

5 million at risk of starvation in Sudan: UN

AFP, United Nations

The United Nations appealed Friday for Sudan's battling factions to allow delivery of humanitarian relief to fend off looming "catastrophic" hunger.

Some five million Sudanese could face calamitous food insecurity in coming months as a nearly yearlong war between rival generals continues to tear the country apart, according to a UN document seen Friday by AFP.

It triggered a dire humanitarian crisis and acute food shortages, with the country teetering on the brink of famine.

UN humanitarian chief Martin Griffiths warned in a letter to the Security Council that "almost 5 million people could slip into catastrophic food insecurity in some parts of the country in the coming months."



India's Congress party leaders Rahul Gandhi and Priyanka Gandhi Vadra gesture during Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra roadshow, in Mumbai yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

HUSH MONEY Trump trial delayed till April

AFP, New York

The New York judge presiding over Donald Trump's trial for allegedly covering up hush money payments linked to extramarital affairs ordered a delay Friday in proceedings that had been scheduled to get underway on March 25.

"Trial on this matter is adjourned for 30 days from the date of this letter on consent of the People," Judge Juan Merchan said in a court filing that will push the trial to mid-April.

INDIAN NATIONAL ELECTION

World's largest polls to begin in April

OUR CORRESPONDENT, New Delhi

Setting the stage for a marathon electoral battle spread across nearly two months, India's Election Commission announced today that the 18th Lok Sabha polls of the world's largest democracy, will be held in seven phases between April 19 and June 1, involving nearly 97 crore voters.

The results will be declared on June 4, 12 days before the term of the current 17th Lok Sabha expires on June 16, chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar told the media in New Delhi.

A total of 96.8 crore voters are eligible to

vote in the elections.

Most of the opinion polls have so far projected that the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, will return to power for a rare third successive tenure.

With the announcement of election dates, the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) intended to ensure orderly, transparent, and peaceful elections goes into effect.

Voting for the first phase of polls will be held on April 19 and will cover 102 Lok Sabha seats. The second phase of voting will be held on April 26 for 89 seats and the third phase on May 7 for 94 seats. The fourth phase of

voting will be on May 13 for 96 seats and the fifth phase on May 20 for 49 seats. The sixth and the seventh phases of voting will be held on May 25 and June 1 respectively for 57 seats each.

Polling will be held in seven phases in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. There will be five-phase elections in Maharashtra and Jammu and Kashmir and four-phase elections in Odisha, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. Chhattisgarh and Assam will see three-phase polls while Karnataka, Rajasthan, Tripura and Manipur will see two-phase polls. 22 states will see one-phase polls.

HAITI VIOLENCE

Tensions rise as leadership remains in balance

REUTERS, Port-Au-Prince

Residents braced for another tense night in Haiti's capital Port-au-Prince on Friday, as attacks continued across parts of the city in the aftermath of the resignation of Prime Minister Henry and in the absence of a clear plan to replace him. "Ariel Henry resigned but we are still in political distress," said resident Claude Atilus. "We must take our destiny into our own hands. I want the political players to rise to the task and commit themselves to organizing the country." A man walked through the city's Champ de Mars square carrying a white coffin over his head, while further out in the city's sprawling Delmas neighborhood, flaming tires and roadblocks lined the streets. "The situation is not good for us," said vendor Jean-Phillipe Jean-Louis, adding he was exhausted, prices were exorbitant and working on the streets was dangerous. "When we merchants go out into the streets looking for money to feed our children and wives, we find nothing," he said. The United Nations' children's fund has warned of record hunger and life-threatening malnutrition concentrated in the capital's poorest, most dangerous and busiest neighborhoods, with one in four children nationwide suffering chronic malnutrition, or stunting.

34 migrants missing off Tunisia, 2 dead

AFP, Tunis

Tunisian authorities rescued 34 migrants and found two dead bodies off the North African country's southeastern coast on Friday, said the National Guard in a statement. Another 34 people are believed to be missing, they added, after survivors told them that there were 70 on board before their vessel capsized. "We were able to intercept a crossing attempt of the maritime border, rescuing 34 passengers of different nationalities and recovering two bodies," read the statement. The National Guard said it was still searching for the missing passengers. Survivors told authorities they had set sail from "a neighbouring country" before their boat capsized. Tunisia and Libya are the main north African departure points for irregular migrants.



A house is engulfed in flood waters after heavy rains in Tanggulangin, Central Java, Indonesia yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

Ukrainian strikes rock Russia as vote cements Putin's grip

AFP, Moscow

Ukrainian bombardments killed two people and set an oil facility ablaze in Russia yesterday, the second day of showpiece elections guaranteed to cement President Vladimir Putin's hardline rule.

Presidential polls opened this week but voting has been marred by an uptick in fatal Ukrainian aerial attacks and a series of incursions into Russian territory by pro-Ukrainian sabotage groups.

Fresh bombardments prompted authorities to close schools and shopping centres in the Belgorod region bordering Ukraine, undermining the Kremlin's efforts to isolate Russians from its two-year conflict with Kyiv.

Putin, who cast his vote online, has vowed a harsh response to the assaults and accused Ukraine of trying to "disrupt" his bid for another six-year mandate.

The governor of the Belgorod region said air defence systems had downed eight Ukrainian missiles but two residents were killed and others injured.

"A man was driving a lorry when a shell hit him, after which the vehicle crashed into a passenger bus. The people on it were not injured," Vyacheslav Gladkov wrote on social media.

"Another woman was killed in a parking lot where she and her son came to feed the dogs. Medics are fighting for her son's life," he added.

In a separate post, Gladkov announced that schools and shopping centres in the city of Belgorod and some surrounding districts would close temporarily over the coming days, the second time this month.

Russia's defence ministry earlier said it had downed rockets, missiles and drones in the border regions of Belgorod and Kursk that have suffered an uptick in fatal attacks in recent weeks.

And it later said Russian forces had fought off more attempted infiltrations by "Ukrainian militant sabotage and reconnaissance groups".

Kremlin proxy officials in the occupied Kherson region of southern Ukraine meanwhile said

one person was killed and four wounded in a drone attack.


The border attacks were a concern for voters hundreds of kilometres away in the town of Sergiev Posad outside Moscow, famous for its ornate Orthodox monastery with golden onion domes.


Putin, 71, has been in power in Russia since the last day of 1999 and is set to extend his grip over the country until 2030.

If he completes another Kremlin term, he would stay in power longer than any Russian leader since Catherine the Great in the 18th century.

He faces no genuine competition in the vote, having barred two candidates who opposed the conflict in Ukraine, and around one month after his main opponent, Alexei Navalny, died in an Arctic prison in unexplained circumstances.

The Kremlin has pitched the election as an opportunity for Russians to show they are behind Moscow's full-scale military campaign in Ukraine, where voting is also being held in occupied territory.





স্বাধীনতার স্বপ্নদ্রষ্টা,
বাঙালির সত্তায় চিরবহমান
জন্মদিনের শ্রদ্ধা তোমায়
বঙ্গবন্ধু শেখ মুজিবুর রহমান