

MYANMAR CONFLICT

Junta bans men from applying to work abroad

AFP, Yangon

Myanmar's junta has suspended the issuing of permits for men to work abroad, it said, weeks after introducing a military conscription law that led to thousands trying to leave the country.

The junta, which is struggling to crush widespread armed opposition to its rule, in February said it would enforce a law allowing it to call up all men to serve in the military for at least two years.

The move sent thousands queuing for visas outside foreign embassies in Yangon and others crossing into neighbouring Thailand to escape the law, according to media reports.

The labour ministry has "temporarily suspended" accepting applications from men who wish to work abroad, the ministry said in a statement.



Protesters flash the sign of victory as they are escorted away by French gendarmes during the evacuation of a pro-Gaza sit-in in the entrance hall of the Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po Paris) in Paris, France yesterday. PHOTO: AFP

20 killed as bus falls into ravine in Pakistan

REUTERS, Peshawar

A bus veered into a ravine in Pakistan's far north early yesterday, a local government spokesman said, killing 20 passengers, while 21 injured were rescued and taken to hospital.

The bus was headed to the mountainous northern area of Gilgit-Baltistan from the garrison city of Rawalpindi in Pakistan's eastern province of Punjab, when the accident happened in the early hours.

"The bus was passing through Diamer district in Gilgit-Baltistan when it fell into a deep ravine," Faizullah Firaq, a spokesman for government authorities in the area, said, adding that 21 were injured.

The government immediately launched a rescue operation to evacuate all the injured, he added.

PROBE INTO 'WAR CRIMES' BY ISRAEL-HAMAS
ICC warns against 'retaliation threats'

AFP, The Hague

International Criminal Court prosecutors yesterday warned against "individuals who threaten to retaliate" against the tribunal or its staff, saying such actions might constitute an "offence against its administration of justice".

The ICC did not say if the comment related to its investigation into possible war crimes by Israel or Palestinian groups in Gaza and the West Bank.

US media said this week the ICC might issue an arrest warrant for Israeli officials including Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

and that the latter had urged US President Joe Biden to prevent the court from doing so.

Yesterday, The Hague-based office of ICC chief prosecutor Karim Khan said on X that it sought to "engage constructively with all stakeholders whenever dialogue is consistent with its mandate".

"That independence and impartiality are undermined, however, when individuals threaten to retaliate against the court or against court personnel" if it "made decisions" about probes that fell in its mandate, it said.

"Such threats, even not acted upon, may constitute an offence"

against the ICC's "administration of justice", it said.

"The Office insists that all attempts to impede, intimidate or improperly influence its officials cease immediately."

Khan's office declined to answer questions from AFP as to where the threats of retaliation may have originated from. It also declined to comment when asked whether it was referring to its investigation into Israel and the offensive in Gaza.

The ICC opened a probe in 2021 into Israel, as well as Hamas and other armed Palestinian groups, over possible war crimes in the occupied Palestinian territories.

Labour urges UK polls after Tory losses

AFP, London

Britain's Labour yesterday urged Prime Minister Rishi Sunak to call a general election after the opposition party made significant gains in English polls that included a seat in parliament.

Labour leader Keir Starmer said the party's parliament seat win in Blackpool South in northwest England sent a clear message to Sunak, who has until late January next year to call and then hold a nationwide vote.

"Blackpool speaks for the whole country," he said.

INDIA ELECTION

Rahul to contest polls from family borough

REUTERS, Raebareilly

Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi will contest the general election from the family bastion in the north, his Congress party announced yesterday, a move that will challenge Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a region he dominates. Gandhi, the scion of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, will contest from Raebareilly in politically crucial Uttar Pradesh state, Congress said, in addition to Wayanad in Kerala state in the south, which has already voted. India allows candidates to contest multiple constituencies but they can represent only one. Uttar Pradesh is India's most populous state and elects 80 lawmakers to the lower house of parliament, the most of any state. In the last election in 2019, Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and allies won 64 seats, including from Amethi, adjacent to Raebareilly, where Gandhi was defeated. His return to the area, albeit for a second constituency, will invigorate the party, Congress officials said. Modi and the BJP attacked Gandhi for the decision.

