

India, Pakistan brace for 'Biparjoy'

AGENCIES

Coastal states of India and neighbouring Pakistan were on alert yesterday after meteorologists warned that a cyclonic storm over the Arabian sea would intensify over the next 24 hours.

Indian authorities have told fishing communities to halt operations for the next five days in the eastern and central Arabian sea, and along the Indian Saurashtra and Kutch region.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD), which categorised Biparjoy as a "very severe storm", said at 08:30 am IST (0300 GMT) yesterday that the weather system was centred about 620 kilometres (385.25 miles) west southwest off the financial capital Mumbai, reports Reuters.

On the other hand, the Pakistan Meteorological Department (PMD) advised authorities in Sindh and Balochistan yesterday to remain alert as the "very severe" cyclonic storm, Biparjoy, over the Arabian Sea was maintaining its intensity and lay 910 kilometres south of Karachi.

The IMD in a statement said, "It is very likely to intensify further and move north-northeast wards gradually during next 24 hours."

It warned of heavy rainfall at isolated places in the state of Kerala and coastal Karnataka region in next three days. In Gujarat, the 13 coastal districts of South Gujarat, Saurashtra peninsula and Kutch have been put on alert.

In Pakistan, the cyclone was initially reported to pose no danger to Pakistan's coastal areas. It however, changed its course, reports Dawn.

Listing the distances from Pakistan's coastal cities, PMD in a notification issued yesterday said, the storm lay at a distance of "about 910km south of Karachi, 890km south of Thatta and 990km southeast of Ormara".



A group of Maasai men perform their traditional jumping dance during a Maasai cultural festival in Sekenani yesterday. The Maasai people are a Nilotic ethnic group inhabiting Kenya and northern Tanzania. Their cultural festival is a popular gathering and celebration of the Maasai cultural heritage and aims to showcase the community's traditional activities and fashion.

PHOTO: AFP

How Trump indictment could impact White House race

AFP, Washington

The latest twist in Donald Trump's attritional war with US law enforcement, as with so much else in the former president's story, throws the United States into unprecedented territory.

Facing multiple federal charges over his hoarding of government secrets, the mercurial Republican presents the country with the possibility of a winning candidate moving into the White House while under indictment -- or running the government from a jail cell.

The defiant billionaire has dismissed the notion that he would ever drop out of his party's primary contest, reverting instead to a favored tactic of accusing his "corrupt" political adversaries of election interference.

"It likely won't sway undecided voters but it will galvanize Trump supporters who might be wavering or looking to a candidate with less baggage," Matt Shoemaker, a national security analyst and former intelligence officer, told AFP.

Prosecutors in both the federal documents case and the state-level financial fraud probe targeting Trump in New York will hope to have him face justice before the country goes to the polls in 17 months.

But there is no guarantee of either case wrapping up that quickly and Trump also

faces federal and state-level probes into his efforts to subvert the 2020 election.

He would likely torpedo any outstanding federal prosecutions were he reelected, by attempting to pardon himself -- an unprecedented scenario that would almost certainly spark a constitutional crisis.

But he would have little influence over state-level cases and his more immediate worry is the damage his legal woes could do to his campaign to win the Republican nomination in the first place.

The latest indictment allows Trump's primary challengers -- Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, former vice president Mike Pence and others -- to level the criticism that the runaway frontrunner is unfit for office.

But they run the risk of alienating Trump's loyal base, whose support has only grown more fervent since the Manhattan indictment.

As a result, many rivals have rallied to Trump's side, perhaps hoping to keep their powder dry until he is finally taken out of the running by further indictments expected in the coming months.

Trump is under federal investigation over his role in the January 6, 2021 US Capitol insurrection.

"They are hoping Trump is eventually knocked out of the race by a series of

indictments, including those concerning January 6 and the attempt to overturn the election," said University of Virginia political scientist Larry Sabato.

"That's it. That's their strategy... They won't do anything. Go for the jugular? Trump's teeth will be in their jugular before they can do the same to him."

In a recent YouGov poll only half of respondents said it was a "serious crime" to falsify business records to conceal hush money payments to a porn star -- the case that he faces in Manhattan.

But two-thirds said the same about removing classified government secrets from the White House and obstructing efforts to retrieve them.

