

North Korea blasted at UNSC for arms buildup

AFP, United Nations

North Korea was accused at the UN Security Council Thursday of spending heavily on its nuclear arms program while its people go hungry and lack basic necessities.

Volker Turk, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, told the council that people in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea have experienced increasingly severe political repression while economic conditions have worsened, with widespread systematic human rights violations.

"Many of the violations I have referred to stem directly from, or support, the increasing militarization of the DPRK," he said.

He cited widespread use of forced labor, including by children, to "support the military apparatus of the state and its ability to build weapons."



People line up outside of a local school to register to be evacuated, as wildfires, inset, threatened the Northwest Territories town of Yellowknife, Canada on Thursday. A massive wildfire in Canada's western province of British Columbia prompted more evacuation orders early yesterday, as firefighters race to move all residents from the remote northern city of Yellowknife to safety.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Biden ramps up S Korea, Japan ties in sign to China

AFP, Camp David

US President Joe Biden was set to announce new security cooperation with Japan and South Korea yesterday, including joint exercises at a first-of-a-kind three-way summit with their leaders that has already rattled China.

The summit at the Camp David presidential retreat would have been unimaginable until recently, with the two treaty-bound allies -- together the base for some 84,500 US troops -- at loggerheads for decades over the legacy of Japan's harsh 1910-1945 occupation of the Korean peninsula.

But South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol, taking political risks at home, has turned the page by resolving a dispute over wartime forced labor, instead calling Japan a partner at a time of high tensions with both China and North Korea.

Biden, Yoon and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will agree to a multiyear plan of regular exercises in all domains, going beyond one-off drills in response to North Korea, and will announce a "commitment to consult" during crises, said Jake Sullivan, Biden's national security advisor.

While the United States already works closely with both allies, the new initiatives seek for "this three-way cooperation to get deeper and more institutionalized," Sullivan told reporters at Camp David in the mountains northwest of Washington.

The leaders will also agree to share real-time data on North Korea and to hold summits every

year, officials said.

Camp David marks the first time the three countries' leaders have met for a standalone summit, not on the sidelines of larger event, and is the first diplomatic event since 2015 at the resort, which is synonymous with Middle East peacemaking.

Sullivan said the summit would have an "affirmative vision" on how the countries can deliver together and was "not taking aim at a country."

But Rahm Emanuel, the blunt-speaking US ambassador to Japan, took another tone when he previewed the summit, saying that the three powers "created something that is exactly what China was hoping would never happen."

China, the former congressman turned ambassador said, should understand: "We are the rising power; they are declining."

China has flexed its muscle both at home and in Asia under President Xi Jinping, exerting disputed maritime claims and carrying out major exercises near Taiwan, the self-ruling democracy claimed by Beijing.

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi urged the two economically developed Northeast Asian democracies instead to work with Beijing to "revitalize East Asia."

"No matter how blond you dye your hair or how sharp you shape your nose, you can never become a European or American, you can never become a Westerner," he said in a video shared on official media.

BLASPHEMY 2 Christians arrested in Pakistan

REUTERS, Lahore

Police in Pakistan have arrested two Christians accused of blasphemy, a spokesperson said yesterday, two days after a Muslim mob burnt churches and houses in the minority's settlement, saying the two men had desecrated the holy Quran.

The accusations against the two Christians relates to pages of the holy Quran found with some derogatory remarks written in red, police said.

Paramilitary troops have been guarding the settlement in the eastern part of the country after the mob vandalised at least one main and four small churches and set scores of houses on fire.

A Christian graveyard was also desecrated, residents and the community leaders said.

Sudan fighting reaches war-ravaged south

AFP, Wad Madani

Fighting between two rival generals has spread to cities in war-ravaged Sudan's south, witnesses said yesterday, raising concerns for hundreds of thousands who have fled violence in the Darfur region. The vast western region has seen some of the worst bloodshed since the conflict erupted on April 15 between the army under General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) commanded by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo. Battles resumed late Thursday in the North Darfur state capital of El Fasher, witnesses said, disrupting nearly two months of calm in the densely populated city that has become a shelter from the shelling, looting, rapes and summary executions reported in other parts of Darfur. "This is the biggest gathering of civilians displaced in Darfur, with 600,000 people in El Fasher," said Nathaniel Raymond of the Humanitarian Research Lab at the Yale School of Public Health. One resident told AFP: "As night fell, we heard battles with heavy weapons from the city's east." Witnesses also reported fighting in Al-Fulah, the capital of West Kordofan state which borders Darfur. The conflict had already expanded to North Kordofan state, a commercial and transportation hub between Khartoum and parts of Sudan's south and west.

