

TYPHOON DOKSURI 2 dead in Philippines Taiwan, China threatened

REUTERS, MANILA/BELING/TAIPEI

At least one person died as powerful typhoon Doksuri lashed the coastline of the northern Philippines with gale-force winds and torrential rain yesterday, bursting banks of rivers and leaving thousands without electricity.

Rain pounded coastal communities, including isolated villages tucked away in tropical forests. Many people had already been moved to safer areas ahead of the storm, which brought winds of up to 175 kilometres per hour (108 miles per hour).

"We're being battered here," Manuel Mamba, governor of the northern corn-growing Cagayan province, told Reuters.

The storm, labelled as a super typhoon by China's Meteorological Administration, is nearly 900 km (560 miles) across and is expected to sustain strength as it continues towards Taiwan and the Chinese mainland.

China's weather agency has already raised its storm alert to the second-highest tier and the manufacturing hub of Guangdong province has warned of the worst storm in a decade.

Doksuri is expected to make landfall in China on Friday, the second typhoon to land in under two weeks after Talim slammed into Guangdong on July 17.

Throughout July, record temperatures have caused havoc across the globe, sparking wildfires in the US and the Mediterranean. Scientists say global warming will also make storms wetter, windier and more violent.

In the Philippines, at least one person drowned in the province of Rizal, the national disaster agency said.

More than 4,000 passengers were stranded at ports across the country after sea travel was suspended, the Philippine coast guard said.

The storm's outer rain bands were expected to hit southern Taiwan later yesterday, its Central Weather Bureau said.

Taiwanese authorities issued warnings for several counties and cities in the south including the major port city of Kaohsiung.



Members of the Philippine Coast Guard remove a fallen tree from a road following the onslaught of Typhoon Doksuri in Buguey, Cagayan province, Philippines yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

JUDICIAL CRISIS Israel Supreme Court to hear appeal

Netanyahu suffers polls dip

REUTERS, Jerusalem

Israel's Supreme Court said yesterday it would hear an appeal against a new law that curbs some of its own powers, pitting it against Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing government that is seeking an overhaul of the judicial system.

A bench decision posted on the court's website said a hearing will be set for the appeal in September. The court did not issue an injunction against the new law, which came into effect yesterday.

A political watchdog and Israel's bar association had petitioned the court to intervene.

Critics say the changes will open the door to corruption and abuses of power by removing effective checks on the governing executive's authority.

The judicial overhaul has caused a deep divide in Israeli society, kindling months of unprecedented protests, stirring concern among allies abroad including top supporter Washington for the health of Israel's 75-year-old democracy, and straining the loyalties of some army reservists.

But it has also seen Arab citizens, who make up a fifth of Israel's population, stay on the sidelines, disillusioned with what they say is systemic discrimination

that has left them disproportionately disadvantaged. They say they have no place in the debate over Israel's identity as Jewish and democratic.

Netanyahu has taken a hit in opinion polls. Surveys by two main Israeli news broadcasters showed that if an election was held now, the number of seats held by his hard-right governing coalition in the 120-seat Knesset (parliament) would fall from 64 to 52 or 53.

Seats held by the 73-year-old premier's Likud party would fall from 32 to 28, according to N12 News, and to as low as 25, according to Reshet 13 in the polls published late on Tuesday.

Blinken criticises China's 'problematic behaviour'

REUTERS, Wellington

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken warned of China's "problematic behaviour" during a visit to the Pacific island nation of Tonga on Wednesday, citing Beijing's militarisation of the South China Sea and what he called economic coercion.

China's growing presence in the region, which saw it sign a security pact with the Solomon Islands last year, has fuelled concern in the US and Australia about Beijing's ambitions. It also prompted increased Western aid and engagement.

Blinken said at a press conference that the US had no objection to China's engagement with the region but there were concerns that its investments needed to be transparent and undertaken with sustainable finance.

"I think one of the things that we've seen is that as China's engagement in the (Indo-Pacific) region has grown there has been some, from our perspective, increasingly problematic behaviour," he said.

Japan sees record drop in population

AFP, Tokyo

Japan's population fell by a record in 2022, government data showed yesterday, as the country struggles to reverse its perennial low birthrates.

While many developed countries face low birthrates, the problem is particularly acute in Japan where the population has now fallen for 14 straight years.

The country has the world's second oldest population, after tiny Monaco, and in January, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida warned Japan was "on the verge of whether we can continue to function as a society".

Last year, the number of Japanese fell by 800,523, or 0.65 percent, to 122,423,038 from a year earlier, a survey by the internal affairs ministry shows.

For the first time, the population fell in all 47 prefectures.

The overall drop was the steepest decline recorded since 1968, when the government survey began, the ministry said.

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