

UN Chief Slams Threat From U.S. Supply of Landmines to Ukraine

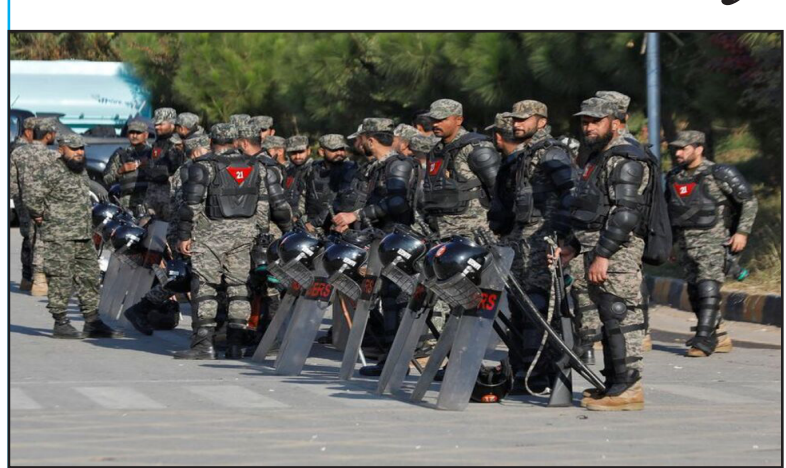


Cambodia was left one of the most heavily bombed and mined countries in the world after three decades of civil war.

SIEM REAP, Cambodia (AFP) -- The UN Secretary-General on Monday slammed the "renewed threat" of anti-personnel landmines, days after the United States said it would supply the weapons to Ukrainian forces battling Russia's invasion.

sonnel mines by some of the Parties to the Convention, as well as some Parties falling behind in their commitments to destroy these weapons," he said in the statement. He called on the 164 signatories -- which include Ukraine but not Russia or the United States -- to "meet their obligations and ensure compliance to the Convention".

Islamabad in Lockdown as Pro-Khan Rally Nears



Pakistani Rangers in riot gear stand guard alongside a road to prevent an anti-government rally in Islamabad, Nov. 25, 2024.

ISLAMABAD (Reuters) -- A march by hundreds of supporters to demand the release of jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan reached the fringes of Pakistan's capital of Islamabad on Monday, his party and officials said, amid reports of violence elsewhere.

Officials and witnesses said all public transport between cities and terminals has also been shut down in the eastern province of Punjab to keep away the protesters, led by members of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. "We wouldn't let them storm the capital," said provincial Information Minister Uzma Bukhari, adding that about 80 of Khan's supporters had been arrested.

Plastic Treaty Talks Begin Amid Wide Divisions

BUSAN/BAKU (Reuters) -- As delegates from 175 countries gathered in Busan, South Korea on Monday for the fifth round of talks aimed at securing an international treaty to curb plastic pollution, lingering divisions cast doubts on whether a final agreement was in sight.

treaty talks echo conflicts that have long stalled UN efforts to curb global warming, with the most recent climate summit, COP29, having just ended with an agreement poorer nations assailed as inadequate. INC Chair Luis Valdivieso told reporters on Monday he was confident this week's negotiations would yield a treaty or a text leading to a treaty.

diately criticized by human rights campaigners. The outgoing U.S. administration is aiming to give Ukraine an upper hand before President-elect Donald Trump enters office. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky called the mines "very important" to halting Russian attacks. Any transfer of mines to Ukraine "will leave a deadly legacy for Ukrainian civilians for generations to come," said Tamar Gabelnick, director of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines (ICBL). "ICBL calls on the United States to reverse its plans to transfer anti-personnel mines to Ukraine, and on the Ukrainian government to honor its obligations under international law and reject this deadly gift," she said in a statement sent to AFP.

