

Myanmar military declares ceasefire as quake death toll exceeds 3,000

AP, BANGKOK: Myanmar's ruling military declared a temporary ceasefire in the country's civil war Wednesday to facilitate relief efforts following a 7.7 magnitude earthquake that has killed more than 3,000 people.

The announcement by the military's high command was reported late Wednesday on state television MRTV, which said the truce would run until April 22 and was aimed at showing compassion for people affected by Friday's quake.

The announcement followed unilateral temporary ceasefires announced by armed resistance groups opposed to military rule. Those groups must refrain from attacking the state, or regrouping, or else the military will take "necessary" measures, the army's statement said.

Earlier Wednesday, rescuers pulled two men alive from the ruins of a hotel in Myanmar's capital and a third from a guesthouse in another city, five days after the quake. But most teams were finding only bodies.

The quake hit midday Friday, toppling thousands of buildings, collapsing



Heavy machinery is used to clear the debris at the site of an under-construction building collapse in Bangkok, as a result of the earthquake

bridges and buckling roads. The death toll rose to 3,003 on Wednesday, with more than 4,500 people injured, MRTV reported. Local reports suggest much higher figures.

The earthquake came amid civil war in Myanmar, making a dire humanitarian crisis even worse. More than 3 million people had been displaced from their

homes and nearly 20 million were in need even before it hit, according to the United Nations.

Two of the major armed resistance forces fighting the military, which seized power in 2021 from the democratically elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi, had announced ceasefires to facilitate the humanitarian response to

the earthquake, though the military initially did not relent in its attacks.

Dramatic rescue in Myanmar capital

In the capital, Naypyitaw, a team of Turkish and local rescue workers used an endoscopic camera to locate Naing Lin Tun on a lower floor of the damaged hotel where he worked. They pulled him gingerly

through a hole jackhammered through a floor and loaded him on to a gurney nearly 108 hours after he was first trapped.

Shirtless and covered in dust, he appeared weak but conscious in a video released by the local fire department, as he was fitted with an IV drip and taken away. State-run MRTV reported later in the day that another man was saved from the same building, more than 121 hours after the quake struck. Both were age 26.

Another man was rescued by a team of Malaysian and local crews from a collapsed guesthouse in the Sagaing township, near the epicenter of the earthquake close to Myanmar's second-largest city, Mandalay.

The earthquake also rocked neighbouring Thailand, causing the collapse of a high-rise building under construction in Bangkok. One body was removed from the rubble early Wednesday, raising the death total in Bangkok to 22 with 35 injured, primarily at the construction site.

Claims of attack on Chinese Red Cross convoy in quake-hit Myanmar

PTI, BANGKOK: An opposition militia belonging to the Three Brotherhood Alliance, one of a powerful group that has taken a large swath of Myanmar from the military, reported that the military fired on a relief convoy of nine Chinese Red Cross vehicles late Tuesday.

The relief convoy was bringing supplies to Mandalay city, which was hit by a 7.7 magnitude earthquake midday Friday, toppling thousands of buildings, collapsing bridges and buckling roads. So far, 2,886 people have been reported dead in Myanmar and another 4,639 injured, according to state television MRTV, but local reports suggest much higher figures.

The Three Brotherhood Alliance announced a unilateral one-month ceasefire on Tuesday to facilitate the humanitarian response.

The shadow opposition National Unity Government had already called a ceasefire for its forces.

But attacks have continued since the quake. Most recently, an opposition militia belonging to the Brotherhood Alliance reported that the military fired on a relief convoy of

nine Chinese Red Cross vehicles late Tuesday on a road in the northern part of Shan state near Ohn Ma Tee village.

The Ta'ang National Liberation Army said the Chinese Red Cross was bringing supplies to Mandalay and had reported its route to the military.

But Maj. Gen. Zaw Min Tun, spokesman for the military regime, told state-run MRTV that the convoy had not notified authorities of its route ahead of time. While not mentioning the Red Cross, he said security forces had fired into the air to deter a convoy that refused to stop near Ohn Ma Tee village, the site of recent fighting with the TNLA.

