

Mali must appoint civilian govt immediately, says regional bloc

Reuters | Accra

Mali's military coup leaders must hand over power to a civilian transitional government immediately, the chairman of the West African regional bloc said on Tuesday, as a deadline expired for the ruling junta to appoint interim leaders.

The 15-member Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed economic sanctions after the Aug. 18 overthrow of President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, and said a new president should be appointed by Tuesday.

But the junta pushed through a charter on Saturday that says the interim president can be a soldier or a civilian and has not yet indicated when the new government would be named.

Regional presidents met junta leaders on Tuesday in Ghana in an attempt to quicken the transition. "Today is supposed to be the day that the junta is to put in place a government, which should respond to the criteria we set out in August. That has not been met," said Ghana President Nana Akufo-Addo, the acting ECOWAS chair, before the start of talks.

"That country can no longer afford any delay in putting a responsible government in place," he said. West African leaders



Colonel Malick Diaw, one of the junta leaders of the National Committee for the Salvation of the People (CNSP), which overthrew Mali's President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, attends a meeting with representatives of political parties and civil society.

have not said what the consequences would be for failing to meet the deadline. The existing sanctions include border closures and the suspension of financial flows.

The charter approved at multi-party talks in Mali also calls for an 18-month transition, while ECOWAS had said that fresh elections should be held within a year.

Regional leaders fear the coup could set a dangerous precedent in West Africa and undermine a fight in Mali and neighbouring countries in the Sahel region against Islamist militants with links to al Qaeda and Islamic State.



News in brief



◆ EU observers are free to visit Xinjiang to "truly understand" the situation in the northwestern region where Beijing is accused of widespread rights abuses against the Uighur population, China said yesterday. Rights groups say over a million Uighurs languish in political reeducation camps, while a campaign of forced assimilation has targeted academics, religious leaders and activists from mostly Muslim minority groups. China has rebuffed past calls to grant independent access to Xinjiang, and the spokesman didn't confirm that EU observers would be allowed to travel freely in the region.

China says EU observers free to visit Xinjiang

◆ Pompeo says fewer than 200 al Qaeda left in Afghanistan

◆ US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said yesterday that there are fewer



than 200 al Qaeda left in Afghanistan today. Pompeo was speaking at an Atlantic Council event.

◆ Delegations from Yemen's warring parties will meet tomorrow in Switzerland to discuss a United Nations-backed agreement on prisoner releases, a Houthi spokesman and a UN source said yesterday.

Yemen warring parties to travel to Switzerland to discuss prisoner releases

The two delegations, which had been meeting in Jordan, are flying on Wednesday to Switzerland for a week-long talks to finalise a deal on prisoner releases, the UN source said. Mohammed Abdulsalam, chief negotiator of the Houthi movement said his group's committee is set to leave Sanaa on a UN plane.

Donald Trump vows '1,000 times greater' response to any Iran attack



President Donald Trump has vowed to hit back at Iran if the Islamic republic strikes at the United States

AFP News

US President Donald Trump yesterday vowed that any attack by Iran would be met with a response "1,000 times greater in magnitude," after reports that Iran planned to avenge the killing of top general Qasem Soleimani.

A US media report, quoting unnamed officials, said that an alleged Iranian plot to assassinate the US ambassador to South Africa was planned before the presidential election in November.

"According to press reports, Iran may be planning an assassination, or other attack, against the United States in retaliation for the killing of terrorist leader Soleimani," Trump tweeted.

"Any attack by Iran, in any form, against the United States will be met with an attack on Iran that will be 1,000 times greater in magnitude!"

Relations between Washington and Tehran have been tense since the Iranian revolution, and have spiralled since Trump unilaterally pulled out of a landmark international nuclear deal with Iran in May 2018.

In January, a US drone strike killed Soleimani in Baghdad, and Washington is pushing to extend an arms embargo on Iran that starts to progressively expire in October as well as reimposing UN sanctions on the Islamic republic.

The Iranian navy last week said it drove off American aircraft that flew close to an area where military exercises were underway near the Strait of Hormuz.

The military said three US aircraft were detected by Iran's air force radars after they entered the country's air defence identification zone.

China says Covid-19 vaccine could be ready for public by November

● Chinese officials didn't specify which vaccine they are referring to

● Official said Phase 3 clinical trial is progressing

AFP News

A China-developed coronavirus vaccine could be ready for the public as early as November, a Chinese official has told state television, as the global race to clear the final round of trials heats up.

Chinese manufacturers have been bullish about development, with companies Sinovac Biotech and Sinopharm even putting their vaccine candidates on display at a trade fair in Beijing this month.

Representatives of the firms said that they hope their vaccines will be approved after phase 3 trials as early as year-end.

And on late Monday, the chief biosafety expert at the Chinese Centre for Disease Control told state broadcaster CCTV that a vaccine would be available to the general public "around November or December."

Wu Guizhen did not specify which vaccine she was referring to, but said "based on the phase 3 clinical results, the current



Chinese manufacturers have been bullish about development, with companies Sinovac Biotech and Sinopharm even putting their vaccine candidates on display at a trade fair in Beijing this month

progress is very smooth."

Wu added that she had taken a vaccine in April and has felt good over the past few months, although she did not specify which candidate she had taken.

There are currently nine vaccine candidates in late-stage human trials, although some have hit recent obstacles -- pharma giant AstraZeneca and Oxford University momentarily paused clinical trials last week after a volunteer developed an unexplained illness.

Some of China's vaccine candidates have already been of-



A Sinovac spokesman said this month that "tens of thousands" of people had voluntarily taken its vaccine, including 90 per cent of its employees and their families -- between 2,000 and 3,000 people

ferred to essential workers under an emergency use programme.

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their families -- between 2,000 and 3,000 people.

In June, China's military approved a vaccine for use within its ranks developed by its research unit and a biotech firm.