

News in brief

El Salvador orders arrest of ex-President Sanchez Ceren in graft probe

El Salvador has



ordered the arrest of former President Salvador Sanchez Ceren and nine top officials from a past administration as part of a money laundering and corruption probe, the Attorney General's office said. The office said Sanchez Ceren was out of the country, but six former high-ranking members of President Mauricio Funes's government from 2009 to 2014 have been detained.

Ecuador declared a state of emergency in its penitentiary system after riots at two prisons left 22 dead and 57 wounded.

President Guillermo Lasso issued the order "to mobilize all necessary human and economic resources to re-establish order" in Ecuador's prisons. Lasso said the military would be in charge of controlling the prison perimeter and entry, while police officers would control the inside. Until now civilians trained as prison guards were in charge of indoor security.

Ecuador declares emergency after 22 killed in prison riots



Russia's Trans-Siberian railway blocked after flooding damages bridge

Flooding has damaged a bridge on Russia's Trans-



Siberian railway in its Far East, suspending traffic in the area, officials said, and President Vladimir Putin said full track repair would take five days. The world's longest railway is a strategic transportation artery for the Russian economy, taking not just passengers but commodities such as oil, timber and coal between Europe and Asia.

Nigeria has received six of 12 turboprop light attack aircraft from the United States to help fight mounting insecurity, its air force said.

Africa's most populous nation faces several security crises, including a 12-year-old jihadist insurgency in the northeast, herder-farmer clashes in the centre, kidnapping for ransom in the northwest and separatist agitation in the south.

Nigeria receives six warplanes from US to fight insurgency



Pope Francis will skip a Mass on Sunday that he had been scheduled to say before his recent surgery, but the Vatican said there was no cause for alarm and that it was part of normal convalescence. The Vatican said the pope will go ahead with his Sunday noon prayer but that a Mass for the Catholic Church day to pay homage to the elderly and grandparents will be said instead by Archbishop Rino Fisichella.



Crypto crackdown: Malaysian police steamroll bitcoin machines

AFP | Kuala Lumpur

Malaysian police hit on a novel way to dispose of more than 1,000 bitcoin-mining machines seized in raids -- they crushed the devices using a steamroller.

Authorities on Borneo island discovered the machines, worth an estimated 5.3 million ringgit (\$1.25 million), in crackdowns between February and April.

Eight people were arrested for allegedly stealing the equivalent of \$2 million worth of electricity to power the energy-hungry computers, according to police.

"The crypto-miners stole electricity," said Hakemal Hawari, a senior police official in the city of Miri, where the devices were seized.

"Their actions are dangerous for life and property, as they can cause power outages."

The 1,069 mining machines were laid out in a car park of a police station in Miri last week and crushed with a steamroller.

Six of those arrested were convicted of stealing electricity, jailed for six months and fined.

Crypto-mining -- the process by which computers mint new virtual currency and validate transactions -- requires vast amounts of energy and processing power.



Malaysian police in Borneo destroy seized bitcoin-mining machines

1,069

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HAKEMAL HAWARI, A SENIOR POLICE OFFICIAL

The process typically involves large numbers of sophisticated computers that form a specially designed "rig" that runs the complex calculations required to maintain a cryptocurrency network.

Bitcoin mining is common

in the Southeast Asian nation, and there are regular reports of police arresting crypto-miners and seizing their rigs. While energy-hungry, the process can be lucrative with each bitcoin currently worth more than \$32,000.

Great Barrier Reef avoids UNESCO 'in danger' listing

AFP | London

Australia yesterday avoided having the Great Barrier Reef listed as an endangered world heritage site by UNESCO, despite concerns about climate change-fuelled damage to the ecosystem's corals.

At a World Heritage Committee meeting chaired by China, delegates voted not to downgrade the reef to "in danger", after a concerted lobbying effort by Canberra.

"May I sincerely thank the esteemed delegates for recognising Australia's commitment to protecting the Great Barrier Reef," Australia's Environment Minister Sussan Ley said in a statement to the body.

The United Nations' cultural agency had recommended in June that the reef's World Heritage status be downgraded because of its dramatic coral decline, largely due to the impacts of climate change and poor water quality.

Tim Badman, director of the International Union for Conservation of Nature's world heritage programme, argued that the reef "unambiguously" met the criteria for an endangered listing.

