

UN needs \$46bn for aid in 2024

REUTERS, Geneva

The United Nations yesterday appealed for \$46 billion in funding for 2024 to help millions of people affected by humanitarian crises around the globe, including in the occupied Palestinian territories, Sudan and Ukraine.

In its Global Humanitarian Overview for 2024, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said that nearly 300 million people will require humanitarian assistance next year due to conflicts, climate emergencies and economic factors.

That includes 74.1 million people in East and Southern Africa, a large portion of whom are affected by the crisis in Sudan.

"We will target for our specific needs, for the agencies that I represent, 181 million of those 300," said UN aid chief Martin Griffiths.



Boys hold containers while they line up, as displaced Palestinians, who fled their houses due to Israeli strikes, shelter in a tent camp near the border with Egypt, amid the ongoing conflict between Israel and Hamas, in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Positive peace talks held over Myanmar conflict: China

AFP, Beijing

China said yesterday that peace talks had been held over the conflict in northern Myanmar and yielded "positive results", after weeks of fighting between the country's junta and ethnic minority armed groups.

"China is happy to see the parties to the conflict in northern Myanmar hold peace talks and achieve positive results," foreign ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said.

Beijing would "continue to provide support and facilitation to this end", she added. "We believe that the easing of the situation in northern Myanmar serves the interests of all parties in Myanmar and is conducive to maintaining tranquillity and stability along the China-Myanmar border," Mao said.

AFP was unable to reach a Myanmar junta spokesman for comment.

Clashes have raged across Myanmar's northern Shan state after an armed alliance of three ethnic minority groups launched surprise attacks against the military in October.

The Arakan Army (AA), the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (MNDAA) and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) have seized dozens of military positions and a town important for trade with China, in what analysts say is the biggest military challenge to the junta since it seized power in 2021.

Return to spirit of universal rights declaration

UN human rights chief urges world leaders amid widespread oppression, polarisation

AFP, Geneva

The UN yesterday urged world leaders to revive the spirit that led to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights 75 years ago, to counter today's widespread oppression and polarisation.

The text adopted after World War II and the Holocaust marked the first time that countries agreed to protect fundamental rights and freedoms on a universal scale, for all people.

"In the ashes of global warfare, it brought hope. To put an end to cycles of bloodshed, it promised justice," said United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk.

"It set out the path to peace," he told a gathering celebrating the 75th anniversary of the groundbreaking tract, adopted in Paris on December 10, 1948.

Turk said his thoughts went "to the millions of people suffering unbearably in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, notably in Gaza, and Israel; in Sudan; Ukraine; Myanmar; and so many other places".

"Famine. Oppressive and hateful discrimination. Repression and persecution. Threats to human rights generated by climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss."

"These are profound and interlocking challenges that stem from failure to uphold human



rights," Turk told yesterday's event at the UN's European headquarters in Geneva.

During the event, which began with a minute of silence for victims of rights violations, Turk said the declaration provided a "guide" to solve the towering challenges we face today.

The declaration, he said, "resonates with the ancient wisdom that connects all human beings".

It drew its inspiration from around the world, he said, including the philosophies of the Enlightenment; Islam's emphasis on human dignity and compassionate sharing; and the demands of the Haitian revolution for an end to enslavement and racist oppression.

Although not legally binding, the declaration stresses the supremacy of individual rights

over those of states.

"The drafters of the Universal Declaration transcended geopolitical clashes and economic differences.

"They set aside many terrible disputes to achieve this luminous text, which lit the path to peace, justice and freedom," he said.

The 75th anniversary, he said, should be seen as "a call to hope and... action".

"At a time of so little solidarity, and so much divisive and short-sighted vision, I view it as a call to overcome polarisation," he said.

"A call to hark back to the spirit that led every member state to adopt the Universal Declaration; and to base local, national and global decisions, across all areas of policy, on the intrinsic, and equal, value of every human life," Turk said.

China's carrier passes through Taiwan Strait

Says Taipei

AFP, Taipei

A Chinese naval formation led by the Shandong aircraft carrier sailed through the Taiwan Strait yesterday, Taipei's defence ministry said.

The carrier group entered the strait that separates the island and mainland China, travelling from north to south, Taipei's defence ministry said. It added that "security and prosperity" across Asia-Pacific region was "an obligation and responsibility" shared by all parties.

"The military will continue to... strengthen our self-defence capabilities and respond to regional threats," the ministry added.

The Shandong has sailed through the Taiwan Strait several times in recent months, as Beijing ramps up military pressure on the self-ruled island, which it claims as its own territory.

During the past four years Taiwan has repeatedly complained of stepped-up Chinese military activity nearby, including fighters and drones crossing the median line. Last week, Taiwan reported a rare night mission by China's air force over the strait.