Khan's party accused the government of using violent tactics to block the protesters, saying it had arrested hundreds of workers and leaders. "They are even firing live bullets," one of Khan's aides, Shaukat Yousafzai, told broadcaster Geo News TV. Gatherings of any sort in Islamabad have been banned, police said in a statement. Authorities closed all schools in Islamabad and the adjacent garrison city of Rawalpindi, while the internet and WhatsApp messaging services also slowed.

The protest march, which Khan has described as the "final call", is one of many his party had held to seek his release since he was jailed in August last year. The party's most recent protest in Islamabad, early in October, turned violent. Khan's third wife, Bushra Bibi, and a key aide, Ali Amin Gandapur, who is the chief minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, are leading a rally that arrived just outside Islamabad on Sunday night, his party said.

Months of political tensions since right-winger Barnier became prime minister at the helm of a minority government appointed by President Emmanuel Macron in the wake of this summer's elections are coming to a head over the budget which has yet to be approved by parliament. The opposition on all sides of the spectrum have denounced the budget, prompting Barnier to consider brandishing the weapon of article 49.3 of the constitution which allows a government to force through legislation without a vote in parliament.

Pro-Russian Georgescu Surges to Lead in Romania Vote



Calin Georgescu, who ran as an independent candidate for president, is pictured in Bucharest, Romania, Oct. 1, 2024.

BUCHAREST (AFP) -- Far-right candidate Calin Georgescu surged unexpectedly in Romania's presidential election, pulling ahead of the pro-European prime minister with more than 98 percent of votes counted Monday and looking all but certain to advance to a runoff.

nationalist posturing, setting itself apart from Hungary and Slovakia. Ciolacu's Social Democrat party has shaped Romania's politics for more than three decades, and as he voted Sunday he promised stability and a "decent" standard of living.

Whatever the outcome, "the far right is by far the big winner of this election", political scientist Cristian Pirvulescu told AFP. Another nationalist candidate, George Simion, is currently running fourth, putting the far-right on track to take about a third of the vote.

Looking for a new election breakthrough for European far-right parties, he had warned of possible "fraud" and "foreign interference" when voting. The stakes are high for Romania, which has a 650-kilometre (400-mile) border with Ukraine and has become more important since Russia invaded its neighbor in 2022.

Le Pen Threatens to Topple French Government Amid Standoff



Le Pen is putting Barnier's government in an increasingly precarious position.

PARIS (AFP) -- French far-right figurehead Marine Le Pen on Monday threatened to back a no confidence motion that could topple the government of Prime Minister Michel Barnier in a standoff over the budget, saying after talks both sides were entrenched in their positions.

"My position has not changed. No more, it seems, than that (the position) of the prime minister has changed," Le Pen after meeting Barnier, describing him as "at the same time courteous but also entrenched in his positions." Asked if the RN would back a no confidence motion, she replied: "Of course."

News in Brief

MOSCOW (AP) -- The Russian military have captured a British national fighting alongside Ukrainian troops in Russia's partially occupied Kursk region, state news agency Tass reported Monday, citing unidentified sources in law enforcement.

BEIJING (Reuters) -- China and the European Union are partners rather than adversaries, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Monday, calling on the two sides to think from each other's perspective and seek cooperation.

NIAMEY, Niger (AFP) -- Niger said it could no longer work with the European Union's ambassador and had requested a replacement "as soon as possible" after the bloc recalled its envoy over a row surrounding the disbursement of emergency aid.

WASHINGTON (AFP) -- While fighting between criminal groups in Haiti decreased during 2024, attacks on civilians have risen, including an expanded use of "horrific sexual abuse," according to a new report by Human Rights Watch.

MONTEVIDEO (Reuters) -- Center-left opposition candidate Yamandu Orsi secured victory in Uruguay's presidential election, official results showed, with 99% of votes tallied, in a second-round race that pollsters expected to be closely fought.

DHAKA (AFP) -- Japanese officials in Bangladesh are preparing the bodies of 23 soldiers who died during World War II to return them home after more than 80 years, exhumation teams said Monday.