

Myanmar Leader Aung San Suu Kyi Moved To House Arrest Due To Heatwave

Myanmar's former leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been moved from prison to house arrest as a health measure amid severe heatwave, The Guardian said in a report.

It quoted a spokesperson of the military junta as saying that it was trying to prevent heatstroke among "all those who need necessary precautions, especially elderly prisoners".

The outlet said both Suu Kyi and president U Win Myint, 72, have been moved from prison.

However, it is not clear where they have been taken.

Win Myint is serving an eight-year prison sentence in Taungoo in Myanmar's Bago Region.

Al-Jazeera quoted Myanmar's meteorological department as saying that capital Naypyidaw saw temperatures of 39 degrees Celsius on Tuesday.

United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has previously called for her release, and the cases have been criticised by human rights experts.

In September last year, Aung San Suu Kyi's son Kim Aris said she had such serious gum disease that she was struggling to eat.

"Nobody outside the prison has seen her for a long time.

Now, being unable to eat puts her life at risk.

Given how many people lose their lives in prison in Burma (Myanmar's former name), this is of grave concern," he told The Guardian.

Mr Aris said her lawyers had not been able to meet with her.

Nobel laureate Suu Kyi is serving 27 years in detention at an undisclosed location for a multitude of offences her supporters say are fabricated. Both the leaders have been held since military seized power in a coup in February 2021. The coup triggered a huge outpouring of public opposition, which the military attempted to crush with force, unleashing a spiralling conflict that has left more than 4,800 civilians dead.

The army is now struggling to maintain its grip on the country in the face of resistance from civilian anti-junta fighters and long-established ethnic minority armed groups.

Dubai Under Water, Metro Station Submerged, Cars Abandoned On Road

Heavy rain threw life into disarray in Dubai on Tuesday, crippling the city of skyscrapers and submerging its metro stations. Flights were impacted, and so was the road traffic as the city looked the exact opposite of its lavish facade.

The flash floods revealed an unusual image of Dubai, including a waterlogged metro station where passengers navigated in ankle-deep water.

The ground floor of the station was entirely inundated with water seeping into the sides of the escalators. Outside, cars were submerged. Roads resembled pools with reflections of high-rises all around, essentially locking its thousands of residents to their homes.

"I am sure these people are not going to reach home today. This road has turned into a river," remarked a woman while filming an arterial road choked due to traffic - from her terrace.

She also pointed to a submerged Land Cruiser, whose passengers had to be rescued through the sunroof. The flood was completely drowned. Highways and airports are now under water. 18 people died in Dubai due to dire situation.

A close-up view of another road showed cars piled up, abandoned by their owners as they were almost under water.

This was a pretty intense sight watching the storm over Dubai today. Dubai, which has the world's busiest air hub for international passengers, also had to divert several inbound flights.

Delays and cancellations marred operations at the Dubai International Airport. The access roads leading to the airport were also inundated. Planes were seen taxiing on flooded runways and cars half-submerged at the airport's parking lot.

Several other city landmarks - including flagship shopping centres like Dubai Mall and Mall of the Emirates - were flooded as well.

Residential communities faced hardships, struggling with leakages from roofs, doors, and windows.

US, China Defence Chiefs Hold Talks For First Time In 18 Months



WASHINGTON: US Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin spoke with his Chinese counterpart Dong Jun via video teleconference Tuesday, in the first substantive talks between the superpowers' defence chiefs in nearly 18 months. The United States has been working to strengthen defence cooperation with its allies in the Asia-Pacific region to counter China's growing influence but also wants to maintain lines of communication with Beijing to prevent tensions from spiralling out of control. "The two officials discussed US-PRC defence relations and regional and global security issues," the Pentagon said in a statement, referring to the People's Republic of China.

"Secretary Austin emphasized the importance of continuing to open lines of military-to-military communication between the United States and the PRC" following talks between the two sides in recent months, the statement said.

Austin also "reiterated that the United States will continue to fly, sail, and operate -- safely and responsibly -- wherever international law allows," and "underscored the importance of respect for high seas freedom of navigation guaranteed under international law, especially in the South China Sea."