India's lunar lander sends photos of Moon

REUTERS, Bengaluru

India's space agency yesterday released images of the moon taken from its Chandrayaan-3 space craft as it approaches the lunar south pole, a previously unexplored region thought to contain water ice where Russia is trying to land first. The video, taken on Thursday just after the separation of the rocket's lander from the propulsion module, showed a close-up of craters as earth's only natural satellite spun round. "The Lander Module (LM) health is normal. LM successfully underwent a deboosting operation that reduced its orbit to 113 km x 157 km," the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) tweeted later. The Indian space agency launched the rocket carrying the spacecraft on July 14, blasting off from the country's main spaceport in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh. The lander is scheduled to attempt a touchdown on Aug 23. Russia launched its first moon-landing spacecraft in 47 years on August 11, taking a more direct course to reach the moon's south pole where scientists have detected water ice that could be used for fuel, oxygen and drinking water for future moon missions or a lunar colony. Russia's moon mission is on track to land the Luna-25 on August 21, two days before India's spacecraft.



More cases now outside Dhaka

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The total number of cases went up to 95,877, including 48,944 outside Dhaka.

Experts have urged the government to pay the same attention to cities and towns outside Dhaka to control the spread of dengue.

Entomologist Kabirul Bashar of Jahangirnagar University said multiple reasons were behind the increase in the cases outside Dhaka.

As a huge number of residents of the capital have already developed antibodies to one or more serotypes of dengue virus, he said.

Though a total of 94,312 dengue cases have been reported till Thursday morning, the actual figure would be at least 10 lakh as only hospitalised patients are being tallied, Bashar told The Daily Star.

Also, the authorities outside Dhaka have not taken adequate measures to control the breeding of Aedes mosquito, he added.

Stressing the need for building awareness, the expert said no steps have been taken to make people outside Dhaka aware of Aedes mosquito.

Rain for longer period this year is another reason for the increase in Aedes mosquito population, he said.

Urbanisation outside Dhaka is also playing a significant role in the spread of dengue as Aedes mosquitoes are getting suitable atmosphere there to breed.

Bashar said it is very important to step up mosquito control measures in all cities to control the Aedes mosquitoes, carriers of dengue virus.

The government will have to pay the same attention to every city for this purpose, he said.

GM Saifur Rahman, another entomologist, said there is a lack of necessary equipment to conduct anti-mosquito drives. The government should pay attention to this, he added.

"It would be much easier to control the spread of dengue and breeding of the mosquitoes if a vector management authority is set up. The authority would formulate proper guidelines in this regard," he said.

The LGRD ministry should

send brief guidelines to the district

authorities regarding the elimination of Aedes breeding grounds and personal protection, he observed.

Entomologist Manzur Chowdhury said the infection rate outside Dhaka usually increases when patients from Dhaka travel outside.

"Earlier, the epicenter [of the viral disease] used to be Dhaka. The disease would spread outside if patients went out of the capital. But this year, the number of patients seemed to have simultaneously increased in and outside Dhaka due to the increased breeding of Aedes mosquitos."

Many people infected with the virus travelled outside the capital during Eid-ul-Azha holidays, which might have contributed to the spread of the disease, Manzur added.

He said it is now necessary to break the transmission chain.

"One of the main methods is to use mosquito nets while sleeping, wearing clothes covering exposed body parts, spraying repellants and ensuring cleaning of stagnant water and destroying all possible Aedes mosquito breeding sources," he added.

India's SC lists

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patriarchal society about gender roles, sex and violence, such as domestic chores being confined to women or that their use of alcohol or tobacco suggests they "want to engage in sexual relations with men".

It states, "Judges must be vigilant against all forms of gender biases and ensure that every person, regardless of their gender identity, is treated equally and with dignity."

Groups advocating for women's rights welcomed the step.

"Language is not just communication, it also in a way paints a picture of society, people, and values," said Ranjana Kumari, director of the Centre for Social Research in Delhi.

"We are very happy that those words have been chosen carefully and redefined."

After floods

FROM PAGE 12

Contacted, Alak Paul, professor of geography and environmental studies at Chittagong University, said people are cutting trees on hills indiscriminately that makes hills soil loose. "When it rains heavily, the soil goes to the river."

"To prevent situation, we have to protect the environment and stop cutting trees on the hills."

S'pore company

FROM PAGE 12

"I think they're doing very well... they're enjoying the view and I guess the perceived freedom that they get," said Marissa Ng, a 28-year-old human resources professional whose five-year-old ragdolls Coco and Bobo sat looking out at the sea from a cage beside her table.

The ship has hosted over 2,000 dogs since 2021, and the cat cruises may soon catch up, with more than 200 tickets for human passengers - priced at S\$225 (\$166) each - having already been sold.

The cat and dog cruises have different sailing days.

While the canines are served an onboard three-course dinner at the table, cat owners take their pets' meals home since the finicky creatures tend to turn down food when they are outside of their comfort zone.

The company running the cruises, TallShip Adventures, says it consulted with experts and cat welfare organisations such as the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals to ensure a safe experience on board.

Precautions include making sure cats are securely harnessed and leashed at all times. They are also required to be vaccinated and sterilised, and to be transported in carriers while boarding.