Asked about the incident, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun did not comment on the attack, but said relief supplies provided by the Red Cross Society of China to Myanmar have arrived in Myanmar and are on the way to Mandalay, adding that rescue personnel and supplies are safe.

China is incredibly economically important to Myanmar, and also one of the military's largest suppliers with weapons, along with Russia.

Indian Navy seizes 2,500 kg narcotics

PTI, NEW DELHI: Indian Navy's frontline frigate INS Tarkash has seized over 2,500 kgs of narcotics in the Western Indian Ocean, officials said.

The operation to seize the narcotics was launched after the Navy received inputs on March 31 on suspicious movements of some vessels, they said.

After systematically interrogating all suspicious vessels in the vicinity, INS Tarkash intercepted and boarded a suspect dhow, owing to the coordinated efforts with the P81 marine surveillance aircraft and the Maritime Operations Centre in Mumbai, a Navy spokesperson said.

Additionally, the ship launched its integral helicopter to monitor the activities of the suspicious vessel and identify other vessels likely operating in the area, he said.

A specialist boarding team, along with Marine Commandos, boarded the suspect vessel and conducted a thorough search, leading to the discovery of various sealed packets, the official said.

Further search and interrogation revealed over 2,500 kgs of narcotic substances stored in different cargo holds and compartments onboard the vessel, he said.

Protests over India-Myanmar border fencing, free movement restriction

PTI, KOHIMA: The Naga People's Front (NPF) held a rally at the border village of Longwa to protest the Centre's decision to scrap the Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the India-Myanmar boundary.

Addressing the rally, NPF secretary general Achumbemo Kikon highlighted the shared customs and practices of families living across the two countries.

"We are living on our own land, and no one has the right to divide our home. We Nagas know our rights, and it is India that is attempting to curb them. We will protect our land at all costs," he said.

Kikon, an MLA, said Nagas have been historically divided by "external forces", and forced to live in

various states and countries, including Myanmar, Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, and Manipur.

He called for unity among the Nagas, emphasising that it was time for them to protect their culture, traditions, and rights. He said that the border fencing contradicts the very principles of the Act East Policy and the 'Neighbourhood First' approach.

"It is our time to stand up for the rights our forefathers fought for, for the good of future generations," he said.

"The real fight starts here (border villages). We must stand together and fight for our rights. We will not let our land be divided again," Kikon said.

The rally, held on Tues-

day, was attended by senior NPF leaders, community elders, and a large number of people. The 'Angh' Tonyei Phawang, who administers the village, also attended the rally.

They held banners and placards, protesting the decision of the Centre.

Kikon also pointed out that the 'Angh' of Longwa's home is located across both the Indian and Myanmar borders, which makes the decision to fence "absurd and disruptive".

He said the NPF will hold a similar rally on Thursday at the border village of Pangsha in Noklak district.

India and Myanmar share a 1,643-km-long border, which passes through Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh.

Polish PM blames foreign interference for cyber attack

AFP, WARSAW: Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on Wednesday his party, Civic Platform (PO), suffered a cyber-attack that he attributed to "foreign interference" ahead of a presidential election in May.

Authorities in Poland, a staunch ally of neighbouring Ukraine, have warned in the past months that Russia may seek to target next month's vote with cyberattacks and disinformation campaigns.

"A cyberattack on the Platform's IT system. Foreign interference in the elections has begun. The (security) services point to an eastern trace," Tusk said on X.

TIME IS SELFIE TIME



Young men click selfies in a blooming mustard field, at Pampore in Pulwama district, Jammu & Kashmir

Most immigrants facing US deportation are Christian: Report

PTI, WASHINGTON: As many as four in five immigrants at risk of deportation from the United States are Christian, according to a new report that calls on their fellow believers to consider the impact of the Trump administration's aggressive deportation policies.

