

# False alarm sets off nuclear scare in Canada

AFP | Montreal

An alert signaling an incident at a major nuclear power plant near Toronto in Canada was sent in error to millions of residents Sunday, causing a scare and prompting calls for an investigation.

The emergency alert went out shortly before 7:30 am (1230 GMT). Though intended for residents living within a 10-kilometer (six-mile) radius of the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station, it went to all residents

in Ontario province.

About an hour later, the Ontario Power Generation company that manages the nuclear plant announced on Twitter that the alert was issued by mistake.

"There is NO active nuclear situation taking place at the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station," it said.

"The previous alert was issued in error. There is no danger to the public or environment."

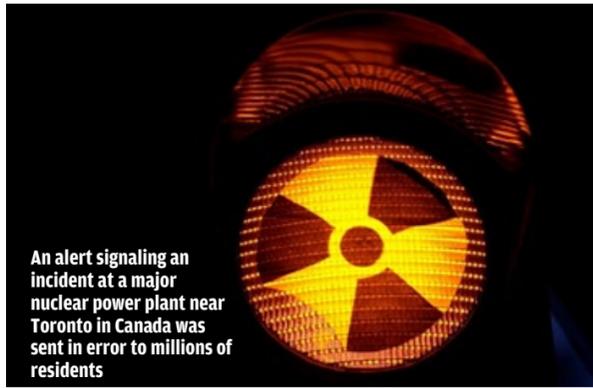
The Ontario provincial government apologized, saying the alert was issued during a routine

training exercise.

"The Government of Ontario sincerely apologizes for raising public concern and has begun a full investigation to determine how this error happened," Solicitor General Sylvia Jones said.

One of the world's largest nuclear power plants, the Pickering facility is located about 50 kilometers east of Toronto, Canada's most populous city, with three million inhabitants.

Several local officials, including Pickering mayor Dave Ryan, immediately demanded an ex-



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planation of the incident.

"Like many of you, I was very troubled to have received that emergency alert this morning," Ryan said on Twitter.

"While I am relieved that there was no actual emergency, I am upset that an error such as this occurred. I have spoken to the province and am demanding that a full investigation take place," he said.

Toronto mayor John Tory also called for a probe, saying area residents had been "unnecessarily alarmed by this event."

## Two WWII bombs made safe in Germany



Experts made safe two WWII bombs in Dortmund after the evacuation of around 14,000 people

● **Two unexploded bombs weighing 250 kilogrammes (550 pounds) each, one British and the other American, were found and made safe**

Berlin

Two World War II-era bombs were made safe in the western German city of Dortmund after around 14,000 people were evacuated, the city said Sunday.

Officials there warning on Saturday that unexploded bombs dropped by Allied forces during the war might be buried in four sites in a heavily populated part of the city centre.

Workers had detected

anomalies during construction work, they announced on the city's official Twitter.

Two unexploded bombs weighing 250 kilogrammes (550 pounds) each, one British and the other American, were found and made safe. Searches for another two suspected bombs turned up nothing.

The precautions included the evacuation of two hospitals and the interruption of rail traffic.

The discovery of World War II bombs is not uncommon in Germany.

Last September a 250-kilo bomb was made safe in Hanover, with 15,000 people evacuated.

And in Frankfurt, in 2017, some 65,000 people were evacuated when a 1.4 tonne bomb was found, the largest such operation since the end of the war in Europe in 1945.

## Ex-pope rejects opening up priesthood to married men

Rome

Former pope Benedict XVI has publicly urged his successor Pope Francis not to open the Catholic priesthood up to married men, in a plea that Sunday stunned Vatican experts.

The ex-pontiff, who retired in 2013, issued the defence of clerical celibacy in a book written with arch-conservative Cardinal Robert Sarah, extracts of which were published in exclusive by France's Le Figaro.

"I cannot keep silent!" Benedict wrote in the book, which follows an extraordinary meeting of bishops from the Amazonian at the Vatican last year that recommended the ordination of married men in certain circumstances.

The pope emeritus, 92, and Sarah from Guinea weighed in on the controversial question of whether or not to allow "viri probati" -- married "men of proven virtue" -- to join the priesthood.