"Despite the major efforts that have been made by the state party, both the current status of the outstanding universal value of the Great Barrier Reef and the prospects for future recovery have significantly deteriorated," he said.

Ley had flown to Paris earlier this month to personally lobby member states on the committee, while Australia also took key ambassadors on a reef snorkelling trip.



An aerial view of the Great Barrier Reef off the coast of the Whitsunday Islands, along the central coast of Queensland

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TIM BADMAN, DIRECTOR OF THE INTERNATIONAL UNION FOR CONSERVATION OF NATURE'S WORLD HERITAGE PROGRAMME

The decision had already been postponed from 2015, when Australia successfully waged a similar diplomatic campaign and committed billions of dollars to reef protection.

But the 2,300-kilometre-long (1,400-mile-long) ecosystem has since suffered three mass coral bleaching events, which

are caused by rising ocean temperatures due to global warming.

Though government scientists say corals have shown signs of recovery in the past 12 months, they admit the reef's long-term outlook remains "very poor".

Two thirds of the reef is believed to have been damaged in some way.

As well as coral bleaching, the reef is also susceptible to damage from cyclones and outbreaks of crown-of-thorns starfish, which eat the coral.

UNESCO had accused Australia of failing to meet key water quality and land management targets, while also taking aim at the country for its lacklustre climate efforts.

Canberra is facing growing international criticism for refusing to commit to net zero emissions by 2050.

The conservative government has said it hopes to meet the target "as soon as possible" without harming the country's fossil fuel-reliant economy.

Dozens of landslides

Dams and rivers are "deployed to help evacuate"

Landslides and floods kill at least 44 in Maharashtra state after heavy rains

AFP | Mumbai

Forty-four people have been killed in landslides caused by monsoon rains in western India, authorities said yesterday.

As many as 38 others were missing after three separate landslides on Thursday evening in Maharashtra state's Raigad district, south of India's financial capital Mumbai.

"Forty-two people have died due to landslides in Raigad district and 38 people are still missing," state government spokesperson Anirudha Ashtaputre said. "There have been six more landslides in Satara district, where two people have died", he added.

Elsewhere in the state, up to 15 people were also missing.

The Navy and Air Force joined rescue efforts after the downpour caused floods that left thousands stranded, but their operations were hampered by landslides blocking roads, including the main highway between Mumbai and Goa.

Water levels rose to 3.5 metres (12 feet) in areas of Chiplun, a city 250 kilometres (160 miles) from Mumbai, following 24 hours of

Villagers flooded

Death toll stands at 56

AFP | Beijing

Villagers were evacuated yesterday as floods submerged swathes of central China following a historic deluge that claimed at least 56 lives -- while an approaching typhoon threatened to dump more rain on the stricken area.

Millions have been affected by the floods in Henan province, which have trapped people for days without fresh food or water and blocked roads as they breached embankments, caking large areas in thick ankle-deep mud.

The death toll is expected to rise, with provincial officials telling reporters yesterday that casualties were still being counted.

Adding to the misery, Typhoon In-Fa is forecast to bring further torrential downpours to parts of Henan in the coming days, state media said.

In the worst-hit city of Zhengzhou, firefighters yesterday continued to pump muddy water

COVID-19: Countries worst affected

Country	Total cases	Total deaths
1 USA	8,526,027	226,319
2 India	7,670,537	116,068
3 Brazil	5,274,817	154,888
4 Russia	1,447,335	24,952
5 Spain	1,029,668	34,210
6 Argentina	1,018,999	27,100
7 Colombia	974,139	29,272
8 France	930,745	33,885
9 Peru	874,118	33,875
10 Mexico	860,714	86,893
11 UK	762,542	43,967
12 South Africa	706,304	18,656
13 Iran	545,286	31,346
14 Chile	495,637	13,719

Global tally

41,192,932

Deaths

1,131,568

Recovered:

30,709,840

New cases

+168,201

New deaths

+2,720

Figures as of closing

Middle East

Country	Total cases	new cases	Total deaths	New Deaths	Total recovered	Active cases
Egypt	105,705		6,142		98,413	1,150
Saudi Arabia	343,373	+405	5,235	+18	329,715	8,423
UAE	119,132	+1,538	472	+2	111,814	6,846
Kuwait	118,531	+813	721	+7	109,916	7,894
Oman	111,484	+451	1,137	+15	97,367	12,980
Qatar	130,210	+266	225	+1	127,093	2,892