

Landslides Hit Japan's Hiroshima, Killing 36



Japan Self-Defense Force (JSDF) soldiers and police officers carry the body of a victim in a plastic bag at a site where a landslide swept through a residential area at Asaminami ward in Hiroshima, western Japan, August 20, 2014

TOKYO (Reuters) - At least 36 people, including several children, were killed in Japan on Wednesday, when landslides triggered by torrential rain slammed into the outskirts of the western city of Hiroshima, and the toll could rise further, police said.

Seven people were missing after a month's worth of rain fell overnight, loosening slopes already saturated by heavy rain over the past few weeks.

"There was rain and thunder all night, beating down so hard I was scared to go outside," a resident told Fuji TV. "Great big drops. I've never seen anything like this."

Helicopters clattered over-

head, lifting out survivors, as rescue workers searched through mud and piles of stones in residential areas about 5 km (3 miles) from the city centre.

Among those dug out of the debris were two brothers, aged eleven and two, whose house was struck as they slept.

A child's red school bag, covered in mud, lay in the debris. Houses had been pushed 100 metres (yards) by the landslide in the worst-hit area, where thick, knee-high mud hampered rescue efforts.

"The rain was just pouring down and the street in front of my house turned into a river," a man in his 70s told national television NHK.

Hiroshima city authorities issued an evacuation advisory notice about an hour after the first landslide on Wednesday.

"Something went wrong in our analysis (of the situation) ... We failed to issue an evacuation advisory ahead of the disaster. Looking back, I believe this is something we need to amend," an official at the city's fire department said.

The soil in the area was of a kind that absorbed water until it suddenly loosened and slid, increasing the danger, disaster management experts told NHK.

Cities in land-scarce Japan often expand into mountainous areas, leaving such development vulnerable to landslides.

Four Beheaded Corpses Found in Egypt's Sinai

CAIRO (Reuters) - Four beheaded corpses were found by residents of a town in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula on Wednesday, security sources said, blaming Islamist militants waging an insurgency against Cairo.

The security sources in Sinai and Cairo, said residents of Sheikh Zuwaid found the bodies two days after the men were abducted by gunmen while traveling in a car in the town, a few kilometers from the Gaza Strip.

Though the men were civilians, they may have been targeted for their perceived allegiance to the police and army, the sources said, speaking on condition of anonymity. They gave no other indication of the identity of the men.

The militants have stepped up attacks on policemen and soldiers since then-army chief Abdel Fattah al-Sisi toppled President Mohamed Mursi of the Muslim Brotherhood in July 2013.

The government does not distinguish between the Sinai militants and the Brotherhood, which it has designated a terrorist group although the movement says it is peaceful and denies any links to the wave of militant attacks.

Sisi, now elected president, said last month that Islamist militants were ravaging the Middle East and pose a threat to security globally.

The Sinai militants are not believed to be officially linked to Islamic State insurgents who have swept through parts of Iraq and

Syria and have released a video purporting to show the beheading of a U.S. journalist.

The attacks by the Egyptian militants initially targeted security forces in Sinai - a remote but strategic part of Egypt located between Israel, the Gaza Strip and the Suez Canal - but they have since extended their reach to the mainland with bombings of security installations.