India SC may consider interim bail to Kejriwal

NDTV ONLINE

The Indian Supreme Court will look into the possibility of granting interim bail to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal so that he can campaign for the ongoing Lok Sabha polls. A bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Dipankar Datta yesterday said it will look at the interim bail plea on Tuesday and asked the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Kejriwal's counsel to be prepared. The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader was arrested by ED officials on March 21 in connection with alleged irregularities in the now-scrapped Delhi liquor policy. He has approached the Supreme Court after he did not get relief from lower courts. Appearing for Kejriwal, Senior Advocate Abhishek Singhvi yesterday said there is no evidence against the Delhi Chief Minister and his arrest is legal. Kejriwal, he said, had responded to nine summonses from the ED. He added that failure to appear cannot be a basis for arrest.

Reader's Digest UK folds after 86 years

FROM PAGE 12

are working to communicate with everyone about the next steps. I sincerely hope this process goes smoothly and swiftly for you."

The monthly publication's most recent print issue was dated May 2024 and the most recent story published on the homepage of the Reader's Digest UK website was dated last Wednesday (24 April).

"This magazine carries a profound legacy, holding special memories for so many—whether it adorned our parents' coffee tables or served as a gateway to the English language for those abroad. Its closure marks the end of an era that is deeply felt..."

"While this chapter may close, I am comforted by the belief that the spirit of Reader's Digest will endure in our memories and within the rich archives spanning nearly a century. As we bid farewell to this beloved publication, I want to express my deepest gratitude for allowing us to be part of your lives and homes," Mackevic wrote in a message addressed to readers on the Reader's Digest UK website.

Reader's Digest was founded in the US in 1922, while its first UK publication was in 1938. It contained articles like health tips, financial advice, and recipes and was licensed by its parent company in the US. Trusted Media Brands continues to publish the US edition of Reader's Digest.

Fish, chicken

FROM PAGE 12

struggling to make ends meet due to the soaring prices of these commodities.

Mohammad Liton, who works at a private organisation, said he thought that the price of broiler chicken would come down at least, but it did not.

"There is no relief for the consumers as the prices of many commodities have gone up after the Eid. As I am on a fixed income, I have to buy commodities in less quantities now," he told The Daily Star at Karwan Bazar.

Like him, many other consumers expressed frustration over the fresh price hike of commodities. They urged the government authorities concerned to strictly monitor the markets to give some comfort to the low-income people.

US, KSA 'nearing deal on security pact'

REUTERS, Washington

The Biden administration and Saudi Arabia are finalising an agreement for US security guarantees and civilian nuclear assistance, even as an Israel-Saudi normalisation deal envisioned as part of a Middle East "grand bargain" remains elusive, according to seven people familiar with the matter.

A working draft lays out principles and proposals aimed at putting back on track a US-led effort to reshape the volatile region that was derailed by the outbreak of offensive in Gaza, according to two sources who have seen the document.

It appears to be a long shot strategy that faces numerous obstacles, not least the uncertainty over how the Gaza conflict will unfold. US and Saudi negotiators have, for now, prioritized a bilateral security

accord that would then be part of a wider package presented to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who would have to decide whether to make concessions to secure historic ties with Riyadh, five of the sources said.

"We're very close to reaching an agreement" on the US-Saudi portion of the package, US State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said on Thursday, predicting that details could be ironed out "in very short order."

That part of the plan is likely to call for formal US guarantees to defend the kingdom as well as Saudi access to more advanced US weaponry in return for halting Chinese arms purchases and restricting Beijing's investment in the country, according to foreign diplomats in the Gulf and sources in Washington.

Tamim powers

FROM PAGE 12

Bangladeshi after Junaid Siddique to score a fifty on T20I debut. Siddique had made 71 on his debut against Pakistan in 2007.

Following the early dismissal of Liton Das, who extended his lean patch in the white-ball formats with a three-ball one, Tamim starred in a 52-run stand with skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto and another 69-run third-wicket stand with Towhid Hridoy. Hridoy remained unbeaten on 33 off 18 deliveries, smashing five fours and a six.

