

Afghan finds 500-kg Soviet bomb in garden: police



Picture for representation

AFP | Ghazni, Afghanistan

An unexploded Soviet-era bomb weighing 500 kilograms (around 1,100 pounds) was discovered in a private garden in eastern Afghanistan, police said Thursday.

More than 45,000 Afghans have been killed or injured by explosive remnants of war and mines since Soviet troops withdrew in 1989, according to the United Nations Mine Action Service.

On Wednesday, a resident found "a suspicious object in the garden area inside the yard of his house", said Khalid Sarhadi, police spokesperson in

Ghazni province. The security forces and a demining team from the Danish Refugee Council went to the home in Sir village, Sarhadi told AFP.

"A 500-kilogram bomb from the Soviet era was discovered, transferred to a mountainous area, and detonated safely," the police spokesperson added.

Soviet troops pulled out from Afghanistan after a nearly decade-long occupation, but successive wars followed.

Despite unexploded ordnance remaining across the country, the number of teams deployed to tackle the problem has been slashed by 64 percent over the past two years, Nick Pond, head of the Mine Action Section of the UN mission in Afghanistan, told AFP in June.

Heavy rain soaks eastern Japan, prompting highest-level warning

AFP | Chiba, Japan

Torrential rain pummelled eastern Japan on Thursday, triggering landslides and power outages, and prompting the weather authority to issue its highest-level heavy rain warning for the region for the first time.

Footage from public broadcaster NHK showed cars submerged in floodwaters in a residential area in the city of Kashiwa, Chiba region.

"This is shaping up to be an unprecedented level of heavy rain," a Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) official told a news conference.

In areas hit by the localised rainfall, "lives may be in imminent danger. Please secure your safety immediately," the official said.

More than 100,000 households, mostly in Chiba, but also in the Ibaraki and Saitama regions, were urged to evacuate, according to the disaster management agency.



Hundreds of people were left stranded in Chiba station due to suspended train services, an AFP journalist saw.

In the hour leading up to 9:00 pm (1200 GMT), approximately 100 millimetres (3.9 inches) of rain fell in the vicinity of Sakura city, Chiba, NHK reported, citing JMA. The JMA issued its highest-level heavy rain warning for the Chiba region for the first time ever, the JMA official told reporters.

The agency's top-level warning typically indicates a high likelihood of an imminent disaster due to heavy rain.

'How many will die?': the mysterious ailment killing Kenyan elephants

AFP | Kimana, Kenya

Lying on the ground and kicking up a cloud of dust, the elephant slowly exhausted himself in futile attempts to stand, the latest potential victim of a still-mysterious ailment in southern Kenya.

Distressed vets administered a glucose injection -- the only option, given that the cause of the ailment remains unknown -- to the 11-year-old male, known as Genghis Khan, who was struggling to breathe.

The mystery affliction has killed at least 19 pachyderms, mostly females or young males, since June in Kenya -- with all of the animals exhibiting identical symptoms, including partial paralysis.

Elephant herds have made Amboseli -- overlooked by Africa's highest peak, Mount Kilimanjaro in Tanzania -- a



lucrative tourist hotspot and the mysterious deaths in the region are a sensitive issue in a country where tourism is a huge source of revenue.

"You would find one struggling for a day, struggling for two or even three days. Until they completely die," said Patrick Papatiti, head of operations for Olgulului communal lands, which includes the Kitenden B reserve where Genghis Khan was found.

Japan protests Putin's first visit to disputed islands



Russia's President Vladimir Putin tastes caviar as he visits the Yasny fish processing factory on Iturup island, one of four islands in the Kuril Islands

● The Kremlin posted a video of Putin on one of the four main islands, with Russian media saying he visited a fish-processing plant and showing him trying local caviar.

AFP | Moscow, Russia

President Vladimir Putin visited Russia's far-eastern Kuril islands for the first time yesterday, prompting protests by Japan which also claims the territory.

The Kremlin posted a video of Putin on one of the four main islands, with Russian media saying he visited a fish-processing plant and showing him trying local caviar.

