

SUDAN CONFLICT

One million children displaced

Says Unicef, warns many more at ‘grave risk’

AFP, Khartoum

The conflict in Sudan has displaced more than one million children including 270,000 in the Darfur region, the United Nations children’s agency said, warning many more were at “grave risk”.

Fighting has raged in Sudan since mid-April between army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF).

As well as the more than one million displaced, at least 330 children have been killed and more than 1,900 others wounded, Unicef said in a statement on Thursday. “Many more are at grave risk”.

Mandeep O’Brien, Unicef



representative in Sudan, said: “The future of Sudan is at stake, and we cannot accept the continued loss and suffering of its children.

“Children are trapped in an unrelenting nightmare, bearing the heaviest burden of a violent crisis they had no hand in creating -- caught in the crossfire, injured, abused, displaced and subjected to disease and malnutrition,” he added.

Unicef said an estimated 13 million children were in “dire need” of humanitarian assistance.

The UN agency said it was ready to assist them but called for “safe, unrestricted access and guaranteed security to all areas where children are in desperate need”.

It said the situation in the western region of Darfur -- where 270,000 children are said to have been displaced by the fighting -- was especially concerning.

“The situation in West and Central Darfur, in particular, is characterised by active fighting, severe insecurity and looting of humanitarian supplies and facilities,” said Unicef.

“The lack of safe water has left hundreds of thousands of children at risk of dehydration, diarrhoea, and malnutrition,” it added.



Residents watch as a car drowns in an inundated street at the coastal town of Mandvi in Gujarat, India yesterday as Cyclone Biparjoy makes landfall. The cyclone tore down power poles and uprooted trees after pummelling the Indian coastline, but the storm was weaker than feared and there were only two confirmed deaths.

PHOTO: AFP

SHIPWRECK OFF GREECE

Hope fades for survivors

9 Egyptians arrested on suspicion of people smuggling

AFP, Athens

Greek rescuers yesterday scanned the Ionian Sea by air and boat for survivors of a migrant boat sinking, as hope faded of finding more people alive two days after the disaster.

On Wednesday, a fishing boat overloaded with migrants capsized and sank, killing at least 78 people, off the Peloponnese. Some 104 people had been found alive.

The exact number of people aboard the boat is unknown, with one survivor telling hospital doctors in Kalamata he had seen 100 children in the boat’s hold, broadcaster ERT reported.

“Hopes of finding survivors are fading each minute after this tragic sinking, but the search must continue,” Stella Nanou, a spokeswoman for the UN refugee agency UNHCR, told AFP.

“According to broadcast images and accounts of some of the survivors, hundreds of people were aboard” she said.

The Greek coast guard said that rescuers scoured the sea through the night.

A helicopter, a frigate and three boats were scanning the waters yesterday, a coastguard spokeswoman told AFP.

Police on Thursday arrested nine Egyptians



on suspicion of people smuggling -- one of them the captain of the boat carrying the migrants.

They were detained at the port of Kalamata, where the survivors are being cared for, said Greek news agency ANA.

The survivors, mainly from Syria, Egypt and Pakistan, were being housed in a Kalamata warehouse.

Greece, Italy and Spain are among the main landing points for tens of thousands of people who seek to reach Europe as they flee conflict and poverty in the Middle East, Asia and Africa.

The United Nations yesterday called for in-depth investigations into the boat sinking off Greece.

The UN agencies for refugees and migrants called in a joint statement for “urgent and decisive action to prevent further deaths at sea following the latest tragedy in the Mediterranean, the worst in several years”.

They insisted states had an obligation to come together to address the dangerous gaps in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean, pointing out that “the duty to rescue people in distress at sea without delay is a fundamental rule of international maritime law”. The UN rights office meanwhile called for “thorough” investigations into the “horrific tragedy”.

Five foreign militants killed in J&K

Say Indian police

REUTERS, Srinagar

Indian police said security forces killed five foreign militants early yesterday in a gunfight in Kashmir along the Line of Control (LOC), the defacto border with Pakistan in the Himalayan region.

A joint team of Indian army and police prevented infiltration across the border by the militants, police said.

“Five foreign militants were killed in the operation in Jumagund area near the LOC. The search operation in the area is going on,” said Vijay Kumar, the chief of Indian police in Kashmir. He did not specify their nationalities.

Ashok Yadav, a senior Indian security official deployed for the security of the border, said last week that the melting of snow in the mountains might open traditional infiltration routes along the LOC.

‘I place my hopes on the American people’

China’s Xi tells Bill Gates

REUTERS, Beijing

Xi Jinping called Bill Gates “an old friend” and said he hoped they could carry out activities together beneficial to both China and the United States, in the Chinese president’s first meeting with a foreign entrepreneur in years. In a meeting at Beijing’s Diaoyutai state guesthouse yesterday, where China’s leaders have historically received senior foreign guests, Xi told the Microsoft co-founder and philanthropist that he was very happy to see him after three years and described Gates as the first American friend he had met this year. “I often say the foundation of US-China relations lies with its people. I place my hopes on the American people,” a video published by state broadcaster CCTV showed Xi as saying. “With the current global situation, we can carry out various activities beneficial to our two countries and people, activities that benefit humanity as a whole,” he said. Gates, who arrived in Beijing on Wednesday, told Xi that he was “honoured” to have the chance to meet. “We’ve always had great conversations and we’ll have lot of important topics to discuss today... so it’s very exciting to be back.”



