

## International

# More than 1,800 prisoners escape after gang attack on Nigeria jail

## Assailants engage prison guards in a gun battle and free inmates

ABUJA: More than 1,800 inmates have escaped after a heavily armed gang attacked a prison in southern Nigeria using explosives, correctional authorities said Monday, in one of the West African country's largest jailbreaks. The attackers blasted their way into the Owerri prison in Imo state, engaging guards in a gun battle and breaking out inmates, the national corrections authority said in a statement.

"I can confirm that the Imo State command of the Nigerian Correctional Service was attacked by unknown gunmen in Owerri," Imo state corrections service spokesman James Madugba told AFP, adding that the number of escaped inmates was yet to be confirmed. "The situation is under control," he said.

The assailants arrived in pickup trucks and buses before storming the facility, the correction authority said. No group claimed responsibility for the assault, though President Muhammadu Buhari called the attack an "act of terrorism" carried out by "anarchists" and urged security forces to capture the assailants and the escaped detainees. Prisons in Africa's most populous country are often overcrowded, and as many as 70 percent of inmates are on remand and can be held awaiting trial for years.

The governor of neighboring Abia state imposed a night curfew on two towns there, a statement said, to protect local residents without direct reference to the prison attack. Imo state is part of a region that has long been a hotbed for Nigerian separatist groups and where tensions between federal authorities and the indigenous Igbo population are often high.

The Indigenous People of Biafra (IPOB) separatist



More than 1,800 inmates have escaped from a prison in Nigeria after it was attacked by gunmen, officials say. —AFP

movement has recently been posting videos on social media of dozens of its militiamen in training. Authorities imposed a curfew on parts of Imo State earlier this year after clashes between the army and the local militia.

But IPOB spokesman Emmanuel Powerful rejected any involvement in the Imo prison attack in a statement sent to AFP, dismissing any accusations as "lies". Calls for a separate state of Biafra in the south are a sensitive

subject in Nigeria, after a unilateral declaration of independence from British rule in 1967 sparked a brutal 30-month civil war. Buhari is facing several security challenges including a more than decade-long jihadist insurgency in Nigeria's northeast, a spate of mass kidnappings by criminal gangs in the northwest and a surge in piracy on commercial shipping in the Gulf of Guinea off the coast. —AFP

## Kneeling on Floyd's neck violated policy, 'values': Police chief

MINNEAPOLIS: Minneapolis police chief Medaria Arradondo testified on Monday that officer Derek Chauvin violated the department's training policies and its "values" by kneeling on George Floyd's neck after he had stopped resisting. Arradondo, called as a prosecution witness at Chauvin's murder trial, said the use of force against Floyd was reasonable during the "first few seconds" of his May 25, 2020 arrest but it should have ended quickly. "It is contrary to our train-

ing to indefinitely place your knee on a prone, handcuffed individual for an indefinite length of time," the police chief of the Minnesota city said.

"That in no way, shape or form is anything that is by policy," he said. "It is not part of our training and it is certainly not part of our ethics or our values." "Once Mr. Floyd had stopped resisting, and certainly once he was in distress and trying to verbalize that, that should have stopped," Arradondo said.

The 45-year-old Chauvin, who is white, was seen in a video taken by a bystander kneeling on the neck of a handcuffed Floyd for more than nine minutes as the 46-year-old African-American man complained repeatedly that he "can't breathe." Arradondo, 54, Minneapolis's first Black police chief, fired Chauvin and the three other officers involved in the arrest that led to Floyd's death the day after the incident. —AFP



This NASA photo shows NASA's Ingenuity Mars Helicopter on the ground behind the Perseverance rover. —AFP

## NASA's Ingenuity helicopter survives first night on Mars

WASHINGTON: NASA's Ingenuity mini-helicopter has survived its first night alone on the frigid surface of Mars, the US space agency said, hailing it as "a major milestone" for the tiny craft as it prepares for its first flight. The ultra-light aircraft was dropped on the surface on Saturday after detaching from the belly of the Perseverance rover, which touched down on the Red Planet on February 18.

Detached from the Perseverance, Ingenuity had to rely on its own solar-powered battery to run a vital heater to protect its unshielded electrical components from freezing and cracking during the bitter Martian night, where temperatures can plunge as low as minus 130 degrees Fahrenheit (minus 90 degrees Celsius). Making it through the frigid Martian night was "a major milestone for the small rotorcraft," NASA said in a statement Monday.

"This is the first time that Ingenuity has been on its own on the surface of Mars," said MiMi Aung, Ingenuity project manager at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory.

"But we now have confirmation that we have the right insulation, the right heaters, and enough energy in its battery to survive the cold night, which is a big win for the team. We're excited to continue to prepare Ingenuity for its first flight test." Over the coming days, Ingenuity will undergo tests of its rotor blades and motors. If all goes well, Ingenuity is expected to make its first flight attempt no earlier than the evening of April 11, the Jet Propulsion Laboratory said. It will be the first aircraft to attempt powered, controlled flight on another planet.

### Tribute to Wright brothers

Ingenuity is carrying a small piece of cloth that covered one of the wings of the Wright brothers' first aircraft which achieved the first powered flight on Earth at Kitty Hawk in 1903, to pay tribute to the milestone. Its attempt will also coincide with the 60th anniversary of the first human space flight, by Soviet cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin on April 12, 1961, and 40th anniversary of the April 12, 1981 launch of the first space shuttle, Columbia. Ingenuity will be attempting to fly in an atmosphere that is one percent the density of Earth's, which makes achieving lift harder—but will be assisted by gravity that is one-third of our planet's. The first flight will involve climbing at a rate of about three feet (one meter) per second to a height of 10 feet (three meters), hovering there for 30 seconds, then descending back to the surface. Ingenuity will be taking high-resolution photography as it flies from its "airfield" in the Jezero Crater.

