanitarian relief for civilians.

There were clashes overnight in the capital Khartoum and Omdurman, an adjoining city across the Nile, residents said, while human rights monitors reported deadly fighting in El Fashir, one of the principal cities in the western region of Darfur.

The conflict between Sudan's army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) that erupted on April 15 has left the capital reeling from heavy battles, lawlessness and a collapse in services, driving more than 1.3 million people from their homes and threatening to destabilise the region.

Good ties with China possible without BRI
Says Italy PM

REUTERS, Milan

Good relations with China are possible even without being part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) deal, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said in an interview published yesterday, as her government weighs abandoning the project.

Italy is the only major Western country to have joined China's BRI scheme, which envisions rebuilding the old Silk Road to connect China with Asia, Europe and beyond with large infrastructure spending.

In an interview with Il Messaggero daily, Meloni said it was too early to anticipate outcome of Italy's decision on whether to remain part of the project, which it signed in 2019, drawing criticism from Washington and Brussels.

"Our assessment is very delicate and touches upon many interests," said Meloni. The pact expires in March 2024 and will be automatically renewed unless either side informs the other that they are pulling out.

In an interview with Reuters last year, before she won power in a September election, Meloni made clear she disapproved of the 2019 move.

Modi inaugurates new parliament 19 opposition parties boycott the event

AFP, New Delhi

Flanked by priests, Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated a new Indian parliament yesterday in a ceremony steeped in religious symbolism but boycotted by opposition parties.

The hexagonal new building -- shaped like a coffin, one opposition party said -- is centrepiece of a remodelling of the heart of New Delhi by Modi aimed at ridding the capital of vestiges of British colonial rule.

"India is not only a democratic nation but also the mother of democracy," Modi said.

"This is not just a building, this is the temple of democracy that gives the world a message of India's determination."

The unveiling was preceded by a multi-faith prayer ceremony and Modi later entered the chamber accompanied by a posse of chanting Hindu seers in saffron robes before installing a ceremonial sceptre.

He later re-entered the chamber to chants of "Modi Modi" by government lawmakers.

Nineteen opposition parties boycotted the event because Modi, and not Indian President Droupadi Murmu, was inaugurating the new chamber, calling it a "direct assault on our democracy".

Modi "has relentlessly hollowed out" parliament, with opposition lawmakers "disqualified, suspended and muted" and laws passed "with almost no debate", a statement by the parties said.

The new legislature building stands next to the ageing and cramped colonial-era parliament building.



Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and his wife Emine Erdogan vote at a polling station during the second round of the presidential election in Istanbul, Turkey yesterday. Inset, Kemal Kilicdaroglu, presidential candidate of main opposition alliance, and his wife Selvi Kilicdaroglu cast their ballots at a polling station in Ankara yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

40 insurgents shot dead in India's Manipur

Says the state's chief minister; 10 hurt; encounters on

NDTV ONLINE

Commandos of the Manipur Police had been engaging insurgents for over eight hours yesterday in several areas of the Indian state hit by ethnic violence, sources have told NDTV.

Chief Minister N Biren Singh told reporters they have got reports that "40 terrorists" have been shot dead.

"The terrorists have been using M-16 and AK-47 assault rifles and sniper guns against civilians. They came to many villages to burn down homes. We have started taking very strong action against them with the help of the army and other security forces. We have got reports some 40 terrorists have been shot dead," Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh told reporters yesterday.

"I won't call them Kuki militants. They are Kuki terrorists. They have been shooting at unarmed civilians," Singh said.

The insurgents simultaneously attacked five areas in and around Imphal valley at 2:00 am yesterday, sources said.

The areas are Sekmai, Sognu, Kumbi, Phayeng and Serou. There are reports of gunfights going on in more areas and unclaimed bodies lying on the streets.

The gunfight at Sekmai is over, sources said, without giving more details.

Doctors at the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences (RIMS) in state capital Imphal told NDTV on phone yesterday they have received 10 people injured in the gunfight at Phayeng.

Khumanthem Kennedy, 27, a farmer, was killed after he was hit by multiple bullets in Bishenpur's Chandonpokpi; his body is being taken to RIMS, sources said, adding more casualties are feared. Kennedy is survived by his wife and infant son.



Over 25 Kuki insurgent groups have signed the tripartite "suspension of operations" (SoO) agreement with the centre and the state government. Under the SoO rules, the insurgents are to be confined in designated camps identified by the government and the weapons kept under locks, regularly monitored.

Home Minister Amit Shah is scheduled to visit Manipur today. He has appealed to both the Meiteis and the Kukis to maintain calm and peace, and work for bringing normalcy.

Army chief General Manoj Pande also went to the state on Saturday on a two-day visit to review the security situation.

