

Ebola risk ‘very high’ in DR Congo: WHO

AFP, Geneva

The public health risk from the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been upgraded from high to very high, the World Health Organization said yesterday.

The risk level remains high at the regional level and low worldwide, WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a press conference.

He said there were now nearly 750 suspected cases in the DR Congo and 177 suspected deaths.

“The Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is spreading rapidly,” Tedros said.

“We are now revising our risk assessment to very high at the national level, high at the regional level, and low at the global level.

“So far, 82 cases have been confirmed in DRC, with seven confirmed deaths.

“But we know the epidemic in DRC is much larger. There are now almost 750 suspected cases and 177 suspected deaths.

“The situation in Uganda is stable, with two cases confirmed in people who travelled from DRC, with one death.”

India to host Quad meeting

AFP, New Delhi

India will host a meeting of foreign ministers of the “Quad” group that includes Australia, Japan and the United States on Tuesday, New Delhi’s foreign ministry said.

The so-called Quad security alliance is seen as a counterweight to Beijing’s presence in the Indian Ocean and wider Asia-Pacific region.

The May 26 meeting comes during a visit by US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who arrives on an India tour today, hosted by India’s Foreign Minister Subrahmanya Jaishankar, with Australia’s Penny Wong and Japan’s Toshimitsu Motegi also to attend.

The four-way partnership was first conceived by late Japanese prime minister Shinzo Abe, who foresaw an alliance of democracies surrounding China – which has repeatedly alleged that the Quad is a way to contain it.

“In keeping with the Quad vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific, the ministers will... exchange views on advancing Quad cooperation across priority areas,” New Delhi’s foreign ministry said yesterday.

Despite common ground on China, the members have differed on other hotspots, including the Russia-Ukraine war and the attacks in Iran.



Farmers remove husks from maize before separating the kernels from the cobs using a machine in Chabbishnagar village of Rajshahi’s Godagari upazila yesterday. The scene has become a regular sight in the region, where Paba and Godagari upazilas recorded a bumper maize harvest this season, and farmers are getting good prices for their produce.

PHOTO: AZAHAR UDDIN

‘50-50’ chance of a deal

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A senior Iranian source told Reuters on Thursday that gaps had narrowed, although uranium enrichment and the Strait of Hormuz remained key sticking points.

Pakistan’s Interior Minister Mohsen Naqvi yesterday met Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi for the second time in two days in a bid to secure a breakthrough. A delayed visit to Tehran by Pakistani army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir may also signal progress in the talks.

During the meeting, the two officials reviewed the latest proposals to end the war and resolve remaining disagreements between the US and Iran, Tasnim news agency reported.

Munir had been due in Tehran on Thursday, but his visit was postponed because of a lack of progress in the talks. Pakistan may also seek to involve China as a mediator, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif is due in Beijing today.

Oil prices and stock markets rose yesterday as traders tracked developments in the Middle East, alongside mixed corporate earnings and positive economic data.

Despite the cautiously positive tone, future control of the Strait of Hormuz and Washington’s demand that Tehran export its stockpile of highly enriched uranium remain major obstacles.

On Thursday, President Donald Trump said the US would eventually take control of Iran’s stockpile of highly enriched uranium, which Washington believes is intended for nuclear weapons, although Tehran says it is for peaceful purposes.

“We will get it. We don’t need it, we don’t want it. We’ll probably destroy it after we get it, but we’re not going to let them have it,” Trump told reporters at the White House.

Two senior Iranian sources told Reuters before Trump’s remarks that Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei had ordered that the uranium not be sent abroad.

Trump also criticised Tehran’s reported plan to charge fees on ships using the Strait of Hormuz.

“We want it open, we want it free. We don’t want tolls,” Trump said. “It’s an international waterway.”

Rubio likewise accused Iran of “trying to create a tolling system” and

persuade Oman to join it.

“There is not a country in the world that should accept that,” Rubio said.

In April, Pakistan hosted the only direct negotiations between US and Iranian officials since the war began, with Munir helping mediate the talks.

But the negotiations ultimately failed, with Tehran accusing Washington of making “excessive demands”. Since then, the two sides have exchanged multiple proposals while the threat of renewed conflict has persisted.

“It’s right on the borderline, believe me,” Trump told reporters on Wednesday. “If we don’t get the right answers, it goes very quickly. We’re all ready to go.”

Al Jazeera yesterday reported, citing the US military’s Central Command (Centcom), that the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier strike group is “maintaining peak readiness” in the Arabian Sea.

Trump also faces domestic pressure ahead of the November midterm elections, with Americans angered by rising fuel prices and his approval rating near its lowest point since returning to the

White House last year.

Tehran submitted its latest proposal to the US earlier this week.

Iranian descriptions of the proposal suggest it largely repeats terms Trump has previously rejected, including demands for control of the Strait of Hormuz, compensation for war damage, sanctions relief, the release of frozen assets and the withdrawal of US troops.

Meanwhile, Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy said 35 ships, including oil tankers and container vessels, transited the Strait of Hormuz in the past 24 hours.

The IRGC said the movements took place with its permission and coordination.

Meanwhile, Republican leaders in the US House of Representatives unexpectedly cancelled a Thursday vote on a resolution seeking to end the Iran war unless Trump obtained congressional authorisation, two days after a similar measure advanced in the Senate.

The vote had been scheduled for late Thursday, just before lawmakers left Washington for the Memorial Day recess.

Taiwan arms

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then the foreign military sales will continue when the administration deems necessary.”

The US State Department and the Pentagon did not immediately respond to requests for comment on Cao’s remarks.

Taiwan’s Presidential Office spokeswoman Karen Ku yesterday said there was “no information indicating that the US intends to make any adjustments to this arms sale.”

