

Lat/Am

Over 30 killed in Brazil city

Leftist Obrador 'rivals' deny rumors of possible late-campaign alliances

MEXICO CITY, May 3. (Agencies): Mexico's presidential hopefuls are rushing to deny rumors of possible late-campaign alliances or candidate switches in a race that has been dominated by leftist **Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador**.

Much of Mexico's elite wants to stop Lopez Obrador from winning the July 1 election, fearing he would undo market-oriented economic reforms.

A poll published Wednesday by the newspaper Reforma gave Lopez Obrador an 18 percentage point lead over Ricardo Anaya, who heads a left-right opposition coalition. The survey had margin of error of four percentage points.

Lopez Obrador claimed Tuesday that business leaders tried to persuade the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party to switch its support to Anaya from its lagging third-place candidate, Jose Antonio Meade.

Anaya himself has called on those frightened by Lopez Obrador to unite behind him.

"I am completely open to building with whoever I must build with to win this election and give a viable future to this country," he said recently when asked about whether he would meet with President Enrique Pena Nieto to look for an alliance with the governing Institutional Revolutionary Party, or PRI.

More than 30 killed in Brazil: Local media in Brazil are reporting more than 30 people have been shot dead in the northern city of Belem since the weekend.

The G1 news portal says 33 people have been killed since Sunday, when police officer Maria de Fatima dos Santos was gunned down.

The Brazilian think-tank Igarape says Belem averaged 2.5 homicides a day last year, a rate less than a third of this week's. The state's Public Security Department

said Wednesday it could not confirm the number of dead.

Authorities in Latin America's largest nation are often slow to confirm killings, and most homicides go unsolved. But with security issues top of mind for many Brazilians, local media often cover deaths closely.

49 missing in Sao Paulo blaze: Forty nine people were listed as still missing Wednesday after a 24-storey building occupied by squatters in central Sao Paulo was engulfed in fire and collapsed, the Brazilian city's fire department said.

In the immediate aftermath of the disaster on Tuesday only three were declared unaccounted for, including one man who was seconds from being successfully rescued by firefighters before the building suddenly crashed down.

Nicaraguan protesters back: Riot police blocked young Nicaraguan demonstrators who were back on the streets Wednesday to demand justice over the deaths of 43 people in anti-government unrest.

"Let us through! The streets belong to the people!" protesters screamed as riot units cut them off in part of the capital Managua's historic center.

The students emerged from Central American University heading to Congress to underscore opposition to the Truth Commission formed by ruling Sandinista party lawmakers on the deadly demonstrations against President Daniel Ortega.

Remains of 9K exhumed: Colombia has located and exhumed the bodies of 9,000 people killed by far-right paramilitary groups during the country's decades-long civil war, judicial officials said Wednesday.

According to the public prosecutor's office, the bodies were found in mass graves which were located with the help of former members of the notorious AUC (Colombian Self-Defense Units), a paramilitary group funded by wealthy landowners to fight leftist guerrillas.

Such groups were disbanded between 2003-2006.



Obrador



Firefighters try to extinguish a fire at a recycling plant on the outskirts of Ciudad Juarez, Mexico on May 2. Juarez authorities declared an environmental emergency due to harmful particulate matter in the smoke, and people in its path were advised to stay inside, shut windows and doors and not use air conditioners under any circumstances. (AP)

Africa

US hands two planes to Chad: The United States on Wednesday formally handed over to Chad two light reconnaissance aircraft intended to help its forces fight a jihadist insurgency.

Two single-engine Cessna 208Bs planes were officially transferred to the Chadian air force in a ceremony at its base outside the capital N'Djamena.

The planes were delivered in December 2017 and have since been used for pilot training.

The US has also helped to build shelters and maintenance areas for Chadian aircraft, after a damaging windstorm in 2017 damaged air force facilities.

Together, the donated equipment and work amount to \$43 million (36 million euros), said US ambassador **Geeta Pasi**, who attended the ceremony. A vast, poor country in central-northern Africa, Chad is struggling with a jihadist insurgency that has spilled over from neighbouring Nigeria. (AFP)

Riak named S. Sudan army chief: South Sudan's President Salva Kiir appointed General **Gabriel Jok Riak** as the new head of the army on Wednesday, according to a decree read out on State Television.

Riak's appointment follows the death in Cairo last month of army chief General James Ajongo after a short illness.

Riak, from Jonglei State in the Upper Nile region, was the deputy army chief for operations and has been serving as the acting army chief.

"I do hereby issue this Republican Decree for the appointment of General Gabriel Jok Riak Makol as the chief of the Defense Force of the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA)," Kiir's statement read.

South Sudan, which obtained independence from Sudan in 2011 and is the world's youngest nation, has been mired in civil war since 2013, when Kiir fired his deputy. Tens of thousands of people have been killed in fighting often along ethnic lines, and much of the nation has faced dire food shortages. (RTRS)

Gunmen kidnap German nurse: Unidentified gunmen kidnapped a German nurse from the International Committee of the Red Cross in the Somali capital, Mogadishu, on Wednesday night, police and the ICRC said.

While abductions and killings of Somali aid workers are common in the Horn of Africa country, the targeting of foreign workers has become far less frequent in recent years as security has improved.

"We got the report minutes after she was abducted and now we are searching the whole area. We hope we shall find her," Major Mohamed Hussein, a police officer, told Reuters. (RTRS)

16 Tuaregs killed in N. Mali: Suspected Islamist militants killed at least 16 Tuareg civilians in attacks in northern Mali, just days after 40 Tuaregs were killed during similar raids on neighbouring villages, local authorities said on

Wednesday. The attacks occurred on Tuesday in the village of Tindibawen, 160 km (100 miles) east of the town of Menaka near the border with Niger, and in a nearby village, Menaka Mayor Nanout Kotia told Reuters. (RTRS)

Church opposes Burundi referendum: Burundi's influential Catholic bishops said Thursday that they were opposed to fundamental constitutional changes to be voted on in a referendum this month.

If passed, the proposed changes could see President Pierre Nkurunziza remain in charge for another 16 years.

A statement, signed by 10 powerful bishops, said it was, "not the appropriate time to make profound changes" to the constitution.

Nkurunziza has ruled the tiny central African nation since 2005. His run for a controversial third term in 2015 triggered a deep political crisis that has since seen 1,200 people killed and 400,000 forced from their homes.

The violence and abuses are being investigated by International Criminal Court (ICC). (AFP)

Ex-Gambia gens deny desertion: Two renegade generals who followed ex-Gambia president Yahya Jammeh into exile pleaded not guilty on Wednesday to a charge of desertion brought by the military.

General Umpa Mendy and General Ansumana Tamba sought refuge in Equatorial Guinea alongside Jammeh in January 2017 after his brutal 22-year rule came to an end.

They were arrested at the beginning of the year, shortly after they returned to Gambia. At a court in Banjul, the pair pleaded not guilty to desertion. The charge can carry life imprisonment.

Mendy was in personal charge of protecting the former leader, while Tamba was the head of his presidential guard. (AFP)



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