

# Twelve killed in Myanmar military plane crash

Plane loses communication in bad weather as it was making landing approach

● The plane was carrying six military personnel in addition to two monks and six devotees

Reuters | Yangon

Twelve people were killed when a Myanmar military plane carrying a senior monk and several donors to a religious event crashed in a central region of the country, a junta spokesman said yesterday.

The plane, which was carrying six crew and eight passengers, crashed shortly before it was due to land in the city of Pyin Oo Lwin, spokesman Zaw Min Tun said in a statement, blaming "bad weather".

Footage broadcast by local media showed wreckage strewn around the twisted body of a plane lying on open ground near overhead pylons, and a small plume of smoke billowing upwards. AFP was unable to verify the footage.

Emergency responders had been able to rescue a boy and a sergeant from the plane's crew, the statement said, adding they had been sent to a nearby military hospital for treatment.

Kavisara, a prominent monk from the Zay Kone monastery near the capital Naypyidaw, and seven donors had been on board, travelling to Pyin Oo



military and locals stand beside the wreckage of a Myanmar Air Force Beechcraft 1900 that crashed in Pyin Oo Lwin

Lwin to open a religious event, it said.

Pyin Oo Lwin is home to the Defence Services Academy, where the military's top brass are trained. Junta leader Min Aung Hlaing is a graduate.

He visited the monastery and paid homage to its chief monk on February 3, state media reported, two days after ousting civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi from power in a coup.

Myanmar has been in turmoil since, with mass protests convulsing daily life and sending its economy spiralling.

The country's Buddhist monkhood led an earlier strug-

gle against military rule but is split on the coup that ended the country's nascent democracy, with some prominent religious leaders defending the new junta.

The military has sought to quell mass anti-coup protests with bloody crackdowns that have killed more than 800 civilians, according to a local monitoring group.

This has prompted civilians in some townships to form "defence forces", while some of Myanmar's ethnic rebel armies have stepped up offensives against the military.

Last month, the Kachin Inde-

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

Myanmar's Buddhist monkhood led an earlier struggle against military rule but is split on the coup that ended the country's nascent democracy in February

pendence Army -- an ethnic rebel group that has waged a decades-long insurgency against the military -- downed an army helicopter during fierce clashes.

Plane crashes are common in Myanmar, which has an underdeveloped aviation sector, and the country's monsoon season has caused problems for commercial and military flights in the past.

A military plane crashed into the Andaman Sea in 2017, killing all 122 people on board in one of the deadliest aviation accidents in the country's history. Authorities blamed bad weather.

And in 2015, an Air Bagan passenger plane veered off the runway amid bad weather and heavy rain. A passenger and a person on the ground were killed.

## Regime shelling kills 10 in northwest Syria: monitor



Syrians on a motorbike drive past the carcass of a charred car

AFP | Beirut

Syrian regime shelling on the opposition-held Idlib enclave killed 10 people yesterday, one of the deadliest violations of a 15-month-old ceasefire, a war monitor said.

An AFP correspondent in the area saw the remains of a house destroyed by the rocket fire as well as a charred vehicle parked outside.

The bodies of several victims were lined on the floor and covered with blankets.

The incident started with rocket fire near the village of Iblin, which lies around 25 kilometres (15 miles) southwest of the city of Idlib.

The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said three civilians, including a man, a woman and her child, were killed in the shelling, which occurred near the line separating regime forces from the opposition-held enclave.

A second attack killed seven people who had gathered at the site of the first, said the monitor.

They were all members or affiliates of the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance, a jihadist organisation that includes ex-members of Syria's former

**BETTER YOU KNOW**

The attack was one of the deadliest since a March 2020 ceasefire, which was brokered by the conflict's main Russian and Turkish brokers and has largely held since

Al-Qaeda franchise, the Observatory said.

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An HTS spokesman and an HTS media coordinator were among the seven killed, added the Observatory.

In a statement sent to local journalists over Whatsapp, HTS confirmed that three of its members were among those killed.

## From village to conservation forest, Indonesian orangutan finds a new home

Reuters | Jakarta

An adult male orangutan has been released into an Indonesian national park by conservationists and the government after he was caught eating a villager's coconut plants on Borneo island.

As the orangutan habitat diminishes due to land use, conflicts between communities and the great apes have increased. Indonesia has designated several areas in Kalimantan as safe havens for Borneo orangutans, which are on the World Wildlife Fund's endangered list.

Conservationists found Jala eating a villager's coconut plants after residents reported seeing the orangutan near their gardens in March.

They monitored the ape, whom they estimated to be about 15 years old, for a month before transporting him to the Tanagupa conservation forest in the Gunung Palung National Park, in west Kalimantan.

At the end of the lengthy journey, including a boat ride into the jungle, Jala bounded out of the transport crate and climbed nimbly up a tree.

Karme L. Sanchez, director of the International Animal Rescue Indonesia conservation programme, thanked the village residents for reporting the orangutan rather than taking



Jala, a male adult orangutan, climbs a tree after leaving a cage

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KARMELE L. SANCHEZ, DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL ANIMAL RESCUE INDONESIA

action themselves.

"We are very happy that people are aware and understand how to deal with potential conflicts of this nature," she said.

Jala's arrival marks the second relocation of an orangutan to the national park this year, a park official said.

Survey results and habitat feasibility studies have deemed Tanagupa forest a suitable area to resettle orangutans, as it is far from human settlements, has an abundance of foraging plants and a low density of resident orangutans.

Conservationists hope the dedicated habitats will help sustain Indonesia's orangutans. There are an estimated 104,700 Bornean orangutans, less than half the 230,000 a century ago, according to the World Wildlife Fund.

## Former PM nicknamed 'Fist' wins Mongolia presidential election

AFP | Seoul

Mongolia's new president Khurelsukh Ukhnaa is a macho character who has been photographed topless on horseback Putin-style, and became known as "Fist" after punching a parliamentarian.

The former prime minister won nearly 70 percent of the vote in the presidential election, preliminary results showed yesterday, with historically low voter turnout for the third election in two years.

The country went to the polls Wednesday to replace populist businessman Battulga Khaltmaa -- a former world champion on the martial art of sambo who cannot run for a second presidential term under constitutional rules.

In the early hours of yesterday, Khurelsukh declared a decisive victory after getting nearly 70 percent of votes cast.

"From the bottom of my heart, I thank my fellow Mongolians," he said.

Enkhbat Dangaasuren, his main rival, gathered only around a fifth of the votes and conceded defeat.

Khurelsukh has cultivated a macho persona, complete with photos of him posing shirtless with a hunting gun -- similar to the famous images of Russian



Mongolia's newly elected president Khurelsukh Ukhnaa delivers a speech

**YOU KNOW WHAT**

Khurelsukh Ukhnaa got the nickname "Fist" after a video of him punching a member of parliament went viral in 2012

leader Vladimir Putin.

He also got the nickname "Fist" after a video of him punching a member of parlia-

ment went viral in 2012.

Khurelsukh has since tried to clean up his image, and this is the first presidential win in 12 years for his Mongolian People's Party -- but voter turnout was just 59 percent out of around two million eligible voters.

He resigned as prime minister in January following protests and public outrage over the treatment of a coronavirus patient and her newborn baby.

Landlocked Mongolia, wedged between China and Russia, has struggled with political instability since it became a democracy. Its first constitution was passed in 1992 after decades of communist rule.