The report says about 10 million Christians are vulnerable to deportation and 7 million US citizens who are Christian live in households where someone is at risk of deportation.

The report, under the auspices of major Catholic and evangelical organizations, draws on a range of data, including percentages of religious affiliation in various migrant and national populations and on an advocacy group's analysis of US census data on migrants.

Though we're deeply concerned about fellow Christians, we're not exclusively concerned with immigrants who happen to share our faith, said Matthew Soerens, vice president of advocacy and policy at World Relief, an evangelical humanitarian organization that cosponsored the report.

As Christians, we believe that all people, regardless of their religious tradition or nationality, are made in God's image with inherent dignity," Soerens said in a video statement. But he added that many Christians in the US may not realise that most of those who could be deported share their faith.

Tourists stranded as Ooty shops down shutters, autos stay off roads

PTI, UDHAGAMANDALAM (TAMIL NADU): Commercial establishments downed shutters while autos and tourist taxis kept off roads here on Wednesday in protest against the e-pass system implemented in line with a court verdict to keep the movement of vehicles under check. The agitation severely affected tourists who complained of exorbitant pricing of available hotel rooms and food.

The protest, which was total, mainly affected the tourists as they did not have access to hotel rooms and food as hotels and restaurants remained closed.

People queued up at the state-run Amma Canteens, while roadside vendors sprang up at various places to sell food items. Amma Canteens are named after late Chief Minister J Jayala-

lithaa and the outlets sell food at subsidised rates.

Moulana from Kerala said food was being sold at exorbitant prices. The hotel which had rented out a room for him till Tuesday at Rs 5000 was now demanding Rs 15,000, he claimed and wanted a mechanism to keep hotel tariff under check.

Rajesh, a local, also pointed to the inflated rates of food and hotel rooms, even as he said that the e-pass system will affect business in the hill district during the peak vacation season.

Sukumaran, secretary of a local tea farmers' association, welcomed the e-pass initiative. It will help in ensuring smooth flow of vehicular traffic and avoid pile-ups, he said.

As part of the protest, shops were closed in Udhagamandalam (Ooty),

Kotagiri, Gudalur and Pandalur—all in the Nilgiris district.

The protesting shopkeepers and tourist vehicle operators wanted the withdrawal of the e-pass system, saying it was affecting their livelihood.

As per the new mandate, those visiting the district in private vehicles need to apply in advance on a government portal and obtain it.

The Madras High Court had earlier mandated the e-pass system for Ooty and Kodaikanal (Dindigul dt) in Tamil Nadu to check the burgeoning vehicle influx to the hill tourist attractions during summer.

According to the system that had come into effect on April 1, the vehicles entering Nilgiris will be limited to 6000 on weekdays and 8000 on weekends.

Murder accused shot dead in UP

PTI, MEERUT: A 24-year-old murder accused was killed and his two aides were injured in a shooting incident in Meerut district on Wednesday, police said.

Police have identified the deceased as Paramjeet alias Gulla, who was recently released on bail. Police suspect the incident is the result of an old rivalry.

Superintendent of Police, Rakesh Kumar Mishra, said the shooting occurred around 4.45 pm near Latifpur village in Hastinapur area.

"Paramjeet alias Gulla, a murder accused, was shot by unknown assailants. He was taken to the hospital where doctors pronounced him dead. Two of Paramjeet's companions sustained bullet injuries and are currently hospitalised. Their condition is reported to be stable," the SP said.

Parl passes Immigration and Foreigners Bill with RS nod

PTI, NEW DELHI: Parliament approved a bill to regulate immigration, entry and stay of foreigners in India with the Rajya Sabha giving its nod on Wednesday, as Union minister Nityanand Rai accused the Congress and TMC of "aiding" illegal immigrants under their rule.

The Immigration and Foreigners Bill, 2025 was passed in Lok Sabha on March 27, 2025. The Rajya Sabha passed the Bill by voice vote on Wednesday after various amendments moved by opposition members were negated.