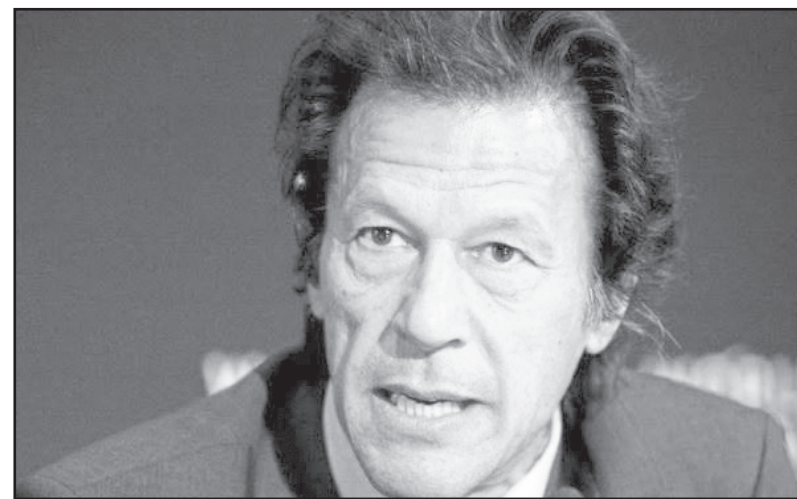
The government says nearly 500 people, mostly from the army and police, have been killed in clashes and in attacks by Islamist insurgents angered at Mursi's removal. Rights groups have put the number far higher, saying that many hundreds of Brotherhood supporters, meanwhile, have been killed at the hands of security forces.

A security crackdown since Mursi was ousted has also seen many thousands of Islamists arrested. More than 1,000 have been sentenced to death. Secular liberals accusing the government of rights abuses have also been jailed.

Seventeen pro-Brotherhood protesters were sentenced to life in prison by an Egyptian court on Wednesday on charges including murder and possession of arms during clashes that erupted at a protest in August 2013.

Rights groups say trials of Islamists have generally violated the most basic rights of citizens to fair hearings due to a lack of evidence against the defendants, among other problems.

PTI Members Voice Skepticism Over Imran Khan's Protest Approach



Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD (Press TV) - Members of Pakistan's Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party have criticized its chairman Imran Khan's recent aggressive turn in his leading of the wave of anti-government protests in the country.

A PTI worker and candidate for National Assembly seat NA-153 in 2013, Saeed Khurshid Ahmed, slammed the party's recent call for civil disobedience in a letter to Khan. Ahmed said that he had observed a change in Khan's statements and the party's position towards the objectives of the opposition "Azadi" or Freedom March, which started on August 14.

He also voiced disappointment with Khan's demands for the removal of Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, saying that such an unconstitutional demand would only stir turmoil in the country.

"I must say in direct words that there is a disappointment amongst the majority of PTI supporters who don't like violence, hate speeches, anarchy,

insulting remarks against institutions, especially the judiciary, police, and a retired army chief, etc," Ahmed said.

Former president of the Insaf Students Federation (ISF), K. Asif, also expressed dissatisfaction with PTI's actions.

He said the party had distanced itself from its original slogan of bringing change in a positive manner.

The recent anti-government demonstrations have been led by Khan and cleric Muhammad Tahir ul-Qadri.

The protesters have been demanding that Sharif step down from power, accusing him of coming to power through vote rigging.

Khan has not responded to a government call for talks. Qadri has rejected the offer outright.

Earlier, a senior cabinet minister, Ahsan Iqbal, who was appointed by Sharif to lead talks with the opposition, said that, instead of the march, "we request that Imran Khan and Tahir-ul-Qadri agree to talks with the government."



NEW DELHI (Press TV) - India has called off forthcoming foreign secretary-level talks with neighboring Pakistan after Pakistani Ambassador to India Abdul Basit met Kashmiri pro-independence leaders in New Delhi.

Spokesman for India's External Affairs Ministry, Syed Akbaruddin, said Monday's meeting between the Pakistani envoy and leaders from the political front Hurriyat Conference Jammu Kashmir (HCJK) has "undermined efforts" by New Delhi to resume a dialogue process with Islamabad.

"Under the present circumstances, it is felt that no useful purpose will be served by the foreign secretary of India going to Islamabad next week," Akbaruddin said.

India's Foreign Secretary Sujatha Singh was due to travel to Pakistan for talks with her counterpart Aizaz Ahmad Chaudhury on August 25.

