

WORLD
world**US reports gunfire near Haiti embassy**
Port-au-Prince, Haiti

The US embassy in Haiti reported gunfire on Monday near its diplomatic compound but said the incident was quickly over.

In a travel alert, the US State Department said gunfire had come from the "rear entrance to the embassy" in Port-au-Prince and that staff had taken shelter inside.

"If you are traveling to the embassy, find a safe area to shelter," it wrote on Twitter.

Some two hours later, the State Department said the situation has been "resolved" with the order to take shelter lifted. Officials did not immediately have further details.

Peru bans electric scooters from sidewalks

Lima, Peru

Peru banned motorized scooters from sidewalks and pedestrian areas from Monday after a woman in Lima broke both her arms in a collision with one.

The new law from the transport ministry limits such motorized scooters to "cycle paths and the right lane in roads" reserved for the slowest moving vehicles.

Authorities also imposed a speed limit of 20 kilometers per hour (12.4 mph) for the scooters, which are capable of reaching 25 km/h.

Kabul on lockdown

An Afghan policeman stops passengers at a checkpoint in the city in Kabul

AFP | Kabul, Afghanistan

Afghanistan's usually bustling capital Kabul slowed to a crawl yesterday amid massive security for a high-stakes peace summit that has previously been a target for insurgent attacks.

Police flooded the city and authorities blocked off key roads around the west Kabul venue of the so-called "loya jirga" -- where some 3,000 tribal elders, religious figures, and politicians from across Afghanistan are gathering over four days to discuss possible conditions for a peace deal with the Taliban.

Taliban suicide bombers armed with rockets and guns attacked a 2010 peace jirga at the same venue, and in 2011, two rockets were fired into Kabul during a two-day jirga.

Despite such past attacks, Kabul residents are infuriated with the scale of the lockdown, which has already been blamed for at least one death and has paralysed businesses in what would ordinarily be a busy week before Ramadan begins.

Local media reported that a newborn baby died when the father, who was trying to take the infant to a hospital, was blocked by security forces.

"The little baby should not have died," Afghanistan's chief executive Abdullah Abdullah said.

"We are actually here to serve the same people who die because of the roadblocks."

Adding to the slowdown, authorities have declared a week-long public holiday in Kabul.

"Yesterday, I could only take two passengers from one part

of the city to the other. It took me three hours to complete a 15-minute ride," Nasrullah, a taxi driver who gave only his first name, told AFP.

Shopkeeper Taj Mohammad said poor people had been hit particularly hard.

"It is good to provide security for the participants, but that should not cost people's businesses," Mohammad said.

Siam Pasarly, an economics expert, estimated the holidays were costing the business community \$1 million a day.

"Afghanistan is a developing country and its economic engine should be running all day," he said. "A week-long shutdown is like a poison to the economy."

'Waste of time'

The loya jirga -- literally "grand assembly" in Pashto --

is being held as the US and Taliban are discussing a possible foreign troop withdrawal from Afghanistan in exchange for a permanent ceasefire and various Taliban pledges.

The jirga is seen as an attempt by the Afghan government to influence the peace talks which so far have cut out President Ashraf Ghani, whom the Taliban view as a US stooge.

But some prominent Afghans, presidential hopefuls, and government officials including Abdullah have boycotted the assembly.

Ahmad Khan, another taxi driver, bemoaned the meeting as a "waste of time".

"Holding this jirga is an economic blow for poor labour like us, who come out in the morning for a morsel of food, and how can we provide food

Netanyahu sworn into Israel's new parliament after election victory

Netanyahu

Jerusalem, Undefined

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was sworn into Israel's new parliament yesterday following his victory in April 9 elections and will seek to form a governing coalition in the days ahead.

Netanyahu was among the 120 members of the Knesset, or parliament, sworn in during an official ceremony.

Netanyahu's Likud won 35 seats in the election, the same as his main opponents from the centrist Blue and White alliance, led by ex-military chief Benny Gantz.

Support from smaller right-wing parties allied to Likud led to a majority of 65 parliament members supporting Netanyahu to continue on as premier.

But Netanyahu also faces the prospect of becoming the first sitting prime minister to be indicted.

The attorney general has announced he intends to indict him for bribery, fraud and breach of trust pending a hearing.

He is not required to resign if indicted, only if convicted with all appeals exhausted.

Indian Army's Yeti 'footprint' cause online storm

New Delhi, India

Pictures of a "Yeti footprint" the Indian Army posted on social media triggered a barrage of jokes yesterday.

"For the first time, an #IndianArmy Mountaineering Expedition Team has sighted Mysterious Footprints of mythical beast 'Yeti'," an apparently serious -- though misspelled -- tweet on the army's official account said yesterday, alongside three images of prints in the snow.

It added the "elusive snowman has only been sighted at Makalu-Barun National Park in the past", referring to footprints reported by British explorer Eric Shipton in 1951 on the west side of Mount Everest.

According to folklore, the abominable snowman lives in the Himalayas but no proof of the enormous creature has ever been produced.

Social media users were quick to jump on the Indian military for its tweet.

"With all due respect, institutions such as yours should be more responsible and careful before going ahead and declaring the sighting of any footprints as 'Yeti's!'", said Kushal Prajapati.

done on Bigfoot/Yeti (including sighting/footprints) with none proving its existence," he added.

"Seriously disappointing to see Army propagating such foolish myths into reality. Expected better from you guys," said another comment.

Several Twitter observers asked why there was only one footprint when the beast would probably have had two feet.

Others, were more forgiving, though still tongue-in-cheek.

"Congratulations, we are always proud of you. salutes to the #IndianArmy Mountaineering Expedition Team," wrote Tarun Vijay, a leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

But Vijay said the snowman should not be referred to as "a beast".

The army said the footprints measured 32 inches by 15 inches (81 centimetres by 38) and were spotted by a team on April 9 close to the Makalu Base Camp, an isolated area on the Nepal-China frontier.

An army official told AFP that pictures were released to "excite a bit of a scientific temper".

"We will share whatever we get with the domain experts to analyse. We will be contacting



Several Twitter observers asked why there was only one footprint when the beast would probably have had two feet

the team on the satphone in the evening for more details about it. The idea is to find out more, to look for an answer," the official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The yeti is traditionally described as an ape-like creature, taller than a human, that lives in the Himalayas, Siberia, and parts of Central and East Asia.

Most scientists have written the creature off as a centuries-old myth originating in Tibet.

Forensic results of previous samples have proved to be from prehistoric bears.



Large footprints are seen in the snow, sighted by the Indian Army, near the Makalu Base Camp in the North-Eastern Himalayas.

Ukraine says radiation safe after nuclear plant fire
Kiev, Ukraine

Ukrainian officials said yesterday that radiation levels remained safe after a fire broke out at a nuclear power plant, leading to the shutdown of one of the reactors.

The fire, which was extinguished within an hour, began late Monday at the Rivne nuclear power station in western Ukraine, around 300 kilometres (190 miles) from Kiev.

It erupted in an electrical transformer, triggering the reactor protection system and "the third reactor was turned off," Ilona Zayets, a spokeswoman for the state nuclear agency Energoatom, said yesterday.

"Radiation levels have not risen," she said, adding that no one was hurt as a result of the incident.

The level of seriousness of the incident on the international scale for emergencies at nuclear stations is zero, the nuclear agency said in a statement.