Replying to the discussion on the Bill, Rai, Minister of State for Home Affairs, attacked the previous Congress government and the TMC dispensation in West Bengal for "aiding" illegal immigrants enter the country and "facilitating" their stay

by including their names in voters' list and ration cards.

This was strongly objected to by the Congress and TMC members, who along with other opposition parties' MPs, staged a walkout from the Upper House.

Several opposition members earlier demanded that the Bill be referred to a standing committee, but Rai said the Home Ministry took three years to formulate this Bill after great thought and based on what the country needs.

This Bill will reduce overlapping and increase collaboration between agencies, he said.

One of the key provisions in the Bill is that anyone found to be using a forged passport or visa for entering India or staying in or exiting from the country will be punishable with a jail term of up to seven years and a fine which could extend to Rs 10 lakh.

Two women Naxalites carrying Rs 14 lakh bounty each killed in encounter in MP

PTI, BHOPAL: Two women Naxalites, carrying a reward of Rs 14 lakh each on their heads, were killed in an encounter with police in Madhya Pradesh's Mandla district on Wednesday morning, a senior official said.

The gun-battle took place under Bichhiya police station limits, Director General Police (DGP) Kailash Makwana said. A self-loading rifle (SLR), an ordinary rifle, a wireless set and some items of daily use were recovered from the spot. A search operation was underway for other Naxalites, he said.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said the two Naxalites carried a reward of Rs 14 lakh each on their heads.

"I congratulate all the jawans of the security force for their bravery and courage. This success will definitely give impetus to the resolve to completely free India from the Naxal problem by March 2026 under the guidance of respected Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah," he said.

The country and Madhya Pradesh will be completely

free from terrorism, Naxalism and extremism, the CM said.

An official of the MP Police Headquarters said both the hardcore women Naxalites belonged to Boramdev Area Committee of KB (Kanha Boramdev) Division of MMC (Madhya Pradesh-Maharashtra-Chhattisgarh) zone of Maoists.

Following the intelligence input about the presence of Maoists in Mundidadar-Ganeridadar-Parsatola forest area of Kanha National Park, the security forces launched a search operation.

3 minors held for robbery in Delhi

PTI, NEW DELHI: Three minors were apprehended for allegedly assaulting a man and fleeing with his motorcycle and mobile phone in Delhi's Alipur area, an official said.

The victim has been identified as Amit Singh, a resident of Bakhtawarpur, he said.

On March 27, a call was received at Alipur Police Station regarding an incident near Triveni Colony, where a man was attacked with a bottle by some individuals who fled with his motorcycle and mobile phone, he added.

People with autistic disorders are entitled to get gainful employment: Experts

PTI, KOLKATA: People with autistic disorders need to be provided with skill training to get gainful employment besides being treated with empathy, feel many domain experts.

The World Autism Awareness Day is observed every year on April 2 after the United Nations General Assembly designated this day for the purpose in 2007.

Globally, the prevalence of neurodevelopmental disorders is rising, with autism affecting one in 100

children according to WHO. Psychotherapist Minu Budhia said.

"The focus should be on skill building in a sensory-friendly environment with social communication training. Organisations need to create an inclusive autism-friendly workspace," Budhia said.

Conditions such as ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder), intellectual disabilities and learning disorders also impact millions, making neurodiversity far more

common than we realise, Budhia said.

Individuals on the autism spectrum do not need pity, she said, adding, "They need our understanding. Empathy to my mind means seeing their strengths, celebrating their abilities, and providing the right support to help the neurodiverse to thrive in a neurotypical world".

Budhia, founder of Caring Minds International also said that as a mother to a special child, she witnessed the power of

empathy firsthand. "Empathy fuels attitudinal shifts. When teachers, educational institutes, employers and society keep an open mind, individuals with autism can lead fulfilling lives on their terms," she said.

According to rehabilitation psychologist Amrita Panda, people living with autistic spectrum disorder should be imparted with vocational skill training to get gainful employment.

"These people should be treated with empathy and not sympathy," she said.