Francis is currently considering allowing it in remote locations, such as the Amazon, where communities seldom have Mass due to a lack of priests, and is expected to publish his decision in the coming weeks.

The pair asked the whole Church not to be "swayed" by "bad pleas, theatrics, diabolical



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lies, fashionable errors that want to devalue priestly celibacy".

"It is urgent, necessary, that everyone, bishops, priests and laity, let themselves be guided once more by faith as they look upon the Church and on priestly celibacy that protects her mystery," they wrote.

They warned of priests "confused by the incessant questioning of their consecrated celibacy".

"The conjugal state concerns man in his totality, and since the service of the Lord also requires the total gift of man, it does not seem possible to realise the two vocations simultaneously," Benedict wrote.

Sarah insisted that while celibacy can be "a trial" it is also "a liberation".

### 'Serious breach'

Benedict, who was the first pontiff to resign in almost 600 years, at first withdrew to a life of quiet contemplation in the Vatican, but has increasingly begun to speak out on key Catholic issues.

He and Sarah insisted their plea was not a "political manoeuvre" or "power game".

But Vatican experts expressed astonishment that the retired pope would speak out on such a sensitive topic.

"Benedict XVI is really not breaking his silence because he (and his entourage) never felt bound to that promise. But this is a serious breach," Massimo Faggioli, who writes for La Croix, said on Twitter.

## Plea for New Zealand to house fire-threatened koalas



Koalas and their habitats have been hit hard by Australia's devastating bushfires Wellington

Thousands of people have signed a petition for koalas to be introduced to New Zealand to escape Australia's devastating bush fires, but the proposal has been given the thumbs down by officials.

A group calling itself the Koala Relocation Society said koalas were "functionally extinct in Australia" but could thrive in New Zealand which has nearly 30,000 hectares planted in eucalypts.

There have been estimates of up to a billion koalas and other animals affected by the fires raging across Australia and there are concerns about how the survivors will cope given the loss of vegetation.

As of midday Monday, the online petition had 7,500 signatures, but a spokesman for Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern told Television New Zealand that the government's focus was on helping to get the fires under control so koalas "can stay in their natural habitat".

## Historic German island is nursery for North Sea seals

Helgoland | Germany

The birthplace of Germany's national anthem and a practice bombing range for British airmen after World War II, Helgoland island in the North Sea turns cuddly at the turn of the year as grey seals arrive to give birth.

The Jordsand society, dedicated to preserving North Sea coastal life, has counted more than 520 births since November.

Dozens of tourists come each day to see the white-furred seal pups hop around the beach during the whelping season that lasts into January.

"They're so close and so live-ly. I often

watch them on TV, but it's much more exciting to come here," said Karin, who had made a long trip to the island, also spelled Heligoland in English, from Essen in western Germany.

But two local rangers and Jordsand volunteers must keep the excited fans at a distance of at least 30 metres (100 feet).

Adult seals can grow as large as 300 kilogrammes (660 pounds) and won't hesitate to bite if they feel threatened.

"Sometimes, the tourists forget the restrictions and get too close.

If the seals get

**Adult seals can grow as large as 300 kilogrammes (660 pounds) and won't hesitate to bite if they feel threatened.**

too used to people, that has negative consequences in summer," said ranger Ute Pausch.

"They'll want to play in the water and they can injure swimmers."

Wooden boardwalks have been set up to corral the tourists during whelping season.

The challenge has become all the greater as seal numbers have

grown in response to rising water temperatures.

Researchers say climate change is behind waters growing 1.6 degrees Celsius (2.9 degrees Fahrenheit) warmer in the past 45 years.

Now, "the seals are more and more numerous, I think it's because there's more food around," said Elmar Ballstaedt, who works for the Jordsand society.

But potential negative effects of global warming could one day outweigh the bonanza for the sea-dwell-

ing mammals, he warned.

"We're at sea level here. If the water rises, we'll certainly have new challenges to overcome," Ballstaedt said.

In the nearer term, the seal year is just getting started on Helgoland.

After three weeks nursing with their mothers, the pups are left to fend for themselves in the North Sea.

But they return to the island in the spring to moult -- and to take another turn in front of crowds of tourists and photographers.



Grey seals come to Helgoland island in the North Sea to give birth