

Japan sends in troops after typhoon kills 30

Reuters | Tokyo

Japan sent tens of thousands of troops and rescue workers yesterday to save stranded residents and fight floods caused by one of the worst typhoons to hit the country in recent history.

At least 30 people were killed in the typhoon that left vast sections of towns under water, public broadcaster NHK said. Another 15 were missing and 177 injured by Typhoon Hagibis, which paralyzed Tokyo on Saturday and dumped record levels of rain around Japan. About 100,000 homes were left without power.

Rescue efforts were hindered after more than 20 rivers in central and northeastern Japan burst their banks and dozens more overflowed although their banks were still in tact, NHK said, adding that flooding rivers could cause more damage.

Evacuation centers filled with residents, while some people perished as they sought shelter, NHK said, adding a 77-year-old woman fell about 40 meters to her death during an airlift.

Some of the worst damage hit the central Japanese city of Nagano, where the Chikuma River inundated swaths of land and forced military helicopters to airlift people from homes.

Kiyokazu Shimokawa, 71, speaking at an evacuation center, said he had waited all night with his wife and mother until they were finally rescued around 3 p.m. (0600 GMT) on Sunday.

"I made the mistake of figuring that as long as we were on the second floor of the house, we'd be fine," he told Reuters. "When we realized that maybe we should evacuate, it was too late - the water rose very quickly."

Rie Hasegawa, a woman in her 30s, said she never imagined her landlocked town would be inundated. "The force of the water was incredible. It was dark,



A local resident is rescued by Japanese Self-Defence Forces soldiers from area flooded by Abukuma river



An aerial view shows residential areas flooded by the Chikuma river, central Japan



Japanese Defence-force soldiers rescuing local residents in Miyagi prefecture



Hagibis, which means "speed" in the Philippine language Tagalog, made landfall on Japan's main island of Honshu on Saturday evening and headed out to sea early yesterday, leaving behind cloudless skies and high temperatures across the country

frightening, and I thought this might be the end," she said.

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of Honshu on Saturday evening and headed out to sea early yesterday.

Help promised

The storm sank a Panama-reg-

istered cargo ship that had anchored near Tokyo. The sunken ship was located early on Sunday. A newspaper reported that at least five of the 12 crew were dead and three were missing.

Prime Minister Shinzo Abe held an emergency ministerial meeting and sent the minister in charge of disaster management to affected areas. The government also set up a task force to deal with the damage.

"The government will do everything in its power to cooperate with relevant agencies and operators working to restore services as soon as possible," the prime minister said.

In Fukushima, north of the capital, Tokyo Electric Power Co reported irregular readings from sensors monitoring water in its Fukushima Daiichi nuclear

plant overnight. The plant was crippled by a 2011 earthquake and tsunami.

Landing restrictions at Tokyo's Narita and Haneda airports were lifted but more than 800 flights were canceled for the day, NHK said. Some Shinkansen bullet train services to the worst-hit areas were also disrupted.

The Rugby World Cup match between Namibia and Canada scheduled for Sunday in Kamaiishi, northeastern Japan, was canceled, but the Japan-Scotland match in Yokohama, south of Tokyo, went ahead. Japan won their clash.

Media mogul, academic face off as Tunisians choose president

AFP | Tunis

Tunisians voted yesterday in a presidential runoff pitting a conservative academic against a media magnate fresh out of jail, reflecting a shift in the country's political landscape.

The political newcomers swept aside the old guard in the first round, highlighting voter anger over a stagnant economy, joblessness and poor public services.

"There is a lot of unemployment, so we need a president who works hard for the economy," said Ibdisseme Adaili, who cast her ballot in the capital Tunis.

Adding controversy and suspense to the contest, presidential contender Nabil Karoui only walked free on Wednesday, having spent more than a month behind bars on suspicion of money-laundering.

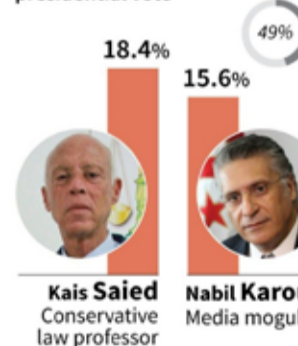
The poll, Tunisia's second free presidential election since the 2011 revolt, follows the death of president Beji Caid Essebsi in July.

Exit polls are expected on Sunday evening and official results by Tuesday.

In one polling station, voters said they were divided between

Tunisian election

Results of 1st-round presidential vote



Tunisians are voting in their second free presidential election since the 2011 revolt



Presidential contender Nabil Karoui only walked free days before the vote having spent more than a month behind bars on suspicion of money-laundering



Presidential candidate Kais Saied called on Tunisians to cast their vote "in complete freedom"

"the one who will apply the law" and the one "who helps the poor," referring to a charity television show that boosted Karoui's popularity.

"Today is a chance to recover our Tunisia, the modern Tunisia that is for women... not the Tunisia that frightens us," said Karoui after casting his vote in Tunis.

Some Tunisians organised car-sharing and free transport for students who have to travel far to their hometowns to cast their ballots.

"I am doing it out of love for my country. I support the one who embodies hope for Tunisia," said taxi driver Bakri who was offering free rides to Saied

supporters between Tunis and the coastal city of Nabeul.

At the Ban Alouia terminal in Tunis, 35-year-old Reda joined the crowds to catch a bus to his hometown of Kabylie, 450 kilometres (280 miles) away.

"It is important to vote... it is a duty. The two candidates are very different. One could help the country advance, the other sink it," he said.

The runoff outcome remains uncertain, with a ban on opinion polls, but Karoui received

a boost with his newly formed party, Qalb Tounes (Heart of Tunisia), coming second in legislative elections a week earlier.

Saied topped the first round in the presidential election, held on September 15, with 18.4 percent of votes, while Karoui followed with 15.6 percent.

Nearly half of eligible voters cast their ballots in that round.

Officials said turnout in the runoff was 17.8 percent by noon, higher than at the same time during the first round.