Four-month-old British shorthair kitten Mahmud appeared calm even though it was his first time in a harness, snoozing on a bench beside his family as they ate dinner.

"This is a good time to spend the day as a family, since we just got Mahmud," said Aziana Aziz, a 41-year-old teacher sailing with her son and husband.

11 more assets in S'pore

FROM PAGE 1

The police conducted a massive island-wide blitz on Tuesday, hitting several GCBs and high-end condos across Singapore simultaneously to nab several suspects involved in possible illicit activities.

The properties raided included ones in Tanglin, Bukit Timah, Orchard Road, Sentosa and River Valley. Ten people, including a woman, were charged on Wednesday night.

Ranging in age from 31 to 44, they are suspected to be involved in offences of forgery, money laundering or resisting arrest.

The accused hold multiple passports, but are originally from Fujian, China. Another 12 are assisting in investigations, while eight more

people are currently on the run and have been placed on a wanted list.

The police said on Wednesday that the blitz involved more than 400 officers, including those from the Criminal Investigation Department, Commercial Affairs Department, Special Operations Command and Police Intelligence Department.

The group of foreign nationals are allegedly involved in laundering the proceeds of their organised crime activities overseas, and are also linked to scams and online gambling.

The police had identified them through extensive investigations, including the analysis of suspicious transaction reports made by financial institutions.

Water receding, sufferings linger

FROM PAGE 12

A bulletin of the Bangladesh Meteorological Department (BMD) predicted short-term flooding in the country's northern, north-eastern, and south-eastern regions in August due to heavy monsoon rainfall.

In Sirajganj, around 50 char and vast low-lying areas in Sadar, Chowdhali, Kazipur, Shahjapur, and Belkuchi upazilas have been inundated.

The Jamuna has been swelling for the past week, however, it is still flowing below the danger level, said Ranajit Kumar, sub-divisional engineer of the WDB in Sirajganj.

Torrential downpours in the upper catchment Indian state of Assam contributed to the rise in the water level of Jamuna, he added.

However, the WDB official said the water level in the Jamuna was already falling and there was no chance of a long-term flood this time.

The water level in the Jamuna has been fluctuating for one and a half months. "Our croplands have been underwater for around one month. We don't have any work. It has become difficult for us to survive," said Sharif Hossain, a resident of Choto-Koyra village in Sadar upazila.

"My house was devoured by Jamuna a month ago. I then built a makeshift hut on my char land. But that too was inundated a week ago. We are passing tough days with little access to food and drinking water," said Mosharaf Hossain, a resident of Chowdhali upazila.

In Bogura, with low-lying areas of Sariakandi and Sonatala being inundated, people there are facing a severe crisis of cattle feed and grazing lands.

Rafikul Islam, 50, of Biotana char under Sariakandi upazila, said, "Our village has remained flooded for a month. Although water has yet to enter our house, we are struggling to keep our farm animals alive as grazing lands and crop fields remain underwater."

Nazmul Haque, the executive engineer of Bogura WDB, said, "The Jamuna is still below the danger level, and the floodwater is receding. But the water level may rise again next week."

In Nilphamari, the Teesta crossed the danger mark on August 14, leaving vast tracts of lowland inundated and over 20,000 people marooned.

But the water level has declined, and it was flowing 49cm below the

Colleagues threaten

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"The offer of resignation by our colleague Prof Sabyasachi Das and its hasty acceptance by the University has deeply ruptured the faith that we in the faculty of the department of Economics, our colleagues, our students, and well-wishers of Ashoka University everywhere, had reposed in the university's leadership," the letter said.

"Unless these questions regarding basic academic freedoms are resolved before the start of the Monsoon 2023 semester, faculty members of the department will find themselves unable to carry forward their teaching obligations in the spirit of critical enquiry and the fearless pursuit of truth that characterise our classrooms," the letter stated.

danger mark at the Dalia point yesterday, said Rashedin Mawla, sub-divisional engineer of Nilphamari WDB.

Abdus Sadek, 65, of Uttar Kharibari village under Dimla upazila, said, "I, along with my family members, was forced to leave our home on the night of August 14 and take shelter on an embankment as our village was quickly submerged."

In Kurigram and Lalmonirhat, the Teesta, Dharta, and Dudhkumar started swelling last week, but the floodwater started receding after three days, said Abdullah Al Mamun, executive engineer of Kurigram WDB.

Nagen Chandra Barman, 65, a farmer from Rajpur village under Lalmonirhat Sadar upazila, said, "My home and croplands were inundated as the river swelled and overflowed its banks. Many people left their homes to take shelter on roads and other elevated grounds."

Nazar Ali Mandal, 60, of Begumganj village under Kurigram's Ulipur upazila, said, "Floodwater has receded, but our croplands have been damaged. We can't feed our farm animals."

[Our Correspondents from Pabna, Bogura, Nilphamari, and Lalmonirhat contributed to this report.]