



U.N.: Polio remains global emergency, eradication at risk

LONDON (AP) — The World Health Organization (WHO) says the ongoing attempt to eradicate polio remains a global emergency amid an increase in cases for the first time in years and a worrying number of outbreaks sparked by the vaccine. After a meeting convened by the U.N. health agency, experts said that failing to wipe out polio in the next few years could lead to a resurgence of the crippling disease. An international initiative to eradicate polio began in 1988 but efforts have stalled in war-torn countries and WHO and its partners have missed repeated deadlines to stop the virus. WHO said the polio epidemics in Afghanistan and Pakistan were particularly worrying. The number of cases in Afghanistan has almost doubled this year and polio is increasingly being found in the environment.

Tens of thousands demand rebuilding of Hindu temple

LUCKNOW, India (AP) — Tens of thousands of Hindus gathered in a northern Indian city to renew calls to build a Hindu temple on a site where a mosque was attacked and demolished in 1992, sparking deadly Hindu-Muslim violence. The gathering at Ayodhya, 350 miles east of New Delhi, brought Hindu holy men and activists to the town where the Hindu god Ram was believed to have been born. Hindu fundamentalists with pickaxes and crowbars razed the 16th-century Babri Mosque to the ground in December 1992. Hindu groups say the mosque was built after a temple dedicated to Ram was destroyed by Muslim invaders. The destruction of the mosque sparked riots across India that left at least 2,000 people dead.

Akihito performs last harvest ritual before abdication

TOKYO (AP) — Japanese Emperor Akihito gave thanks to the gods for a bountiful autumn harvest, the last time he performed one of the most important annual palace rites before abdicating next spring. Akihito conducted the Niiname ritual at an Imperial Palace shrine illuminated by torchlight as ancient music was played. He offered harvested rice and other items to the gods, thanking them and praying for peace for the nation. November 23 was Japan's national thanksgiving holiday. Some of the rice was harvested by Akihito from a field inside the palace grounds. The rest was offered by farmers from around the country. Ahead of the ritual, Akihito invited some farmers to ask about their harvests this year, according to Japanese media. Akihito is to abdicate on April 30 and will be succeeded the following day by his son, Crown Prince Naruhito. The religious harvest prayer is one of about 20 rituals that the emperor performs privately at the palace each year, separate from his official duties. The two-part ritual runs past midnight — including a three-hour interval — inside the unheated shrine, making it difficult for the 84-year-old emperor. In recent years, he has attended only the first half of the rite, with an aide performing the latter half. According to tradition, the emperor must sit straight with his legs tucked under him for nearly two hours while performing the ancient ritual.

8,000-strong U.N. peacekeeping standby force ready

BEIJING (AP) — China says it has assembled a standby force of thousands of United Nations peacekeepers, furthering its leading role in the global body's efforts to tamp down conflicts worldwide. Defense Ministry spokesman Ren Guoqiang told reporters that the 8,000-member force had passed an assessment approved by U.N. undersecretary-general for peacekeeping operations Jean-Pierre Lacroix. It fulfills a pledge made at the U.N. three years ago by Chinese President Xi Jinping. China provides the most peacekeepers of any permanent U.N. Security Council member and is the second-largest contributor to the operations' multibillion dollar budget, at slightly over 10 percent. Ren said China has also trained more than 1,500 peacekeepers from more than a dozen countries. The U.N. currently runs 15 peacekeeping missions, the bulk of them in Africa.

North Korea explodes 10 guard posts to lower tensions

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — South Korea says North Korea has blown up some of its own frontline guard posts as part of agreements to ease tensions in the rivals' heavily fortified border. The Defense Ministry said its military confirmed the dismantling of 10 North Korean guard posts. It said North Korea had informed the South of its plans in advance. In September, the Koreans agreed to dismantle all of its guard posts inside the 155-mile-long, 2.5-mile-wide border. They later each withdrew weapons and troops from 11 of their guard posts and decided to completely dismantle 10 of them. South Korea had been dismantling 10 of its guard posts with dynamite and excavators. The Koreans' border has been the site of numerous cases of deadly fighting and bloodshed.