The figures are 28 percent and 42 percent respectively among Republicans -- a gap that suggests Trump's latest scandal could mark a turning point in his primary campaign.

"DeSantis would most benefit from Trump dropping out of the race but he seems to have calculated that they have many of the same potential voters so doesn't want to alienate them," Shana Gadarian, a professor of political science at Syracuse University, told AFP.

"It may take someone like... Christie to shake up that narrative," she added.

FRANCE KNIFE ATTACK Suspect charged with attempted murder

AGENCIES

The Syrian refugee detained in the stabbing of six people including four young children in the French Alpine town of Annecy has been charged with "attempted murder", a prosecutor said yesterday.

Abdalmasih H "did not wish to speak" during his 48 hours in police custody nor before the magistrates leading the investigation, public prosecutor Line Bonnet-Mathis told a press conference, adding that the victims were no longer in a life-threatening condition, reports AFP.

The stabbing was the first violent attack targeting children since 2012, when gunman Mohamed Merah shot three Jewish children and one of their parents, and then three soldiers, in Toulouse in 2012.

The suspect was examined by a psychiatrist who considered that he was fit to be held in custody, according to Reuters. Drug and alcohol tests were negative.

"Presently it is premature to assess his motivations," Bonnet-Mathis said, reiterating that there was no indication yet that terrorism was the assailant's motivation.

On his arrest, police found a folding knife, Christian faith images, a cross, cash, and a Swedish drivers' licence.

Blinken to visit China next week

WASHINGTON, United States



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken will travel to China next week, rescheduling a visit that was canceled in February after a saga over a suspected surveillance balloon, US officials said Friday.

Blinken is expected to arrive in Beijing on June 18, the first trip by a top US diplomat to China since his predecessor Mike Pompeo in October 2018, US officials said on condition of anonymity.

The State Department has not officially announced his travel. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby recently said the United States would announce travel by senior officials "in the near future" without giving details.

Presidents Joe Biden and Xi Jinping met in Bali in November and agreed to try to stop high tensions from soaring out of control, including by sending Blinken to Beijing.

Blinken abruptly canceled a trip scheduled in early February after the United States said it detected -- and later shot down -- a Chinese surveillance balloon flying over the US mainland, drawing fury from US lawmakers and denials by Beijing.

But the two sides have recently looked again to keep tensions in check including with a closed-door meeting between Biden's national security advisor Jake Sullivan and top Chinese diplomat Wang Yi in Vienna last month.

Missing children found after 40 days in Amazon

AFP, Colombia

Four Indigenous children who had been missing for more than a month in the Colombian Amazon rainforest were found alive and flown to the capital Bogota early yesterday.

The children, who survived a small plane crash in the jungle, were transported by army medical plane to a military airport at around 00:30 am yesterday (0530 GMT).

They were immediately taken off the plane on stretchers with ambulances waiting to bring them to hospital.



"Today we have had a magical day," President Gustavo Petro told the media after announcing their rescue.

"They are weak. Let's let the doctors make their assessment," he added.

The president had posted a photo on Twitter showing several adults, tending to the children.

"A joy for the whole country! The 4 children who were lost 40 days ago in the Colombian jungle were found alive," he wrote on Twitter.

Video shared by the Defense Ministry showed the children being pulled up into a helicopter as it hovered over the tall trees in almost complete darkness.

Originally from the Huitoto Indigenous group, the children -- aged 13, nine, four and one -- had been wandering alone in the jungle since May 1, when the Cessna 206 in which they were traveling crashed.

The bodies of the pilot, the children's mother and a local Indigenous leader were all found at the crash site, where the plane sat almost vertical in the trees.

The group had been fleeing threats from members of an armed group.



GPH LEADS IN INNOVATION EXCELLENCE

GPH Ispat, one of the leading industrial conglomerates in the Construction Industry of Bangladesh, has won the prestigious SDG (Sustainable Development Goals) Brand Champion Awards 2023 in the category of Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure. The award is a testament of innovation brought forth by GPH Ispat Limited to create a rebar of highest strength in Bangladesh - the world's best GPH Quantum B600C-R. GPH Ispat is greatly inspired by this achievement and is determined for continual growth towards attaining sustainable development goals.

