

Sudan at risk of disease as corpses litter streets: charity

AFP, Cairo

War-torn Sudan is at risk of major disease outbreaks, with thousands of unburied corpses remaining out in the open and country's health and sanitation infrastructure destroyed, Save the Children warned yesterday.

Residents say Khartoum is littered with dead bodies from fighting between the forces of army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces.

With thousands of corpses decomposing on streets of the capital and morgues overflowing four months into the conflict, the charity raised the alarm about "the risk of major disease outbreaks in the city".

Sudan has seen repeated cholera outbreaks in recent years, and doctors have warned of a renewed threat as a result of the war.



Smoke billows as Israeli soldiers demolish a house at the Asker camp for Palestinian refugees east of Nablus city in the occupied West Bank, early yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

NIGER COUP
US backs West African diplomatic efforts
Junta unresponsive AGENCIES

The United States yesterday backed efforts by West African countries to restore constitutional order in Niger after a July 26 coup and said that diplomacy was preferable to military intervention.

Heads of state from the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) are preparing for a summit tomorrow to discuss their standoff with the Niger junta, which defied an August 6 deadline to reinstate ousted President Mohamed Bazoum.

The possibility of military intervention will be on the table. "There's no doubt that diplomacy is the best way to resolve this situation," US Secretary of State Antony Blinken told French radio station RFI yesterday.

In a separate interview with BBC, Blinken said: "I think what happened, and what continues to happen in Niger was not instigated by Russia or by Wagner, but... they tried to take advantage of it."

"Every single place that this Wagner group has gone, death, destruction and exploitation have followed," said Blinken.

POST-COUP MYANMAR
War crimes by military 'more frequent, brazen'
UN probe finds; Indonesia says Myanmar solution needs 'political will' from all sides

REUTERS, GENEVA

War crimes committed by Myanmar's military, including the bombing of civilians, have become "increasingly frequent and brazen", a team of United Nations investigators said in a report published yesterday.

The report by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), which covered the period between July 2022 and June 2023, said there was "strong evidence that the Myanmar military and its affiliate militias have committed three types of combat-related war crimes with increasing frequency and brazenness".

These crimes include the indiscriminate or disproportionate targeting of civilians using bombs and the burning of civilian homes and buildings, resulting at times in the destruction of entire villages, it said.

The report also cited "killings of civilians or combatants detained during operations".

"Our evidence points to a dramatic increase in war crimes and crimes against humanity in the country, with widespread and systematic attacks against civilians, and we are building case files that can be used by courts to hold individual perpetrators responsible," said Nicholas Koumjian, head of the IIMM.



Since a junta seized power two years ago, Myanmar has been plunged into chaos, with a resistance movement fighting the military on multiple fronts after a bloody crackdown on opponents that saw Western countries re-impose sanctions.

A spokesperson for the junta could not be reached for comment on the findings made by UN investigators.

The junta has previously denied atrocities have taken place, saying it is carrying out a legitimate campaign against terrorists.

Although it has justified bombings as attacks against military targets, UN investigators said the Myanmar military "should have known or did know" that a large number of civilians were in or around the alleged targets when the attacks took place.

Meanwhile, Indonesian President Joko Widodo yesterday said a resolution to the Myanmar crisis that has dragged into its

third year needed "political will" from all sides of the conflict, as divided Southeast Asian nations step up diplomatic efforts.

"We are aware the situation in Myanmar is still full of challenges. We must also realise this situation can only be resolved if there is political will from all parties," he told an anniversary event for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean).

The Indonesian leader told foreign dignitaries the 10-member bloc, which includes Myanmar, must continue to work together to find a breakthrough to the crisis.

"Asean, as a big ship, must move forward. This big ship must continue to sail," he said. "This big ship cannot sink because this is our responsibility to hundreds of millions of people inside."

Indonesia is this year's chair of the Asean bloc and will host a leaders' summit in September. Jakarta has engaged in what it calls "quiet diplomacy" with the Myanmar junta in a bid to bring it back to the negotiating table.

Widodo said the bloc's efforts to solve the crisis would continue along the lines of a five-point deal agreed with Myanmar's junta two years ago.

But the junta has largely ignored that agreement, which aims to end violence and resume talks between the military and the anti-coup movement.

MILITARY DRONES
India bars makers from using Chinese parts

REUTERS, NEW DELHI

India in recent months has barred domestic manufacturers of military drones from using components made in China over concerns about security vulnerabilities, according to four defence and industry officials and documents reviewed by Reuters.

The measure comes amid tensions between nuclear-armed neighbours and as New Delhi pursues a military modernisation that envisages greater use of unmanned quadcopters, long-endurance systems and other platforms.

But as the nascent Indian industry looks to meet the military's needs, the defence and industry figures said India's security leaders were worried that intelligence-gathering could be compromised by Chinese-made parts in drones' communication functions, cameras, radio transmission and operating software.

