

Sr US official visits India

Discusses alleged plot to kill Sikh separatist

REUTERS, Washington

White House deputy national security adviser Jon Finer led a US delegation to New Delhi on Monday where he noted the formation of an investigative panel by India to probe an unsuccessful plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist on US soil.

“Mr Finer acknowledged India’s establishment of a Committee of Enquiry to investigate lethal plotting in the United States and the importance of holding accountable anyone found responsible,” White House said in a statement on Monday.

Last week, the US Justice Department alleged that an Indian government official directed an unsuccessful plot to assassinate a Sikh separatist on US soil, while it announced charges against a man accused of orchestrating the attempted murder.

US officials named the target of attempted murder as Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist and dual citizen of the US and Canada. India expressed concern about one of its officials being linked to plot, from which it dissociated itself, as being against government policy.

Nepal urges Russia not to recruit its citizens into army

Says six killed

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Nepal said it has asked Moscow not to recruit its citizens into the Russian army and immediately send back any Nepali soldier commissioned there back to Himalayan nation after revealing six soldiers serving Russia’s military had been killed.

Nepali soldiers, called Gurkhas, are known for their bravery and fighting skills, and have been serving the British and Indian armies following the independence of India in 1947 under an agreement between the three countries.

Nepal has no such agreement with Russia, which invaded neighbouring Ukraine in February 2022.



Palestinian children queue to collect water amid water shortages during the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Situation in Gaza ‘getting worse by the hour’: WHO

AGENCIES

A World Health Organization official in Gaza said yesterday the situation was deteriorating by the hour as Israeli bombing has intensified in the south of the Palestinian enclave around the cities of Khan Younis and Rafah.

“The situation is getting worse by the hour,” Richard Peeperkorn, WHO representative in Gaza, told reporters via video link. “There’s intensified bombing going on all around, including here in the southern areas, Khan Younis and even in Rafah.”

Peeperkorn said the humanitarian aid reaching Gaza was “way too little” and said the WHO was deeply concerned about the vulnerability of the health

system in the densely populated enclave as more people move further south to escape the bombing.

“We will witness the same pattern of what happened in the north,” he said, referring to an area of northern Gaza that was heavily bombed and nearly cut off from humanitarian supplies.

“That cannot happen ... I want to make this point very clear that we are looking at an increasing humanitarian disaster.”

Thomas White, Director of Affairs at the UN Palestinian agency in Gaza, said a population of more than 600,000 had been ordered to move to escape bombardment, reports Reuters.

“Rafah that normally has a population of 280K and already hosting around 470K IDP (internally displaced people)

will not cope with a doubling of its IDP population,” White wrote on social media platform X.

James Elder, spokesperson for the United Nations children’s agency Unicef, said the areas of Gaza designated as safe by Israel were nowhere near meeting basic requirements, warning an absence of sanitation and shelter have created a “perfect storm” for outbreaks of disease.

“It’s a safe zone when you can guarantee the conditions of food, water, medicine and shelter,” he told reporters via video link from Cairo.

“I’ve seen for myself these are entirely, entirely absent... These are tiny patches of barren land or they’re street corners. They’re sidewalks. They’re half-built buildings. There is no water,” he said.

POST-COUP MYANMAR

Junta calls for political solution with rebel groups

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar’s junta chief has called on ethnic armed groups battling the military across the country to find a political solution, state media reported yesterday. The junta is reeling from coordinated offensives near the borders with China, India and Thailand, in what analysts say is the biggest threat to its rule since it seized power in 2021. Junta chief Min Aung Hlaing “warned that if armed organisations keep on being foolish, residents of the relevant regions will suffer bad impacts”, according to the Global New Light of Myanmar. “So, it is necessary to consider the lives of the people, and those organisations need to solve their problems politically,” he said. Myanmar has more than a dozen ethnic minority armed groups, many of which hold territory in the country’s border regions and have battled the military since independence from Britain in 1948. In late October three groups launched a joint offensive across northern Shan state, capturing towns and seizing vital trade hubs on the China border. More than 250 civilians, including children, are feared to have died since the launch of the offensive in October, according to United Nations field reports.

85 killed after army drone strike hits Nigerian villagers

AFP, Lagos

A Nigerian army drone targeting armed groups killed at least 85 civilians by mistake in northwest Kaduna State, causing outrage over one of the country’s deadliest military bombing accidents. Calling the incident “disturbing”, President Bola Ahmed Tinubu yesterday ordered an investigation after the army acknowledged one of its drones mistakenly struck the Tudun Biri village on Sunday as residents celebrated a Muslim festival. The army did not give any casualty figures, but residents had said 85 people, many of them women and children, were killed. “The Northwest Zonal Office has received details from the local authorities that 85 dead bodies have so far been buried while the search is still ongoing,” National Emergency Management Agency said.



This handout photo taken on Monday and released yesterday by the BASARNAS shows rescuers evacuating one of the victims from the slopes of Mount Marapi in West Sumatra, Indonesia. The death toll from the Mount Marapi volcano eruption has risen to 22 after nine more bodies were discovered.

PHOTO: AFP

Putin to visit KSA, UAE today

AFP, Moscow

President Vladimir Putin will visit Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates today, the Kremlin announced, as Moscow courts allies abroad despite being isolated over the Ukraine conflict.

Putin has limited his international travel since deploying troops to Ukraine, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an international arrest warrant for Putin on the war crime accusation of unlawfully deporting Ukrainian children.

Neither the UAE nor Saudi Arabia have signed the ICC’s founding treaty.

“President Putin will go on a working visit to the UAE and Saudi Arabia tomorrow,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters yesterday.

He said the Russian leader would discuss bilateral relations, the conflict between Israel and Hamas, and international politics.

The United Arab Emirates is hosting the COP28 UN climate talks, but the Kremlin did not specify whether Putin would attend any related events.

Putin has missed several high-level gatherings abroad since Moscow launched large-scale hostilities in Ukraine in February 2022.

13 dead as cyclone batters India’s south

REUTERS, Bhubaneswar

Cyclone Michaung hit the southern India coast yesterday afternoon, after torrential rains sent tall waves crashing into coastal towns, submerging roads and killing at least 13 people, including a child.

The cyclone made landfall on the southern Indian state of Andhra Pradesh near the town of Bapatla, the weather office said, barreling in with winds of up to 110 kph (70 mph).

“The landfall process is continuing and is expected to complete during the next three hours,” the Indian Meteorological Department said on social media platform X.

Parts of the state are expected to be pelted with more than 200 mm (8 inches) of rain over the next 24 hours, the weather office said earlier, and at least 8,000 people have been evacuated.

A 4-year-old boy died in Tirupati district after a wall fell, C Nagaraju, executive director of the state’s disaster management authority said, while 12 people were killed in neighbouring Tamil Nadu state, officials said.

In Tamil Nadu’s capital Chennai, a major electronics and manufacturing hub, residents were seen wading waist-deep through the murky floodwaters, which swept away cars and submerged a runway, triggering the shutdown of one of India’s busiest airports until yesterday morning.

The rains have stopped and water has receded at Chennai airport, and the airfield was operational from 9:00 am local time, a spokesperson for the federal civil aviation ministry said.

The rains and winds also snapped power lines and uprooted trees, officials said, and more than 140 trains and 40 flights were cancelled in Andhra Pradesh.

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