On Monday, prominent pro-independence leader Shabir Ahmad Shah emphasized that bilateral dialogue between India and Pakistan would not resolve the Kashmir issue as people of the Himalayan region of Kashmir are principal party to the dispute.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder was due to visit Ferguson, Missouri, on Wednesday, hours after nearly 50 protesters were arrested in an 11th night of racially charged demonstrations over the killing of an unarmed black teenager by a white police officer.

The St. Louis County prosecutor's office also was expected to begin presenting evidence to a grand jury investigating the Aug. 9 shooting death of 18-year-old Michael Brown, in a case that Governor Jay Nixon vowed would be treated as a "vigorous prosecution."

Holder said he planned to visit Ferguson, a St. Louis suburb that is home to a predominantly African-American population of 21,000, to be briefed on the progress of a separate civil rights investigation he has ordered into the Brown killing.

In a special message to the community published online by the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Holder said about 40 FBI agents have been assigned to the case, along with prosecutors in the U.S. Attorney's Office in St. Louis, and that hundreds of people have already been interviewed.

An independent autopsy, the third conducted in the killing, has also been performed by federal medical examiners at Holder's direction, he said.

"Our investigation into this matter will be full, it will be fair, and it will be independent," he said.

MONROVIA (FNA) - Police in the Liberian capital, Monrovia, fired tear gas on Wednesday to disperse a stone-throwing crowd.

The protesters were agitating to leave a neighborhood under quarantine because of the Ebola virus, Reuters said.

There were no injuries, according to witnesses.

Authorities introduced a nationwide curfew on Tuesday and put the West Point neighborhood under quarantine.

The rundown area has been hit by Ebola and the virus has killed more than 1,200 people in four West African countries

Nine Ukrainian Troops Killed Near Volatile Donets

KIEV (Press TV) - At least nine Ukrainian soldiers have been killed in overnight fighting in the town of Hovaysk, located in the east of the volatile city of Donetsk, a top official says.

Andriy Lysenko, spokesman for the Ukrainian National Security Council, said on Wednesday that fresh clashes between the Ukrainian army troops and pro-Russia forces have left 9 soldiers dead and 22 others wounded.

The Kiev government troops have taken control of half of the town, located 18 kilometers (11 miles) east of Donetsk, and are currently facing fierce resistance from the pro-Russians, Lysenko added.

According to the latest reports, heavy fighting has also broken out in the volatile Ukrainian city of Lugansk. The government forces have regained parts of the city which is considered as one of the strongholds of the pro-Russia activists.

Tens of thousands of civilians, suffering from acute shortages of water and electricity, have fled the government's military operations in the east.

Ukraine's mainly Russian-speaking regions have witnessed deadly clashes between pro-Russia forces and the Ukrainian army since the government in Kiev launched military operations in mid-April in a bid to crush the pro-Moscow protests.

The political unrest in eastern Ukraine has so far claimed the lives of more than 2,000 people, according to figures by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Nearly 300,000 people have been also forced to flee their homes due to fierce fighting in the east, the UN says.

Opposition: Greece Should Withdraw From Sanctions Regime Against Russia

ATHENS (FNA) - The Greek opposition has accused the country's authorities of neglecting the state economic interests and urged Athens to withdraw from the EU sanctions regime against Russia, the opposition leader said.

Alexis Tsipras, the leader of the main oppositional Coalition of Left Radical Forces, said that "the economic war with Russia makes no contribution to Ukrainian crisis settlement, but creates numerous negative consequences for the entire European Union that are catastrophic for Southern Europe, especially Greece", ITAR-TASS reported.

The opposition leader blamed Prime Minister Antonis Samaras and Vice Premier Evangelos Venizelos for "the catastrophic crisis for the Greek interests" in trade relations with Russia that "makes thousand local producers desperate". Tsipras urged the government to distance itself from the "thoughtless policy of sanctions, which preparation started during Greek presidency in the EU".

Greek Government Spokesperson Sofia Voulepsi explained the authorities' position by financial needs. During the years of its EU membership, Greece has received more than €150 billion in the form of various payments, and has been promised €18.5 billion more by 2020.