Beijing, in turn, said Dong had used the talks to call for greater "trust" between the two powers. "China and the United States should... take peace as the most precious, stability as the most important," Dong told Austin, according to a Beijing readout. "The military sphere is the key... to stabilizing the development of the relationship and preventing major crises from occurring," Dong said.

But he also warned the US over the self-ruled island of Taiwan, which Beijing claims as its own. "Dong Jun emphasized that the Taiwan issue is the core of China's core interests," the defence ministry readout said. He also urged the US to respect his country's position on the South China Sea, which Beijing claims

almost in its entirety and where tensions have flared in recent months.

"The US side should recognize China's firm position, respect China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests in the South China Sea, and take practical actions to safeguard regional peace," Dong said. Austin's last significant interaction with a Chinese counterpart occurred in November 2022 when he met with Wei Fenghe in Cambodia.

Wei was subsequently replaced by Li Shangfu, who shook hands and spoke briefly with Austin at a defence conference in Singapore last June but did not hold a formal meeting with the Pentagon chief. China was unwilling to agree to talks between Austin and Li while the latter was under American sanctions, a senior US defence official told journalists -- an obstacle that was removed when Li was replaced by Dong last year.

There are multiple points of contention between Washington and Beijing, especially over Taiwan, the democratic, self-ruled island, which China claims as part of its territory and has said it will not rule out using force to bring under its control. Beijing halted cooperation with the United States on issues including defence talks in August 2022 to express its displeasure over a visit by then-US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi to the island, but US President Joe Biden and his Chinese counterpart.

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How Joe Biden's Hometown Produces War Machinery For Ukraine

SCRANTON: In brick buildings that are more than a century old in Joe Biden's Rust Belt hometown of Scranton, Pennsylvania, dated machinery continues to churn out machinery for modern conflicts -- especially the war in Ukraine. The Scranton Army Ammunition Plant (SCAAP) is making steel tubes for 155 mm caliber shells, which are crucial to Kyiv's efforts to face down Moscow's invasion.

The tubes are then sent to Iowa, where they are loaded with explosives. "The fuse is installed in the field... for security reasons," Richard Hansen, a retired US Navy veteran who has been in charge of the facility since 2009, explained to AFP on Tuesday during a tour for a small group of journalists.

The site, initially built in 1908 to construct and maintain steam locomotives, started its new life in munitions after being purchased by the US government in 1953.

Back then, it was used to make ammunition for use in the Korean War. Some of the manufacturing equipment in use today dates back nearly to that time. The buildings, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are hardly the



picture of 21st-century high-tech efficiency. There is no computer-aided automated production here. AI? Forget about it.

The red-hot steel tubes, just formed in three successive forges, are cooling for three hours in racks hanging from a conveyor belt in the factory's basement, before the next phase of production. The basement is a maze of dark nooks and crannies -- lit up from time to time by flame or searing metal.

Visitors have to pay close attention not to tumble into disused pits or trip on narrow staircases, all while enduring deafening noise -- despite earplugs -- and the smell of hot steel. The tubes are then treated in a variety of ways -- heat, ultrasound, polishing and submersion in oil, among others to remove the tiniest

flaw, inside and out, and identify any defects.

Measurements are checked from all angles several times, using tools that seem like they could be on display in a museum of antique hardware. At the end of the lines, the tubes are painted, to prevent them from rusting out in storage, and are then assigned a batch number for tracing and identification.

The final touch? A label that says "Remove before firing." "Never any incident with a shell has been traced back to this facility," Hansen notes. While Hansen is happy to talk about the plant's history or the production process, he is more tight-lipped about the number of tubes produced and how they are used on the battlefield.

The current contract is to make 24,000 tubes a month in

Snake On Japanese Bullet Train Causes Rare 17-Minute Hold-Up

TOKYO: Even small delays in Japan's much-vaunted bullet trains are rare, and more unusual still are snakes on board holding up the speedy "shinkansen" services.

