

World News Roundup



Rescuers of India's National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) look for survivors after a three-story building collapsed in monsoon rains near the town of Solan, a hilly area 310 kilometers (195 miles) north of New Delhi, India on July 15. Rescuers were looking for half a dozen people, including some soldiers, still unaccounted for following Sunday's collapse. (AP)

Floods force millions to flee as death toll hits 76

Floods have forced more than three million people from their homes across north and northeastern India, officials said on Monday, as the death toll in neighbouring Nepal and low-lying Bangladesh rose to 76 after days of heavy monsoon rains.

Worst affected is the northern Indian state of Bihar, where some 1.9 million people have fled their homes due to rising waters, a state government release said.

Television channels showed roads and railway lines in Bihar submerged, with people wading through chest-high, brown, churning waters, carrying their belongings on their heads.

An impoverished agrarian province with rickety infrastructure and poor healthcare services, Bihar has a history of flooding in its northern areas that border Nepal.

Flood waters in the northeastern Indian state of Assam rose overnight with the Brahmaputra river, which flows down from the Himalayas into Bangladesh, and its tributaries still in spate.

More than 1.7 million people in Assam have been displaced by the floods, authorities said, and most of the Kaziranga National Park, home to the rare one-horned rhino, was also under water.

"The flood situation has turned very critical with 31 of the 32 districts affected," Assam Chief Minister Sarbananda Sonowal told reporters. "We are working on a war footing to deal with the flood situation."

Known for its tea industry, Assam is often inundated by seasonal flooding, and state and federal governments have spent millions of rupees on flood control.

India's weather office on Monday forecast widespread rains across Assam and Bihar for the next two days.

In neighbouring Nepal, 64 people were killed and 31 were missing, with around a third of all districts hit by heavy rains, authorities said. Many of the deaths were caused by landslides that swept away houses.

In southeast Nepal, water levels on the

Kosi river, which flows into Bihar, had receded, an official said.

In 2008, the Kosi broke its banks and changed course, inundating huge tracts of land and killing 500 people.

"Our analysis is that the danger is over now that the water level has come down," Chiranjibi Giri, assistant district administrator of Sunsari district, told Reuters.

The annual monsoon season, which brings the most rain across south Asia, also hit Bangladesh hard, forcing an estimated 190,000 people out of their homes, government officials said.

In Cox's Bazar district, shelter to some 700,000 Rohingya refugees who fled violence in neighbouring Myanmar, more than 100,000 people have been displaced.

Since early July, flooding and landslides have damaged thousands of shelters at the refugee camps, killing two people, including a child, Human Rights Watch said in a release last week.

Also

NEW DELHI: Rescuers say 11 soldiers are among a dozen bodies recovered from the debris of a three-story building that collapsed after monsoon rains hit a hilly area of northern India.

Gaurav Srivastav, an official from the National Disaster Response Force, or NDRF, says the rescuers are looking for two to three people still unaccounted after Sunday's collapse.

Fire official **Raja Ram Bhagate** says the dead included 11 army soldiers who were having a party in a ground floor restaurant in the building when it collapsed. One civilian was also killed.

Several soldiers were among the 31 people rescued after the collapse occurred in **Solan**, a town in **Himachal Pradesh** state.

More than 70 NDRF rescuers and 40 fire officers have been clearing the rubble, using earth movers, drillers and gas cutters. (Agencies)

Asia

Philippines senator chides Iceland: The Philippines' highest-ranking lawmaker said on Monday a UN resolution to probe the country's bloody war on drugs should be ignored, and its chief backer Iceland be investigated instead for human rights abuses in allowing abortion.

"They have more unborn babies that they have aborted or killed. There are more killings in abortion than the drug pushers who are fighting the police," Senate President Vicente Sotto told ANC news channel.

The Nordic nation lacks moral grounds to lecture the Philippines on human rights, Sotto said. "So we should disregard that resolution."

His remarks are the latest in a series of comments from lawmakers urging the government to not cooperate after the UN Human Rights Council on Thursday adopted Iceland's resolution to investigate thousands of deaths under Philippine President **Rodrigo Duterte**'s anti-drugs campaign.

Police have killed more than 6,600 suspected drug dealers in sting operations since Duterte took office in 2016.

Critics and rights group said authorities summarily execute suspects, which the police deny.

"The criminals can fight back, the babies cannot. What human rights are they talking about?" Sotto said, adding that drug dealers that fight back and destroy families lose their human rights. (RTRS)



Duterte

Thai police seize meth: Police in Thailand said they have seized more than a ton of crystal meth and over 10 million methamphetamine tablets in a series of drug raids this month, amid increased production and use of the drugs in Southeast Asia.

Thai authorities often make several large seizures a year of methamphetamine and other drugs, usually arresting low-level traffickers and drivers.

Police said in statements Sunday and Monday that they arrested eight people for trafficking over 5 million methamphetamine pills, 600 kilograms (1,323 pounds) of crystal meth, 15.4 kilograms (34 pounds) of heroin and 51 kilograms (112 pounds) of ketamine. The drugs were discovered Friday in a pickup truck hidden under fruit baskets and at a trafficker's home. (AP)

Widodo pledges more infrastructure: Indonesia's recently re-elected President Joko Widodo on Sunday outlined his vision for a second term, pledging faster infrastructure development and more investment opportunities to create jobs and growth in Southeast Asia's biggest economy.

Hampered by soft commodity prices, Indonesia has struggled to lift growth above 5% in recent years even amid a boom in infrastructure building aimed at unlocking bottlenecks and distributing wealth outside the populous island of Java.