Three of these people and some of the six other government and industry figures interviewed by Reuters spoke on the condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to talk to the media or because of the topic's sensitivity.

Jailed Imran Khan challenges graft conviction

REUTERS, Islamabad

Pakistan's jailed former prime minister Imran Khan appealed against his conviction and three-year sentence on corruption charges yesterday, his lawyer said, a ruling which analysts say is likely to fuel political instability.

Naeem Panjutha said the petition challenging the weekend conviction had been filed in Islamabad High Court which will hear the case today.

Ex-cricketer Khan, 70, was jailed on charges of selling state gifts unlawfully during his tenure as premier from 2018 to 2022.

Khan has been at the heart of political turmoil since he was ousted as prime minister in a vote of no confidence last year, raising concern about stability in the nuclear-armed country as it grapples with an economic crisis.

A US State Department spokesman said on Monday the arrest of Khan is Pakistan's "internal matter", declining to take a position on the legal troubles of the former prime minister and frequent US critic.

"Being aggrieved and dissatisfied", Khan has appealed to the high court to "set aside" the trial court's order that convicted and sentenced him, according to a copy of the petition posted by Panjutha on social media platform X.

Meanwhile, PM Shehbaz Sharif yesterday confirmed that he would write to President Arif Alvi today to dissolve the National Assembly, which would bring the incumbent government's term to a marginally premature end.

NEW HISTORY TEXTBOOKS
Russia praises offensive in Ukraine

AFP, Moscow

Written in record time and praising the army: Moscow unveiled new history textbooks Monday ahead of children returning to the classroom for a second school year with troops fighting in Ukraine and ruptured ties with the West. The Kremlin has tightened its control over the historical narrative in schools under President Putin -- a trend that has hugely accelerated since Moscow launched its Ukraine offensive last year. The conflict has increasingly been presented to the youngest Russians as part of Moscow's historical mission. Presenting the new book at a press conference in Moscow, Education Minister Sergei Kravtsov said the material was written in just a few months.

July hottest month on record: EU

AFP, Paris

July was the hottest month ever recorded on Earth, the European Union's climate observatory confirmed yesterday. Marked by heatwaves and fires all around the world, the previous month was 0.33 degrees Celsius higher than the record set in July 1919 when the average temperature was 16.63C, it said.

"The month was 0.72C warmer than the 1991-2020 average for July," it said. About 1.2 degrees Celsius of global warming since the late 1800s has made heatwaves hotter, longer and more frequent, as well as intensifying other weather extremes like storms and floods. "Heatwaves were experienced in multiple regions of the Northern Hemisphere, including southern Europe. Well-above average temperatures occurred over several South American countries and around much of Antarctica," climate observatory Copernicus said.

INDIAN PARLIAMENT
MPs debate no-confidence motion against Modi govt

AFP, New Delhi

India's parliament debated a no-confidence motion against Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government yesterday, a day after opposition leader Rahul Gandhi returned to the house.

The opposition Congress party launched the debate in a bid to force comment from Modi on months of deadly ethnic conflict in northeastern Manipur state, with a vote potentially to be held tomorrow.

Government minister Kiren Rijiju said the motion had "been brought at an extremely bad time and Congress would regret it later".

Modi's Hindu Nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won 303 seats in the 543-member lower house in the 2019 election and is expected to comfortably defeat the no-confidence vote, which it has dismissed as a headline-grabbing gimmick.

Gandhi, the scion of India's premier political dynasty, was restored to parliament on Monday after the Supreme Court last week suspended his defamation conviction over comments criticising Modi.

The 53-year-old Gandhi was sentenced to two years' imprisonment in March in a case that critics flagged as an effort to stifle political opposition in the world's largest democracy.

"This no-confidence motion is our necessity," Congress MP Gaurav Gogoi told a rowdy session of parliament. "We had to bring it... This was never about the numbers but justice for Manipur," Gogoi said.



The Bibby Stockholm accommodation barge is pictured moored to the quayside at Portland Port in Portland, on the south-west coast of England yesterday. Britain on Monday began housing migrants on board the barge, in its latest controversial immigration policy that has drawn heavy criticism from locals and rights campaigners.

PHOTO: AFP

Two dead, 7 hurt in China knife attack

AFP, Beijing

Two people died and seven others were being treated in hospital after sustaining injuries in a knife attack yesterday in China's Yunnan province, authorities said.

In a statement released yesterday evening, Luoping County police said a 20-year-old man with a history of mental illness had "stabbed his mother with a knife at home then fled, stabbing eight (more) people successively".

"Among them, two people were unable to be saved and died," the statement added. Seven of the victims were still being treated in hospital for their wounds.

The suspect, surnamed Chen, was arrested by public security personnel after the attack, which occurred around 8 am in the county's Lashan urban residential district.

"Investigation into the case and dealing with its aftermath are being conducted in an orderly manner," police said.