On Tuesday evening, a passenger alerted security to a 40-centimetre (nearly 16-inch) serpent lurking on a train between Nagoya and Tokyo, resulting in a 17-minute hold-up. It was unclear whether the cold-blooded commuter was venomous or how it ended up on the train, and there was no injury or panic among passengers, a spokesman for Central Japan Railway Company told AFP. Shinkansen customers can bring small dogs, cats and other animals, including pigeons on board -- but not snakes. "It's difficult to imagine wild snakes somehow climbing onto the train at one of the stations. We have rules against bringing snakes into the shinkansen," the spokesman told AFP. "But we don't check passengers' baggage," he said.

The train was originally scheduled to go on to Osaka, but the company decided to use a different train for the trip, causing a delay of about 17 minutes, he said. Patrols by uniformed security guards onboard bullet trains were scaled up after a fatal stabbing in 2018 on a shinkansen that shocked normally ultra-safe Japan. Additional security was added for the Summer Olympics in 2021 and Group of Seven meetings last year. First launched in 1964, the shinkansen network has never suffered an accident resulting in any passenger fatalities or injuries.

Whistleblower Alleges UN Cover-Up Of "Special Favours" To China: Report

LONDON: Former Officer of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) employee Emma Reilly has levelled serious accusations against the United Nations, alleging a disturbing nexus between the OHCHR and the Chinese government.

The UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee has published written evidence received as part of its inquiry into international relations in the multilateral system.

Reilly, acting as a whistleblower, claimed that the OHCHR has been providing "dangerous favours" -- "being rendered by OHCHR to the Chinese government" and "these favours fall into a broader effort of the Chinese government to instrumentalise the UN to serve its national interests". Her evidence alleges a "UN cover-up of special favours for China," informed UK Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee in a press release.

Reilly alleged that "during the two-year negotiation of the Sustainable Development Goals" that "Beijing paid bribes to the two successive Presidents of the General Assembly who ultimately oversaw the process and had significant influence over the final texts put to the Assembly". Her evidence alleges that China "imposes a secret conditionality across UN agencies that the monies so provided may not be spent in states with diplomatic relations with Taiwan".

Her written evidence



includes allegations that "the Chief of the Human Rights Council Branch in OHCHR, a French national, was secretly providing China with advance information on which human rights activists planned to attend the Human Rights Council". It alleges that "UN officials at all levels deliberately lied to member states, including the UK delegation, who enquired about the UN policy of handing names - including of UK citizens and residents - to the PRC without their knowledge or consent," the release added.

Her evidence alleges that "in cases where China was provided with names of NGO delegates in advance by the UN Secretariat, the delegates have reported that family members were visited by Chinese police, forced to phone them to tell them to stop their advocacy, arbitrarily arrested, placed under house arrest for the period of the meeting, disappeared, sentenced to long prison terms without cause, tortured, or, as regards Uyghurs, put in concentration camps".

She alleges that "in some cases, their family members died in detention. In at least one case, a person named on China's list, who attended only a side event, later returned to China and died in detention". She alleges that "in at least one case, the Chinese government issued an Interpol red notice against an NGO delegate," it also said. Reilly alleges that "self-censorship extends to the Secretary-General... [who] stated that any resolution of my case would be 'difficult,' expressly due to the fact the favours I reported were accorded to the PRC."

The evidence includes allegations that "reports of both the WHO and [United Nations Environment Programme] UNEP on the origins of Covid were edited to reduce references to the possibility of a laboratory leak". The evidence also includes a submission from the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO). The FCDO's evidence says that China is working to "shape the multilateral.

Two Jailed After UK Police Raid Uncovers 70 Million Pounds Cocaine Hidden Inside Blocks Of Cheese

A man who imported cocaine with a street value exceeding 17 million pounds into the UK has been sentenced to prison following the discovery of the illicit substance concealed within blocks of cheese and bin bags, BBC reported.

Saleem Chaudhri was arrested during a raid on an industrial unit in Blackburn in May 2023.

The 46-year-old resident of Blackburn collaborated with courier Rieadul Mohabath, hailing from South Shields in Tyne and Wear, to amass a profit exceeding 70 million pounds between 2022 and 2023.