A Chinese foreign ministry spokesman yesterday told a news conference that Beijing’s “position of resolute opposition to US arms sales to China’s Taiwan region is consistent, clear and firm.”

US President Donald Trump has not committed to following through with the sale, raising concerns over his commitment to support for Taiwan.

The United States recognises only Beijing, but under US law, it is required to provide weapons to the self-ruled democracy for its defense.

Kool-BSPA celebrates

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Amirul Islam to secure the prestigious Sportsperson of the Year title. He also defeated the same duo along with cricketer Tanzid Hasan Tamim to claim the Popular Choice Award, which was determined through online voting by fans.

Adding to his remarkable afternoon, Hamza was jointly named Footballer of the Year alongside Ritu Porna, completing a memorable hat-trick of honours.

“I’m truly honoured to receive this award. The Kool-BSPA Award is one of the most prestigious honours in the country. I would like to thank my family, my coaches, my teammates, my friends, and the fans for their unwavering support for me and the national team throughout this amazing year. Inshallah, we will continue to achieve great things for Bangladesh in the days to come,” Hamza said in a video message.

The ceremony was presided over by Bangladesh Sports Press Association (BSPA) President Rejwan Uz Zaman Rajib. State Minister for Youth and Sports Aminul Haque attended as the chief guest. Malik Mohammed Sayeed, chief executive officer (CEO) of Square Toiletries Limited, was present as the guest of honour.

A total of 15 current and former athletes, organisers and organisations were recognised across 16 categories at this year’s award ceremony, with cash prizes also awarded alongside the prestigious trophies.

Teacher suspended after sexual abuse allegations surface

OUR CORRESPONDENT, Pirojpur

A teacher at a madrasa in Pirojpur has been suspended after allegations emerged that he sexually abused male students, with the managing committee taking action following an internal investigation.

“After finding proof, the madrasa managing committee has suspended Kawser Hosen, 46, a muhaddis at Togra Darul Islam Kamil Madrasa,” said Abdullahil Mahmud, acting principal of the institution, yesterday.

“We will write to Kustia Islamic University authority, and they will take the next decision,” he added.

Recently, a video was leaked showing the accused teacher allegedly sexually abusing a student inside a room on the madrasa campus.

Madrasa sources said the incident happened at the end of last year when the victim reportedly went to Kawser for private lessons, adding that during the incident, someone outside the room recorded the act.

The matter first came to the notice of the madrasa authorities in December last year. A three-member probe committee was formed in February this year to investigate the allegations.

Following the investigation, the committee submitted its report to the managing committee last month, after which Kawser was suspended in May.

Md Sayful Alam, an assistant teacher at the madrasa and a member of the probe committee, said the inquiry had uncovered evidence of wrongdoing.

He further said the accused had committed similar crime with more than one male child.

“We have confirmed it with two children,” he said.

Kawser has remained absent from the madrasa since the middle of December last year after the matter began circulating within the institution.

Asked about the issue, acting principal Abdullahil Mahmud said the teacher had been kept away from duties while the investigation was ongoing.

The accused Kawser could not be reached for comment as his mobile phone remained switched off.

Unresolved murders

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“We identified the culprits within 48 hours of the incident, but mark my words, the Sagar-Runi murder mystery will never be solved,” Rabbi quoted the Rab official as saying.

He further alleged that the Osman family was allowed to flee the country in exchange for Tk 3.5 crore with the help of the administration and various forces. Ajmeri Osman, an accused in the Taqi murder case, was not arrested despite remaining in the country for months after the August 5 political changeover, he added.

Bureaucrats from the Sheikh Hasina-led regime are still running the administration, which is why there has been no real change in the judicial process, Rabbi observed.

Jamshed Anwar Tapan,

convener of Ganatantrik Sangskritik Oikya, expressed concern over the rising trend of “instant justice” or mob killings by capitalising on the public hopelessness that stems from the lack of justice.

Professor Samina Luthfa of Dhaka University said the society has failed to establish the rule of law and ensure a safe environment for its children.

At the rally, protest art was created on an open canvas.

Different cultural troupes and artists, including Udichi Shilpi Gosthi, Samageet Sangskritik Prangan, BotLa, Prachyanat, music band Kora, Wardah Ashraf, and Armeen Musa, performed at the event, moderated by Samageet president Rebeka Nila.

Egg attack

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Patwary and attempted to attack him.

Leaders and activists of the NCP and the Anti-Discrimination Student Movement then reportedly surrounded him, placed a helmet on his head and protected Patwary from the attack.

The situation later escalated into clashes involving bricks, sticks between the two sides.

Jhenaidah district NCP Joint Coordinator Hamid Parvez said Patwary had arrived in the town as part of a scheduled programme.

He alleged that Chhatra Dal activists carried out the planned attack.

District Chhatra Dal President Md Imran Hossain, at a rally, refuted the allegations.

He alleged that two associates of Patwary brandished firearms during the incident. “We demand that the administration take swift action against the armed individuals,” he said.

Meanwhile, leaders and activists of NCP demonstrated in front of the Jatiya Press Club in Dhaka yesterday, protesting the attack on Patwary in Jhenaidah.

Witnesses said the party’s leaders and activists brought out a procession from in front of the press club around 5:00pm which moved through various roads in the area. Later, they held a brief rally there. NCP spokesperson Asif Mahmud Shojib Bhuyain, the party’s joint convener Ali Hasan Junayed and leaders and activists of Dhaka North and South units were present at the rally.



Saudi security forces parade in Makkah ahead of Hajj, as over a million pilgrims gather amid Middle East war and fragile ceasefire.

PHOTO: AFP