

Massacre toll in Mali cut to 35

● Twenty-four of the dead were children

● The killings stirred fears of tit-for-tat violence in the region

● The government had given a provisional figure of 95 dead and 19 missing.

Bamako, Mali

A massacre at a village in central Mali that according to early estimates killed 95 people left 35 dead, the authorities said Wednesday, giving a final toll.

Twenty-four of the dead were children, the government said in a statement which added that six people had been detained "following routine checks".

Gunmen late Sunday surrounded the village of Sobane Da, in an ethnic Dogon enclave, killing inhabitants and torching homes in a seven-hour assault, survivors said.

The killings stirred fears of tit-for-tat violence in the region, an ethnic patchwork where tensions have soared since the emergence of a violent jihadist-led movement in 2015.

The government had given a provisional figure of 95 dead and 19 missing.

That toll was based on early information from soldiers and



Officials and residents stand near ashes in the Dogon village of Sobane-Kou, near Sangha, after an attack



A destroyed home is seen in the Dogon village of Sobane-Kou.

“About a hundred women had succeeded in fleeing to the village of Koundo, and this was one of the causes of the confusion”

A GOVT OFFICIAL

the district mayor who visited the village, which is also known as Sobane-Kou.

But by Monday night there was some doubt and the revised figure was confirmed the following day, officials said.

"This number is based on a painstaking count carried out by a team comprising officials from the (Malian) civil protection force, forensic doctors (and) the public prosecutor of Mopti" region, Wednesday's statement

said. About a hundred women had succeeded in fleeing to the village of Koundo, and this was one of the causes of the confusion, it said.

The government, referring to the risk of another turn in the cycle of violence, also urged local people "not to fall into the trap of guilt by association and revenge."

Ethnic violence in central Mali surged after a predominantly Fulani jihadist group led by preacher Amadou Koufa

emerged in 2015.

On May 16, the UN peacekeeping mission in Mali, MINUSMA, announced it had recorded "at least 488 deaths" in attacks on Fulanis in the central regions of Mopti and Segou since January 2018.

Armed Fulanis "caused 63 deaths" among civilians in the Mopti region over the same timespan, it said.

In the bloodiest raid, about 160 Fulani villagers were slaughtered on March 23 at Ogossagou,

near the border with Burkina Faso, by suspected Dogon hunters. The Fulani are primarily cattle breeders and traders, while the Bambara and Dogon are traditionally sedentary farmers.

In the heart of the Sahel, Mali is one of the world's poorest countries. Unrest in its volatile central region coincides with an ongoing jihadist campaign that the government is struggling to contain, despite military support from France and UN peacekeepers.

Toothpaste firm up for auction on Chinese shopping portal



Taobao is auctioning the well-known toothpaste brand, Tianqi, and its manufacturer, Guangxi Aqili, at a starting price of Rmb163m (\$23.6m) Bloomberg

Shanghai, China

A toothpaste company has been put up for auction on e-commerce giant Alibaba's Taobao, an immensely popular shopping portal in China which sells everything from mundane household items to jumbo jets.

Tianqi toothpaste, a household name in China, and its manufacturer Guangxi Aqili were listed for auction on Tuesday at a starting price of 163.24 million yuan (\$23.6 million).

The package on offer included 57 trademarks related to Tianqi, industrial real estate and production equipment, according to the auction notice, which did not explain why the company was being sold or why Taobao was chosen for the transaction.

The company went unsold in the first round, after only two buyers signed up. The auction terms require the successful bidder to resume production

of Tianqi a month after the sale.

Tianqi was most popular in the early 2000s, but has since faded away with competitors chomping away at its market share.

The auction notice yesterday did not say if the sale would be attempted again.

Taobao is estimated to hold a huge chunk of the consumer-to-consumer market in China, and handles billions of dollars in transactions for everything from jewellery and company shares to helicopters -- and even bottled flatulence.

Among its users are courts trying to auction assets of bankrupt businesses, including the 2017 sale of a defunct cargo company's 747 freight planes.

The platform started its judicial sales platform in 2012, according to China's official Xinhua news agency, and most courts have registered with it, saving buyers billions -- Taobao says it does not charge commission fees.

India unveils spacecraft for moon-landing mission



Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) scientists work on the orbiter vehicle of 'Chandrayaan-2'

Bangalore, India

India yesterday unveiled a spacecraft which is expected to take off for the moon next month, making the country only the fourth to achieve the feat. The mission is India's second to the moon, and if successful it will put the nation in the league of the US, the former Soviet Union and China.

Named Chandrayaan-2, the craft is made up of an orbiter, a lander and a rover developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).

It will be launched from Sriharikota space centre on July 15 and is expected to land near the lunar South Pole on September 6.

Once it touches down, the rover will carry out experiments while being controlled remotely by ISRO scientists.

"It is going to be the most complex mission ever undertaken by ISRO," chairman K. Sivan was quoted as saying by

local media.

"The aim is to use space technology for the benefit of the common man."

India has made giant strides in its space journey in recent years. It launched a record 104 satellites in a single mission in 2017, and has also built a reputation for low-cost space exploration and science missions.



In March, the country said it had destroyed a low-orbiting satellite in a missile test to prove the nation was among the world's most advanced space powers.

Boy dies of Ebola in Uganda as virus spreads from DR Congo

Kampala, Uganda

A five-year-old boy who tested positive for Ebola in Uganda has died, a health ministry official told AFP Wednesday as two of his family members also tested positive for the virus after a visit to neighbouring Democratic Republic of Congo.

The World Health Organisation confirmed on Twitter that Uganda has now recorded

three cases of Ebola, in the first spread across the country's porous western border with the DRC where more than 2,000 cases of the highly contagious virus have been registered.

Uganda's health ministry said on Tuesday that a woman of Congolese origin, who is married to a Ugandan, had gone with her child and four other family members to take care of her father in the DRC, who later died of Ebola.

More than 200 arrested at Moscow police abuse march

Moscow, Russia

More than 200 people including opposition leader Alexei Navalny were detained yesterday as police sought to break up a peaceful Moscow rally against the alleged impunity of law enforcement agencies.

Russian police in riot gear moved in against the unsanctioned march of more 1,000 people amid screams of protesters shouting "you are criminals" and "stop police terror."

Moscow police said around 1,200 took part in the march and more than 200 people were arrested.

As police dragged protesters into vans the crowd yelled: "Shame, on Russia Day, this is our country's day! Have you forgotten the constitution?"

Some of the arrested wore T-shirts in support of Ivan Gol-



Protesters gather as they take part in a march to protest against the alleged impunity of law enforcement agencies in central Moscow

unov, an investigative journalist who was last week arrested on trumped-up drugs charges.

One detained activist brandished a placard saying, "I am Ivan Golunov" in the window of a police van.

At least four journalists were detained including a producer for Der Spiegel, a German news magazine.