Both individuals pleaded guilty to conspiracy to supply cocaine at Preston Crown Court. Chaudhri received a sentence of 27 years and six months, while Mohabath, aged 28, was handed a 16-year prison term.

According to Lancashire Police, Chaudhri was observed "moments before his arrest" on 3 May, taking control of a Toyota Estate from a drug courier and driving it to the Old Fire Station in Blackburn.

Subsequently, law enforcement instructed him to open the shutters on his unit, where they discovered



478 pounds (217 kilograms) of cocaine, valued at over 17 million pounds.

A police spokesperson disclosed that portions of the narcotics were "concealed within blocks of Gouda cheese" imported from Belgium, with additional parcels found within black bin bags "prepared for transfer to couriers".

It was revealed that Chaudhri had arranged to deliver 148 pounds (67 kilograms) to one courier and 139 pounds (63 kilograms) to another on the day of his arrest.

Mohabath was later arrested at his residence in South Shields on 3 July.

During the operation, law enforcement discovered "a considerable sum of money, a cash counting device, and suspected Class A substances of different quantities," stated the spokesperson.

Additionally, a search at Chaudhri's residence in Waterside, Blackburn, uncovered an accumulation of nearly 10,000 pounds in cash. The inquiry into Chaudhri's activities revealed his involvement in agreeing to distribute over 4,400 pounds (2,000 kilograms) for a total exceeding 70 million pounds between September 2022 and May 2023.

Speaking after sentencing, Det Sgt Haydn Sibley said Chaudhri and his associates had gone "to great lengths to hide their product and with the amount of cocaine seized [which was] the biggest haul ever in Lancashire, you can understand why". "When we arrested Chaudhri, you could see by the look on his face that his world had crumbled," he said.

Israel Says 3 Hezbollah Fighters Killed In Airstrike In Lebanon

TEL AVIV: The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said that three Hezbollah fighters, including two commanders, were killed in its airstrikes in southern Lebanon on Tuesday, CNN reported.

According to the statement released by IDF, the "Commander of the Rockets and Missiles Unit of Radwan Forces' Western Region," Muhammad Hussein Shahouri, was killed in an airstrike in Kfar Dounine in south Lebanon." The IDF statement reads, "As part of his role, Muhammad planned and promoted rocket and missile launches toward Israeli territory from the areas of Lebanon's central and western regions."

According to the IDF, Mahmoud Ibrahim Fadlallah, "an operative of Hezbollah's Rockets and Missiles Unit," was also killed in the same airstrike. Earlier, the IDF, in a separate statement, announced that Ismail Youssef Bazz, "the commander of Hezbollah's coastal sector, in the area of Ain Ebel in Lebanon," was killed in its airstrike in southern Lebanon, CNN reported.

Hezbollah confirmed the deaths of its three fighters. However, it did not mention details regarding their ranks or the circumstances of their deaths. Meanwhile, the meeting between Israeli war cabinet officials over their

response to Iran's retaliatory strikes has ended, CNN reported, citing an Israeli official. The source did not mention further details regarding talks.

The discussion, which started at 12:30 pm (local time) was the fifth set of talks held by the war cabinet since the weekend after Iran launched a missile in retaliation to an alleged Israeli strike on an Iranian diplomatic building in Syria's capital, Damascus. Israel's allies and regional leaders have called for restraint as Tel Aviv plans its response to Tehran.

Earlier on Saturday, Iran launched several drones and missiles towards Israel in retaliation for the alleged Israeli air strike on its consulate in Syria that resulted in the killing of Iran's three top generals. The Times of Israel reported. On Sunday morning, Israel Defence Forces (IDF) spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari also said that 99 per cent of the 300 or so projectiles fired by Iran at Israel overnight were intercepted by air defences.

"This is a very significant strategic achievement," he said in a morning press statement. "The Iranian threat met the aerial and technological superiority of the IDF, combined with a strong fighting coalition, which together intercepted the vast majority of the threats," Hagari said.