POST-COUP MYANMAR

Junta-backed media slams ‘rotten’ UN

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar state media condemned the United Nations as “rotten” yesterday, days after the UN special envoy for the country stepped down and the world body slammed curbs on aid for cyclone survivors. Myanmar has been in turmoil since the military seized power in February 2021, ending a brief democratic experiment and sparking clashes across the country with ethnic rebel groups and anti-coup fighters. The military has criticised attempts by the UN and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations bloc to establish dialogue between the junta and its opponents, whom it has vowed to “annihilate”. The state-backed Global New Light of Myanmar published an opinion piece yesterday entitled “The Picture of Irrelevance”, accompanied by a photo of the UN headquarters in New York. “Inside, it is infested with egos. Its core is rotten,” the piece said. “The arrogance, ignorance and self interest have so polluted their minds that they are either in denial of how irrelevance (sic) their existence has become... or just simply incompetent and incapable of seeing the reality.” UN special envoy for Myanmar Noeleen Heyzer stepped down this week after an 18-month tenure in which she was criticised by both the junta and its opponents. The Singaporean sociologist was tasked with urging the military to engage in political dialogue with opposing groups, and end a bloody crackdown it launched after toppling the government of Aung San Suu Kyi.

First Bangladesh

FROM PAGE 12

the facts and administer justice with fairness and a deep respect for the rule of law.”

She faced pushback from some Senate Republicans after she gave inconsistent answers on whether she made comments at 2015 event at Princeton University saying that police killings of unarmed Black men “every day.”

She later in a letter to the Senate Judiciary Committee panel said that “Such a statement is inconsistent with my deep respect for law enforcement.”

Nusrat clerked for a judge on the nearby Southern District of New York trial court as well as the US Second Circuit Court of Appeals, which reviews cases from the New York, Connecticut and Vermont federal courts.

Biden also appointed the first Muslim judge in US history, US District Judge Zahid Quraishi. The Senate confirmed him to the New Jersey federal trial court in 2021.

DGHS closes OT

FROM PAGE 12

against six named and several unnamed persons over wrong treatment and fraud. Among the accused are three doctors.

The accused lied to the patient and her family that gynecologist Sanjukta Saha, consultant of Mahbuba, was at the hospital during the C-section, reads the complaint.

Yesterday, the DGHS also banned Sanjukta from providing consultation services to patients at the hospital until further notice.

It also instructed the hospital authorities to bear all treatment expenses of Mahbuba, compensate the patient’s family as per law, and send all documents related to the complaint to the DGHS and the Bangladesh Medical and Dental Council.

The health directorate warned the hospital of strict legal actions if the order was not carried out.

This newspaper could not reach the deputy director of Central Hospital for comments as he did not respond to calls.

Vast cyber espionage campaign linked to China

Says Google subsidiary Mandiant

AFP, Washington

Online attackers with clear links to China are behind a vast cyber espionage campaign targeting government agencies of interest to Beijing, Google subsidiary Mandiant said on Thursday.

“This is the broadest cyber espionage campaign known to be conducted by a China-nexus threat actor since the mass exploitation of Microsoft Exchange in early 2021,” said Mandiant chief technology officer Charles Carmakal.

The cyberattackers compromised the computer defenses of hundreds of organizations, in some cases stealing “emails of prominent employees dealing in matters of interest to the Chinese government,” Carmakal added.

Mandiant reported having “high confidence” that a group referred to as UNC4841 was behind the wide-ranging espionage campaign “in support of the People’s Republic of China”.

The hackers targeted victims in at least 16 different countries, striking organizations in the public and private sectors worldwide, the report said.

The targeting focused on issues of high policy importance to the Chinese government, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region and Taiwan, according to the report.

Victims included foreign ministries, research organizations, and foreign trade missions based in Hong Kong and Taiwan, Mandiant said in its findings.

The attacks involved email messages booby-trapped with malicious code and exploited a vulnerability in Barracuda software for screening such missives to make sure they are safe, according to the

report.

The cyber espionage activity was detected in May and is believed to have started as early as October of last year.

“We continue to see evidence of ongoing malware activity” on some systems that were compromised, Barracuda Networks told AFP.

The 2021 hack of Microsoft Exchange, which security researchers attributed to a Beijing-backed group, affected at least 30,000 organizations in the United States including businesses and local governments.

Washington has frequently accused Beijing of cyberattacks against US targets, with the issue contributing to a deterioration in relations between the two powers in recent years.

China has consistently denied the claims, and has railed against alleged US cyber espionage, last year accusing the US National Security Agency of carrying out “tens of thousands of malicious attacks on network targets in China”.