It was the first visit by a Russian president since Dmitry Medvedev in 2010.

"The Northern Territories are an inherent part of Japan's territory, both historically and under international law," Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi told reporters.

Putin's visit "offends the sentiments of the Japanese

people and is absolutely unacceptable," she said, adding that it "made it more difficult to restore relations in the medium to long term."

Putin travelled to the Kuril Islands after visiting the nearby Russian island of Sakhalin on Wednesday, where Russia's navy was conducting drills. In Sakhalin, Putin, 73, held a meeting "on ensuring the security of Russia's eastern borders," state media reported.

After the visit to the Kuril Islands, Japan's Foreign Minister Toshimitsu Motegi summoned Russian ambassador to Japan Nikolai Nozdrev to lodge a "strong protest" against Putin's surprise move.

Motegi told the ambassador in the meeting that Putin's visit would "have an extremely negative impact on Japan-Russia relations" already complicated by Moscow's offensive on Ukraine, according to the ministry's statement.

Russia's embassy in Japan said the ambassador had said the islands were "an integral part of the Russian Federation," that their "status is not subject to doubt" and that Putin's travel there was not "a matter for discussion with foreign states".

● Settlers at Qusra near Nablus since Sunday have blockaded Palestinian homes

● Witnesses said that the settlers remained on rocks on a nearby hill

● Huckabee said there was "no excuse for such thuggish behaviour".

AFP | Qusra, Palestinian Territories

Israeli forces yesterday moved against rogue settlers laying siege to Palestinians amid unusually strong US criticism, even as Israel inaugurated an emblematic settlement elsewhere in the West Bank.

Settlers at Qusra near Nablus since Sunday have blockaded Palestinian homes, including one owned by a US citizen, with

5000

More than 500,000 Israelis live in settlements in the West Bank, which are illegal under international law, among some three million Palestinians in the territory.



Israeli settlers walk on a newly built road after the reopening of a settlement at Ganim in the Israeli-occupied West Bank

residents saying they have been cut off from food and other supplies.

The Israeli military said it sent forces to the area overnight and dismantled two outposts, detaining one Israeli. Troops remained in place to "protect the residents and maintain security", the military said.

Witnesses said that the settlers remained on rocks on a nearby hill, even after troops removed their tent and blankets.

"So far, no one has been able to get food and supplies to us because the area is completely sealed off by the army," said Aisha Hassan, trapped in one of the besieged houses.

The US ambassador to Isra-

el, Mike Huckabee, for years a staunch supporter of settlers, said there was "no excuse for such thuggish behaviour".

"Actions by those who carried out this horrific act of terror meant to intimidate and harass this family are disgusting," Huckabee wrote on X.

Huckabee said Israel had intervened at the request of the United States, its crucial ally.

Video footage published over the weekend appeared to show Israeli forces praying alongside the settlers, leading the army to say it would take action.

The army also said it would let residents stay in their homes, after the mayor of Qusra said troops gave temporary evacu-

ation orders so they could operate.

The UN Human Rights Office in the occupied Palestinian territory on Thursday called on the Israeli authorities to "immediately" act against the settlers.

"These criminal actions by the settlers, supported or acquiesced to by Israel, the occupying power, are making life unbearable for these Palestinian families, and are clearly aimed at forcing them to leave their homes and land," it said in a statement.

EU foreign policy spokeswoman Annita Hipper called on Israel to take "concrete action to prevent settler violence".

Romania begins shutdown of nuclear plant due to low Danube

AFP | Bucharest, Romania

Romania began Thursday the complete shutdown of its only nuclear plant after water levels in the Danube, used to cool the site, fell to a record low, the national nuclear energy company said.

Nuclearelectrica already shut down last month one of the two reactors at the Cernavoda power plant, which usually generates a fifth of the East-



ern European country's total electricity. The second needed to shut as well "due to the significant and ongoing drop in the water level of the River Danube", it said in a statement.

"Nuclearelectrica SA announces that, on the morning of 13 August 2026, it began the procedures for the controlled shutdown of Unit 2 at the Cernavoda Nuclear Power Plant," it said.