

Ecuador arrests
woman over alleged
iguana trafficking
AFP | Quito, Ecuador

Ecuadoran police arrested a Russian woman accused of attempting to smuggle 32 rare iguanas from the Galapagos archipelago, authorities said on Saturday.

Marine Galapagos iguanas are native to Ecuador's cherished archipelago, a UNESCO World Heritage Site famous for its unique flora and fauna located about 1,000 kilometers (620 miles) off the coast in the Pacific.

Police said the woman, who was traveling to Iceland, was arrested at Quito airport on Friday, after officers discovered the iguanas hidden in eight plastic boxes in a suitcase.

The iguanas were "in a weakened and dehydrated condition," the environment ministry said.

A judge ordered pre-trial detention for the woman over the alleged "crime against flora and wild fauna" on Saturday, the prosecutor's office said.

The case will be decided on September 18, it said in a post on X.

She could face up to three years in prison if found guilty.



Representative image

N. Korea
defence minister
dismissed: state
media

AFP | Seoul, South Korea

North Korea's defence minister has been dismissed as part of a reshuffle of the country's military leadership, state media reported Sunday.

The "structural reorganization plans" were decided during a meeting on Saturday led by Kim Jong Un, the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

No Kwang Chol was not only dismissed as defence minister but also demoted in the ruling party leadership to "first vice-director of the Munitions Industry Department," KCNA said.

Kim Song Gi, director of the General Political Bureau of the Korean People's Army, was named as the new defence minister.

Another senior official, defence advisor Pak Jong Chon, was given the position of vice-chairman of the Central Military Commission and named to the ruling party's Political Bureau.

Several other promotions were also announced.

Rescuers dig into tunnel as missing toll from flood tops 3,000

● Nepal said it had begun the grim task of burying some of the hundreds of bodies

● Nepali army troops and engineers also drilled through debris yesterday towards hydropower workers believed trapped in a tunnel

AFP | Bidur, Nepal

Rescuers in Nepal and China battled through leg-sucking mud, as well as the threat of rising rivers and a newly formed lake, yesterday to search for thousands missing after a deadly wall of water and debris swept through the Himalayas, engulfing entire villages.

Latest figures from both countries put the number of missing at 3,048, including hundreds of foreigners. There were 797 confirmed deaths, with reports of some bodies possibly swept downstream as far away as India.

Nepal said it had begun the grim task of burying some of the hundreds of bodies yesterday, after first taking DNA samples so that families could later reclaim them and perform traditional funeral rites once they had been identified.

The disaster, which struck the China-Nepal border Wednesday morning, was caused by a glacial collapse, sending a wall of water and debris downstream, the US Geological Survey said.

Nepali army troops and engineers also drilled through debris yesterday towards hydropower workers believed trapped in a tunnel at the Trishuli 3A hydroelectric site in the Himalayan river valley after they successfully inserted a pipe into the passage.

They have "started sending air through the small opening", Nepali Home Minister Sudan Gurung said in a statement.

Overnight rain and rising river waters hampered efforts earlier on Sunday, filling the excavation area with water before conditions eased, the Nepal army said.

Nepal's disaster authority listed 933 hydropower workers among the missing in an area home to vast energy infrastructure projects.

Chinese rescuers near the Tibet border port that was hit by a deadly mudslide were "moved to a safe location" on Sunday after a new lake was formed by a landslide, state media reported.

China's state news agen-

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An overflowing Trishuli River (L) and houses covered in mud (R) in the aftermath of flash floods at Baireni in Nepal's Dhading district



A torrent of muddy water surging past houses and through the Trishuli river in the aftermath of flash floods, at Betrawati in Nepal's Nuwakot district



The damaged Ghatbesi Bridge over the Trishuli River in the aftermath of flash floods in Nepal's Dhading district

cy Xinhua reported on Sunday that experts had said "a glacier on the southern slope of Lirung Peak in Nepal" fractured, triggering an ice-rock avalanche.

The torrent plummeted rapidly, forming a massive debris flow that travelled more than

20 kilometres (12 miles) before crashing into Gyirong Port.

"The sudden glacial collapse and flash flood is a devastating reminder of how fragile these mountain environments can be," UN climate chief Simon Stiell said in a statement.

'Nothing left'

Survivors face an agonising wait to learn the fate of missing relatives and the prospect of rebuilding their lives from nothing.

"All the settlements near the river were swept away," resident

Buddhi Ram Dangol told AFP in Nepal's Nuwakot district.

"There is nothing left."

Worried relatives crowded around lists of rescued people pasted on a wall at an army base serving as a rescue hub in the district capital Bidur.

Nepal's disaster authority said on Sunday 592 foreigners, including trekkers and Hindu pilgrims to Tibet's sacred Mount Kailash, were among the missing. The Isha Foundation, led by Indian guru Sadhguru, said in an Instagram post on Saturday that 80 members had been on a group trip in the area.

"At this time, there seems to be no encouraging indications of survivors at the immigration office area," it said.

The United States and Canada said they would provide \$3.6 million each in humanitarian aid to Nepal.

The UK has offered \$6.8 million, while the UN released \$2.5 million in emergency funding, and aid pledges were made by the European Union, the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and others. Nepal's economy is already under pressure, with limited resources to respond to a disaster of this scale. Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal said the reconstruction bill could run into "billions of dollars".

He appealed for specialised assistance, including heavy-lift drones and technology to help locate people who are trapped.

Malaysia said it would send search-and-rescue specialists to assist.

Khanal also called for forensic testing kits to identify corpses and freezer units to store them, saying bodies that have been in water could decompose at a faster rate.

The deluge of ice and mud caused huge lakes, and one of those formations has become a risk for further floods.

The Chinese and Nepali foreign ministers spoke on Saturday and discussed sharing satellite and hydrological data, both sides said.

In Tibet, where Chinese authorities are the only source of information, rescue operations were paused at the hardest-hit area of Gyirong because of the risk of more flooding from a newly formed lake.

However, state broadcaster CCTV said late on Saturday that the lake was "discharging naturally" and had been "essentially drained", citing China's ministry of water resources.

A total of 2,141 rescuers were near the Gyirong site, the Xinhua state news agency said.

Pilgrimage route

Nepal reported a death toll of 781 people yesterday, with 2,502 people unaccounted for.

Across the border in Tibet, 16 people died and 546 remain missing, CCTV reported.

Authorities also said they had evacuated 555 stranded tourists and 499 Chinese residents from Tibet.