Investigators say doomed Lion Air jet "airworthy"

JAKARTA, Indonesia (AP) — Investigators of the October 28 crash of a Lion Air flight into the Java Sea say the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft was deemed airworthy when it made its final takeoff from Jakarta. Officials summoned reporters to refute reports in a news conference the day before where some media reported they had said the plane was not airworthy when it took off. The investigators were reporting on data from the aircraft's black boxes. They say the cockpit voice recorder, which is still missing and being searched for, is needed to understand what caused the jet to plunge in the Java Sea just 11 minutes after takeoff. Investigator Nurcahyo Utomo said that based on test results after the aircraft's problems were repaired, the aircraft was declared airworthy.



TRIBUNAL TERMINATED. In this photo released by the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, Khieu Samphan, former Khmer Rouge head of state, sits in a courtroom before a hearing at the U.N.-backed war crimes tribunal in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. The international tribunal to judge the criminal responsibility of former Khmer Rouge leaders for the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million Cambodians held a session to deliver its verdicts on charges of genocide and other crimes. (Mark Peters/Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia via AP)

Cambodia says Khmer Rouge tribunal that convicted three is done

By **Sopheng Cheang**
The Associated Press

PHNOM PENH, Cambodia — Cambodia has reiterated it intends to end the work of the U.N.-backed tribunal that in November convicted the last two surviving leaders of the Khmer Rouge of genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

Deputy prime minister Sar Kheng said the tribunal's work was complete and there would not be any additional prosecutions for acts that led to the deaths of an estimated 1.7 million people in the 1970s. The only other person convicted was the regime's prisons chief.

He cited the terms under which the tribunal, staffed jointly by Cambodian and international prosecutors and judges, had been established, limiting its targets to senior leaders of the Khmer Rouge regime that was in power from 1975 to 1979. The rules also allow prosecuting those most responsible for carrying out atrocities.

Sar Kheng spoke at a government ceremony in the northern province of Oddar Meanchey and his remarks were reported later.

The tribunal convicted and gave life sentences to Nuon Chea, 92, the main Khmer Rouge ideologist and right-hand man to its late leader Pol Pot, and Khieu Samphan, 87, who was the regime's head of state. The sentences were merged with the life sentences they were already serving after an earlier conviction for crimes against humanity.

In nine years of hearings and at a cost exceeding \$300 million, the tribunal has

convicted only one other defendant, Kaing Guek Eav, alias Duch, who as head of the Khmer Rouge prison system ran the infamous Tuol Sleng torture center in Phnom Penh.

Cases of four more suspects, middle-ranking members of the Khmer Rouge, were already processed for prosecution but have been scuttled or stalled. Without the cooperation of the Cambodian members of the tribunal, no cases can go forward.

Long-serving Prime Minister Hun Sen has repeatedly declared there would be no more prosecutions, claiming they could cause unrest. Hun Sen himself was a mid-level commander with the Khmer Rouge before defecting while the group was still in power, and several senior members of his ruling Cambodian People's Party share similar backgrounds. He helped cement his political control by making alliances with other former Khmer Rouge commanders.

In his remarks, Sar Kheng sought to reassure former Khmer Rouge members that they would not face prosecution.

"Because there are some former Khmer Rouge officers living in this area, I would like to clarify that there will be no more investigations taking place (against lower-ranking Khmer Rouge members), so you don't have to worry," said Sar Kheng, who is also interior minister.

He acknowledged that even without more prosecutions, the tribunal still had to hear the appeals expected to be lodged by Nuon Chea and Khieu Samphan, but aside from that task, its work was finished.

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Units per U.S. dollar as of 11/30

Bangladesh Taka	79.386
Cambodian Riel	4032.6
China Renminbi	6.9557
Fijian Dollar	2.1284
Hong Kong Dollar	7.8165
Indian Rupee	69.614
Indonesian Rupiah	14338
Iranian Rial	42,025
Japanese Yen	113.56
Laos New Kip	8547.0
Malaysian Ringgit	4.1878
Nepal Rupee	112.09
Pakistani Rupee	136.8
Papua N.G. Kina	3.2681
Philippine Peso	52.352
Russian Ruble	66.967
Saudi Riyal	3.7483
Singapore Dollar	1.3686
South Korean Won	1119.1
Sri Lankan Rupee	178.92
Taiwan Dollar	30.805
Thai Baht	32.908
Vietnam Dong	23335