The continuing ethnic violence between the Meiteis, who live in and around Imphal valley, and the Kuki tribe, who are settled in the hills, over the Meiteis' demand to be included under the Scheduled Tribes (ST) category has claimed over 70 lives since clashes started on May 3.

The development imbalance favouring the valley over the hills has been a point of contention and rivalry between the ethnic groups, reports Reuters.

The groups coexisted peacefully until unrelated events in recent months exposed old faultlines.

Separately, the state government in February launched a drive to evict tribal communities from forests in the hills, saying they had encroached on government land, sparking anger among tribal people that they were being forced out of their homes.

"It has been building up for a long time, in some ways unseen and some ways quite openly, but the government was not paying attention," said Pradip Phanjoubam, editor of the Imphal Review of Arts and Politics.

Manipur has been without internet for over 25 days.

Republicans, Biden reach debt ceiling deal

AFP, Washington

President Joe Biden and Republican leader Kevin McCarthy announced a deal Saturday to raise the debt ceiling, dragging the United States back from the precipice of default with only a few days to spare.

Congress will vote on the deal to extend the government's borrowing authority on Wednesday, just shy of the June 5 "X-date" when Treasury estimates government will no longer be able to pay its bills, plunging the economy into turmoil.

Biden said in a statement that the deal was "good news for the American people, because it prevents what could have been a catastrophic default and would have led to an economic recession, retirement accounts devastated, and millions of jobs lost."

McCarthy, who spoke with Biden on Saturday to close the deal, said there was still "a lot of work to do, but I believe this is an agreement in principle that's worthy of the American people."

The Republican speaker added he would consult again with president and oversee final drafting of the bill, and the House would "then be voting on it on Wednesday."

PLANNED RAID INCIDENT Minister trying to cover up 'horror stories': ex-Pak PM

DAWN ONLINE

PTI Chairman Imran Khan yesterday hit back at Pakistan Interior Minister Rana Sanaullah's allegations that the party had planned to orchestrate a "raid and rape" at a known worker's home in an effort to malign law enforcement agencies, terming them an effort to preempt and cover up "horror stories".

Imran's remarks came hours after Sanaullah, in a post-midnight press conference in Faisalabad, alleged that intelligence agencies had intercepted a telephone call in which a plan to "stage a raid and rape" at a known PTI worker's home was being discussed.

The interior minister did not provide any proof of his claim. "A plan [...] was being prepared. That there is an actual raid at a home — and that home will be of a known PTI worker — and an incident of firing occurs there, resulting in casualties," he said, adding that this was being planned to highlight human rights violations in Pakistan.

"In the same conversation that was intercepted, a second drama was that a rape is carried out. Meaning that an actual rape is carried out and it is blamed on law enforcement agencies [and] that it is happening at the government's behest."

The minister alleged that the PTI had then planned to highlight the issue on international media. He said that there were chances that the act would be carried out "tonight" (Sunday night) which is why the government had deemed it "necessary to make the nation aware of the devilish design".

HARASSMENT ALLEGATIONS Indian cops detain protesting wrestlers

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police yesterday dragged away and detained two Olympic wrestlers and dozens of others as they tried to march to parliament demanding the arrest of the sport's federation chief over allegations of sexual harassment and intimidation. In an escalation of the month-old standoff, police also cleared the site in central New Delhi where the wrestlers have been camped out while calling for the arrest of Brij Bhushan Singh, an AFP journalist at the scene said. The wrestlers attempted to march to new parliament yesterday just as it was being inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, but they were halted by some of the hundreds of police on duty for the event.

China's home-grown plane makes maiden flight

AFP, Beijing

China's first domestically produced passenger jet made its maiden commercial flight yesterday, a milestone event in the nation's decades-long effort to compete with Western rivals in the air. Beijing hopes the C919 commercial jetliner will challenge foreign models like the Boeing 737 MAX, though many of its parts are sourced from abroad. Its first homegrown jetliner with mass commercial potential would also cut the country's reliance on foreign technology as ties with West deteriorate. "In the future, most passengers will be able to choose to travel by large, domestically produced aircraft," CCTV said.



Venice's waters turn green due to an unknown substance near the Rialto Bridge, in Venice, Italy, in this handout image released yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Three killed, 5 hurt in US rally shootout

AFP, Los Angeles

At least three people were killed and five others wounded in a shootout at a biker rally on Saturday in the US state of New Mexico, local media reported.

The shooting occurred around 5:00 pm as 20,000 bikers took part in an annual Memorial Day motorcycle rally in Red River, a small town near the ski destination of Taos.

In a video interview with local outlet Questa Del Rio News, Red River Mayor Linda Calhoun confirmed the deaths and injuries, and said an unspecified number of suspects had been arrested.

"No law enforcement, no first responders were injured. No local people were injured... It was a gang-related incident," she said, declining to divulge which gangs were believed to be involved.

"The shooters have all been apprehended," she added.