Taiwan is on high alert for Chinese activities, both military and political, ahead of its election, especially what Taipei views as Beijing's efforts to interfere in ballot to get electors to vote for candidates China may prefer.

REPEAL OF ARTICLE 370

What led to J&K decision by India's SC?

REUTERS, New Delhi

India's Supreme Court yesterday upheld a 2019 decision by Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government to revoke special status for Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) and split the region into two federally administered territories. Here are some facts about J&K and the constitutional change.

WHAT HAPPENED AT PARTITION?

After partition of the subcontinent in 1947, Kashmir was expected to go to Pakistan, as other Muslim-majority regions did. Its Hindu ruler wanted to stay independent, but faced with an invasion by Muslim tribesmen from Pakistan, he acceded to India in October 1947 in return for help against the invaders.

WHAT WAS CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION?

Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which provided autonomy for Jammu and Kashmir, was drafted in 1947 by Sheikh Abdullah, then the state's prime minister, and accepted by India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru. Classified only as a temporary provision, it was included in the Indian constitution in October 1949.

HOW DID THE PICTURE CHANGE IN 1954?

A further provision added to the constitution in 1954 as part of Article 370, article 35A empowered state lawmakers to ensure special rights and privileges for permanent residents of the state.

But it was scrapped with the repeal of Article 370, allowing non-Kashmiris to buy property in the region and ending local control over state government jobs and admission to colleges.

NEIGHBOURS GO TO WAR OVER THE REGION

The dispute over the former princely state sparked the first two of three wars between India and Pakistan after independence in 1947. They fought a second in 1965, and a third, largely over what became Bangladesh, in 1971.

HOW IS THE REGION DIVIDED UP?

For decades, the armies of India and Pakistan have faced off over the Line of Control (LoC), a UN-monitored ceasefire line agreed in 1972, that divides the areas each administers. The foes fought a 1999 battle along the LoC that some analysts described as an undeclared war. Their forces exchanged regular gunfire over the LoC until a truce in late 2003, which has largely held since.

WHY WAS THERE AN INSURGENCY?

Resentment by many Muslims in Indian Kashmir over what they saw as heavy-handed rule by New Delhi sparked an insurgency by separatists in 1989, with some backing Pakistan, while others sought independence for Kashmir. India responded by pouring in troops, and accused Pakistan of backing the separatists.

PICTURE IN J&K CHANGED SINCE 2019

Since 2019, India has announced more investments for the region in areas such as industries, healthcare, education and tourism. It recently listed J&K new-found lithium reserves for private mining. Tourism has grown since 2019 and separatist violence has fallen, the government says.

WHAT AREAS DOES PAKISTAN HOLD?

These consist of the smaller Azad, or "Free", Kashmir and the Northern Areas that formed part of the state before independence. Pakistan backs a UN-mandated referendum to settle the dispute over the region, expecting that the majority of Kashmiris would opt to join Pakistan.

WHAT IS REGION'S GEOGRAPHIC APPEAL?

The Himalayan region has two capitals, Jammu in winter, and Srinagar in summer. Indian Kashmir sprawls over 42,241 sq km. Before the region was split, its size of 222,236 sq km was slightly bigger than the US state of Utah and almost as big as Britain. The western Himalayan region is bounded by Pakistan to the west, Afghanistan to the northwest, China to the northeast, and India to the south.



Local residents remove debris next to their neighbour's house, heavily damaged by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kyiv, Ukraine yesterday. Ukraine downed eight Russian missiles targeting the capital Kyiv and another 18 attack drones over the rest of the country, the air force said. PHOTO: REUTERS


HK 'patriots only' polls falls flat with low turnout

REUTERS, Hong Kong

A "patriots only" district election in Hong Kong that barred opposition democrats from the ballot sheet amid a national security squeeze had a record low voter turnout of 27.5 percent as many voters spurned what was seen as an undemocratic poll.

The sharp slide in turnout since the last such election in 2019 comes after Beijing imposed a sweeping national security law that has been used to clamp down on dissent, and overhauled electoral system to shut out democrats.

"It can be seen that everyone has begun to feel that the election has no meaning," said Lemon Wong, one of the remaining democrats still involved in local politics.



অভিনন্দন

দেশের বিশিষ্ট শিল্পোদ্যোক্তা ও সফল ব্যক্তিত্ব এ্যাসুরেন্স মনি গ্রুপের মাননীয় চেয়ারম্যান জনাব **গাউছ ইউ খান ২০২৩-২৪** মেয়াদে **উত্তরা ক্লাব লিমিটেড** এর সভাপতি নির্বাচিত হওয়ায় এ্যাসুরেন্স মনি গ্রুপ এর সকল কর্মকর্তা ও কর্মচারীর পক্ষ থেকে প্রানঢালা **শুভেচ্ছা ও অভিনন্দন।**

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