Two cops suspended

FROM PAGE 2

of Shariatpur yesterday evening, reported several media outlets.

According to the order, Sheikh Mohammad Mostafizur Rahman, former officer in charge of Padma Bridge South Police Station has been attached to Chattogram range and Suruj Uddin Ahmed former inspector (investigation) of the same police station has been attached to Barisal range.

These two officers along with additional police superintendent for the Naria circle, Russell Monir have been accused of torturing two businessmen in custody and forcing their family to pay Tk 72 lakh.

Female Jubo Dal

FROM PAGE 12

was returning home on a CNG-run auto-rickshaw after taking part in the rally. Some locals spotted her wearing a BNP cap and informed the police.

“She was not named in the first information report of the case as an accused. But she was found involved in subversive activities during the investigation of the case,” he told The Daily Star.

Asked about the identities of the locals who handed Nadia over to police, the OC said he didn’t know them.

Masud Karim Rana, convener of the Mirsarai Chhatra League convening committee, said he was not aware of the harassment of the Jubo Dal activist.

Shahidul Islam Chowdhury, convener of Mirsarai upazila BNP, said, “Chhatra League men harassed Nadia after intercepting the CNG-run three-wheeler she was travelling in and later handed her over to police.”

“Though she was not accused in any case, police detained her and sent her to a court showing her arrested in a sabotage case,” he said.

The BNP leader protested the incident and demanded her immediate release.

Ukraine offensive

FROM PAGE 12

two explosions. Mayor Vitali Klitschko also reported explosions in the central Podil district.

Ukraine’s air force said it had downed six “Kinzhals” ballistic missiles, six cruise missiles and two drones. City authorities said they had received no reports of deaths or serious damage so far, but police said there were an unspecified number of casualties.

Senior Russian officials said yesterday the Black Sea grain deal could not be extended under current circumstances but that Moscow was working to ensure that poorer countries would not suffer food shortages when it ends.

The deal, brokered by the UN and Turkey in July 2022, allowed Ukraine to resume sea-borne grain exports to help tackle a global food crisis.

Polls will be held on time

FROM PAGE 1

term of the current Awami League government.

The country’s main opposition BNP has vowed to boycott the vote saying it will be rigged in favour of the incumbent, an allegation denied by the government.

The opposition party instead demands that Hasina’s government resigns to pave the way for a neutral administration to hold the polls. The government rejects it as unconstitutional.

PM Hasina said that as BNP knew very well that they would not get any votes from people for their evil deeds, they are now looking for ways to back out from the election process.

“Generally they are the party of thieves and vote rigging, and it is not possible for them to come to power without vote dacoity,” she said.

She mentioned that in the past they grabbed state power by accepting external pressure to sell the resources of the country.

“So people do not want them anymore and for that reason, they do not get votes from the people, so they are searching for holes to backtrack from the election,” she said.

Regarding the BNP’s repeated threat to topple the government, Hasina, who is also the chief of the ruling Awami League, said that her government is not that much weak.

“There was a commotion regarding December 10 that they will oust the government (on that day). But we can’t be toppled as we have people with us, our power is our people,” she said.

Talking about the demand of the BNP to form a caretaker government during the election period, she said a totally independent election commission has been established.

“BNP is still raising their demand for the caretaker government,” she said.

“Has BNP now become insane or a child?” Hasina asked referring to what BNP leader Khaleda Zia once said as the country’s prime minister in response to then-opposition Awami League’s demand for a caretaker government to hold the election in the 1990s.

“By bringing those thieves

to power, by bringing the anti-independence force to power, by bringing murderers, we will not allow Bangladesh to bow down to others,” she asserted.

She said that to cover up their own weakness BNP now spreading various types of propaganda and making dirty tricks.

“Will those who killed people in broad daylight, looted public money, committed corruption and were convicted in corruption cases, now go to power? The main thing is whether they will go to elections by selecting that convicted person as their leader,” she said in obvious reference to BNP vice chairman Tareq Zia, now living in London.

Referring to the sacrifices of Awami League leaders and activists for the establishment of democracy, the prime minister said, “The democratic trend that has been established in Bangladesh today is the result of our movement. My party leaders and workers have given their lives for this. And I narrowly survived a grenade attack.”

Highlighting the benefits of the continuation of democracy Hasina said, “The country has changed because the democratic trend has been unhindered, today the country has developed, today Bangladesh has occupied a dignified seat in the world.”

Reiterating her determination to build a smart Bangladesh, Hasina said that the country will move forward with the status it has got today.

“We will build the hunger poverty-free, advanced and prosperous smart golden Bangla of the father of the nation by 2041.”

Appreciating the role of expatriates in any crisis in Bangladesh, the prime minister said that remittances sent by expatriates play a huge role in the country’s economy.

She urged the expatriates to send money through legal channels instead of through Hundi.

She advised those interested in going abroad to be aware and careful about brokers.

At the same time, Hasina urged them to register and go abroad in a legal way.