In a rally attended by thousands of supporters, Widodo said infrastructure development - a key agenda in his first term - would be accelerated to connect ports and airports across the archipelago to agricultural and tourism centres. (RTRS)

Japan

LDP support up: poll

Japan PM's ruling bloc set for solid upper house win

TOKYO, July 15, (RTRS): Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe**'s ruling coalition is set to win a solid majority in an upper house election later this week, keeping alive his dream to revise Japan's pacifist constitution, a survey showed on Monday.

Abe's Liberal Democratic party (LDP) and its coalition partner Komeito together are on track to win as many as 83 seats, well over the 63 seats needed for a majority of the 124 seats to be contested on Sunday, the poll by the Nikkei business daily conducted late last week showed.

Similar polls taken by other media outlets, including the Kyodo news agency, showed support for the LDP had increased to 31.0% of all respondents, up 2 percentage points from a similar poll last month. Support for Komeito was unchanged at 5.6%.

Such a showing could enable the ruling bloc and other smaller parties including the Japan Innovation Party, which support constitutional revisions, to maintain their "super majority", or two-thirds of the vote. Such a majority is needed to start the process of revising Japan's post-World War Two pacifist constitution.

Changing the constitution to enshrine the role of Japan's military, known as the Self-Defense Forces, has been a long-held goal for Abe, who has been prime minister and leader of the LDP since 2012.

Constitutional revisions require approval by two-thirds of both chambers of parliament and a majority in a public referendum.

Upper house elections are held every three years, with members' terms running for six years. The LDP won a landslide victory in 2013 but fared less well in 2016.



Abe

When anti-nuclear activist Junko Isogai ran for office in Japan's northern Niigata region, it had an awkward dimension: not just stump speeches and chats with constituents, but entertaining potential backers.

"I was asked to pour sake, make flattering conversation and act in a way men wouldn't dislike," Isogai, 45, a mother of two teenage girls, told Reuters. "It was like being a bar hostess."

Such traditional campaign practices - heavy on face-to-face interaction and personal ties - are among many barriers women face when trying to enter Japan's male-dominated politics, candidates and experts say.

Other hurdles include a lack of role models, social norms discouraging women from speaking out, and the burden of an intense, full-time job in a society where women are expected to be responsible for housework, child rearing and elder care.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has made bringing more women into the workforce a policy pillar. But politics remains male-dominated.

Since Abe took office in December 2012, Japan's global ranking of women in parliament has fallen to 164th from 122nd among 193 countries.

His Liberal Democratic Party has a smaller percentage of female lawmakers than its main opposition party.

A July 21 upper-house election will be the first national poll since passage of a gender parity law that set non-binding targets for parties to field equal numbers of male and female candidates. A record 28% of candidates are women.

But only 15% of LDP candidates are women, compared with 45% for its main opposition, the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan (CDPJ). Sakura Uchikoshi, a Tokyo-based lawyer making her first foray into politics in the rural district of Niigata, is among the opposition candidates.

Subcontinent

Miners trapped: A Pakistani official says rescue teams are struggling to save 10 miners trapped after a methane gas explosion in a coalmine in the country's southwest.

The spokesman for the provincial government of southwestern Baluchistan province, Liaquat Shahwani, says one miner had been rescued earlier.

He says the rescued miner was closer to the surface when the explosion took place late on Sunday at a depth of over 1,220 meters, or about 4,000 feet, and the mine in the Degari area near the provincial capital, Quetta, partially caved in.

Shahwani says he's hopeful the 10 trapped miners will be rescued.

Safety standards are commonly ignored in the coalmine industry in Pakistan, leading to accidents and explosions that have caused the deaths of many mine workers in recent years. (AP)

EU agrees to aid: The European Union says it has agreed to provide an 8.5 million euro (\$9.6 million) package to help Sri Lanka battle terrorism following Easter Sunday bomb attacks that killed more than 250 people.

It says EU officials held talks Monday with Sri Lanka's acting secretary of foreign affairs, Ahmed A. Jawad, about the suicide attacks.

An EU statement says the European officials expressed solidarity with Sri Lanka over the bombing of three churches and three hotels.

It says the package will be channeled through the United Nations Development Program and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. (AP)

Roadside bomb kills 9: An Afghan official says at least nine people have been killed when the truck they were riding in hit a roadside bomb in southern Kandahar province.

Yousuf Younosi, a provincial council member, says 18 civilians were wounded in the explosion on Monday afternoon in the district of Khakrez.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the bombing but Younosi blamed the Taliban who often use roadside bombs to target Afghan security forces in the province. He says women and children were among those killed but he couldn't provide an exact breakdown. All the victims were members of the same family and their close relatives who were on their way to a shrine. Younosi added that some of the wounded are in critical condition. (AP)

Barakat Foods Teams up with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank for Blood Donation



Barakat Foods which is a food service and hospitality company based in Kuwait that delivers unique food and beverage experiences, has recently teamed up with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank for blood donation camp on Sunday 14th July 2019 in Jabriya, Kuwait. The campaign was organized as an initiative under the CSR strategy of the BFC, aimed at celebrating the spirit of spreading love and happiness among the lesser fortunate sections of the society. Thanking all the donors for being a part of this drive, Mr. Chawki Barakat, Managing Director of Barakat Foods said "Blood donation is amongst the

highest contributions rendered towards humanity, and expresses our solidarity as a community. Barakat Foods has been a constant participant in various annual events and voluntary activities, as well as local and national campaigns. One of its most recent efforts in this domain involved the national campaign for cancer awareness earlier this year, which was instigated via the distribution of leaflets at company business units in various branches and outlets. This is in addition to taking part in other activities such as annual walkathons to combat diabetes and numerous other events and campaigns.