Middle East Remains On Edge As Israel Vows "Response" To Iran Attack



JERUSALEM: Israel and Iran traded threats on Tuesday after Tehran's first-ever direct attack on its arch-foe sharply heightened regional tensions as the Gaza war ground on with no truce in sight. Israeli military spokesman Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari said Iran would not get off "scot-free" after Tehran and its allies launched a barrage of over 300 missiles, drones and rockets at Israel at the weekend.

"We cannot stand still from this kind of aggression," Hagari said, a day after Israel's military chief vowed there would be "a response" to Iran's offensive. Iran said its attack was an act of self-defence following a deadly Israeli air strike on its consulate in Syria, and that it would consider the matter "concluded" unless Israel retaliated.

Iran's President Ebrahim

Benjamin Netanyahu against "significant escalation" and said now was a moment for "calm heads to prevail".

Throughout, Israel has kept bombing targets in Gaza, the Hamas-ruled coastal territory that has been largely devastated by more than six months of war and a siege on its 2.4 million people.

Since the Iranian attack, Netanyahu has twice convened his war cabinet, set up after Palestinian militant group Hamas launched the October 7 attack that sparked the bloodiest ever Gaza war.

Israel was weighing its options after the Iranian drone and missile onslaught, which caused little damage as Israeli defences intercepted most projectiles, helped by US, British and French forces as well as regional allies. It remained unclear when Israel might strike and whether it would target Iran directly or attack its interests or allies abroad in places such as Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen.

Iran-backed armed groups across the region have carried out attacks since the Israel-Hamas war broke out. Hezbollah, which has been trading regular cross-border fire with Israel since October, claimed an attack with two explosive drones near a northern Israeli town on Tuesday.

Raisi warned that "the slightest action against Iran's interests will definitely be met with a severe, extensive and painful response". US President Joe Biden has stressed that "the United States is committed to Israel's security" and wants to prevent the conflict from spreading. Washington, Israel's top ally and arms supplier, has made clear it will not join Israel in any attack on their common adversary Iran, a senior US official said.

World leaders have urged restraint and de-escalation.

Explained: 2024 Paris Olympics In The Shadow Of International Conflict

PARIS: Even though the United Nations voted last year to observe the Olympic Truce, the Paris Games will still be held under the shadow of international conflict. The UN resolution was entitled "Building a peaceful and better world through sport and the Olympic ideal".

AFP looks at the ways the fighting in Ukraine and Middle East, as well as tensions with countries, notably Afghanistan, whose policies run counter to the Olympic charter, may cause issues for the Games, which run from July 26 to August 11.

Russia's persistent doping led to a ban on their Paralympic team at the Rio Games in 2016 and to bans on Russian athletes competing under their national flag at the 2021 Tokyo Games, and at both the 2018 Pyeongchang and 2022 Beijing Winter Games.

This time the issue is war, not drugs. On February 24, 2022, four days after the Beijing Olympics ended, and with the truce still in force, Russia invaded Ukraine.

The international outcry led to an immediate ban from most international sports on Russia and its Belarusian ally. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) suspended the Russian Olympic Committee last October for annexing the sports organi-

sations of four partly occupied Ukrainian regions.

On the other hand, the IOC is keen to protect individual Russian competitors under the "non-discrimination" clause in the Olympic Charter. It started orchestrating their return to competition in March 2023, and authorised their presence at the Games in December, on the condition they compete under a neutral flag, do not parade in the opening ceremony and prove they have not "actively supported the war in Ukraine" and are not tied to the army or security agencies. Ukraine is still urging a ban on Russians, but Kyiv abandoned its threat to boycott last summer. The IOC estimated in March that 36 Russians and 22 Belarusians should be able to qualify for Paris.

That leaves the recurring issue of how representatives of warring nations will co-exist at the Games. The IOC is striving to remain above the Gaza conflict, citing its implementation of the "two-state solution", a legacy of the 1993 Oslo peace process. The Israeli and Palestinian National Olympic Committees (NOCs) have co-existed in the IOC since 1995. Israel has not violated the Olympic truce and its NOC has not annexed any Palestinian sports organisations, but its retaliation.