Earlier, Bangladesh had reduced Zimbabwe to 41 for seven inside eight overs before a 75-run eight-

wicket stand between Clive Madande and Wellington Masakadza helped Zimbabwe evade humiliation to post 125 all out in 20 overs. The stand between Madande (43 off 39) and Masakadza (34 off 38) remains the second-highest overall for the wicket in T20Is and the highest for Zimbabwe in the format.

For Bangladesh, all-rounder Mohammad Saifuddin, who made a return to national colours after over 18 months, and pacer Taskin Ahmed took three wickets each. Saifuddin returned figures of three for 15 in four overs while Taskin gave away 14 in his four-over spell.

3 injured

FROM PAGE 12

Three trains have been able to operate on the routes so far, but full-fledged operation is yet to resume, he added.

Following the incident, railway police and Joydebpur Junction officials launched a salvage operation, said Zahid Sheikh, commander of Joydebpur Junction Special Response Team.

The loco master of the Tangail commuter train was seriously injured and is undergoing treatment with two other staffers of the same train at Gazipur Shaheed Tajuddin Ahmad Medical College Hospital, said Abul Fazal, emergency medical officer at the hospital.

Joydebpur Junction Station Master Hanif Mia said, "Since it was a Friday, the commuter train did not ferry passengers. It was being brought to Dhaka for routine servicing. Luckily, no one was trapped under the derailed coaches."

Meanwhile, a three-member enquiry committee has been formed and three Bangladesh Railway employees have been suspended over the mishap.

They are Joydebpur Junction Station Master Md Hashem, and pointsmen Mostafizur Rahman and Saddam Hossain, said Deputy Commissioner Abul Fateh Mohammad Safiqul Islam.



Residents are evacuated from a flooded area in the city centre of Sao Sebastiao do Cai, Rio Grande do Sul State, Brazil on Thursday. The death toll from heavy rains in Brazil's southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul rose to 29, local authorities said. PHOTO: AFP

Russian troops enter base housing US military in Niger: US official

REUTERS, Washington

Russian military personnel have entered an air base in Niger that is hosting US troops, a senior US defense official told Reuters, a move that follows a decision by Niger's junta to expel US forces.

The military officers ruling the West African nation have told the US to withdraw its nearly 1,000 military personnel from the country, which until a coup last year had been a key partner for Washington's fight against insurgents who have killed thousands of people and displaced millions more.

A senior US defense official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said Russian forces were not mingling with US troops but were using a separate hangar at Airbase 101, which is next to Diori Hamani International Airport in Niamey, Niger's capital.

The move by Russia's military, which Reuters was the first to report, puts US and Russian troops in close proximity at a time when the nations' military and diplomatic rivalry is

increasingly acrimonious over the conflict in Ukraine.

It also raises questions about the fate of US installations in the country following a withdrawal. "(The situation) is not great but in the short-term manageable," the official said.

Asked about the Reuters report, US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin played down any risk to American troops or the chance that Russian troops might get close to US military hardware.

"The Russians are in a separate compound and don't have access to US forces or access to our equipment," Austin told a press conference in Honolulu.

"I'm always focused on the safety and protection of our troops ... But right now, I don't see a significant issue here in terms of our force protection."

The Nigerien and Russian embassies in Washington did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The US and its allies have been forced to move troops out of a number

of African countries following coups that brought to power groups eager to distance themselves from Western governments. In addition to the impending departure from Niger, US troops have also left Chad in recent days, while French forces have been kicked out of Mali and Burkina Faso.

Canada police

FROM PAGE 12

Indian government official had directed the plot in the attempted murder of Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Sikh separatist and dual citizen of the US and Canada.

Canadian Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc, in charge of Canadian law enforcement agencies, did not directly confirm the arrests but told reporters the probe into Nijjar's murder was "still an active police operation".

The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation earlier cited a source saying investigators had identified the suspects in Canada some months ago and had been keeping them under tight surveillance.