A series of flights are planned over its mission lasting 30 Martian sols (31 Earth days). "Our 30-sol test schedule is frontloaded with exciting milestones," said Teddy Tzanetos, Ingenuity deputy operations lead. "Whatever the future holds, we will acquire all the flight data we can within that timeframe."

The four-pound (1.8-kilogram) rotorcraft cost NASA around \$85 million to develop and is considered a proof of concept that could revolutionize space exploration.

Future aircraft could cover ground much quicker than rovers, and explore more rugged terrain. —AFP

## Three breakthroughs of the new government: making Vietnam become modern developed nation on the occasion of 100th anniversary State formation

In historic April, after the success of the 13th National Congress of the Communist Party of Vietnam (held in January 2021), Vietnam steadily implements and applies the Resolution of the XIII Congress Party into daily life. One of the most important and fundamental steps is to consolidate the senior leadership posts of the State apparatus and form a new Government. The Resolution of the 13th Congress Party clearly stated the orientation of major targets on socio-economic developments over the period of 5 years 2021-2025: The country's development orientation in the period of 2021-2030, with the goal achieved in 2025 to be a developing country, with industry in the modernization direction, surpassing the low-average income barrier in order to celebrate the 50th anniversary of National Reunification; by 2030 to become a developing country with modernised industry and high-average income in order to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Party's establishment; and to be a developed country with high income by 2045, on the occasion of the 100th anniversary formation of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. The new Government of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, headed by the new Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, is considered a dynamic, creative government with many new figures who have impressive experiences in several leadership posts at localities as well as at ministries.

New Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh, 63, is an Associate Professor, Doctor of Law, comes from the rich traditional land of revolution Thanh Hoa, used to be a Senior specialist in the Government Office and in charge of Economy, Science & Technology Research, former Provincial Party Secretary of Quang Ninh Province (2011 - 2015), home to two of the most dynamic border economic zones in Vietnam (Mong Cai, Van Don), also Ha Long Bay which is recognized by New 7 Wonders (N7W) as one of the 7 new natural wonders of the world.

Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and the new Government of Vietnam have identified three strategic breakthroughs in this term: Completing and synchronizing institution of development, first and foremost the institutions for the development of Socialist-oriented market economy; Renovating national



governance towards modernity and effectively competition; Focusing on completing and synchronizing, well-organized implementation of the legal system, mechanisms and policies; Creating a favorable, healthy and fair investment and business environment for all business sectors, boosting innovation & renovation; mobilizing, managing and effectively using all resources for development, especially land, finance, public-private cooperation and promoting decentralization; Developing high-quality human resources, prioritizing the development of human resources for leadership and management; Creating a strong, comprehensive, fundamental change in the quality of education and training associated with the institution and development of science - technology, innovation; inspiring aspirations for developing a prosperous country, promoting cultural values as well as Vietnamese human strength, solidarity and national pride in the cause of national construction and defense; Building a synchronous and modern infrastructure system both economically and socially; giving priority to the development of key transport projects to adapt to climate change and attach importance to developing information and telecommunications infrastructure, creating a national digital transformation platform, gradually developing the digital economy and digital society.

In the light of the Resolution of the 13th Congress Party, with the aspiration of building a mighty nation and the spirit of innovation, determination to inspire and develop a prosperous country, Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh and the new Government of Vietnam will definitely make a breakthrough in the cause of building and defending the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.

### News in brief

#### Taiwan imposes water rationing

TAIPEI: More than one million households and businesses in Taiwan's heavily industrialized central regions were put on water rationing yesterday, as the island battles its worst drought in 56 years. The shortage is expected to particularly impact the water-intensive microchip manufacturing sector during a global shortage of semiconductors that power everything from cars to iPhones and computers. The state water company is now cutting supplies in Taichung, Miaoli and northern Changhua county for two days a week, with the government warning it must "prepare for the worst". — AFP

#### Honduran president faces criticism

TEGUCIGALPA, Honduras: Dozens of Honduran civil society organizations on Monday demanded the "immediate" resignation of President Juan Orlando Hernandez and main government officials for having turned the country into a "narco-state." Hernandez's brother was sentenced to life in prison by a New York judge at the end of March for large-scale drug trafficking. During the trial, US prosecutors said the president had been a "co-conspirator" in Tony Hernandez's crimes. The organization leaders said they were "filled with indignation" in a statement released to "unconditionally demand... the immediate departure of Juan Orlando Hernandez from the government (and) the replacement of the high military command" that supports him. —AFP

#### Florida wastewater emergency crisis

TAMPA, US: Engineers on Monday ruled out a feared second breach in a Florida wastewater reservoir that risks flooding nearby communities with millions of gallons of contaminated water. The state Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) said experts were "on-site today evaluating conditions and determined the site was safe to continue work." Emergency workers, assisted by the Florida National Guard, have been pumping about 33 million gallons daily out of the wastewater reservoir, which has sprung a growing leak in its plastic lining. The water from the Piney Point site is being discharged into Tampa Bay. —AFP

#### Chile Senate approves vote delay

SANTIAGO: Chile's Senate on Monday agreed to postpone by five weeks an election to choose a commission to rewrite the country's dictatorship-era constitution, due to a surge in coronavirus infections. The election was originally due to take place on Sunday until President Sebastian Pinera proposed the delay a week ago. The Senate's decision must still be approved by the lower house of Congress. If it does, the election to decide the members of a Constituent Assembly that will rewrite the constitution—which has been in effect since the Augusto Pinochet dictatorship (1973-90) — will now take place on May 15 or 16. — AFP

#### Arkansas governor vetoes disputed bill

WASHINGTON: Arkansas governor Asa Hutchinson vetoed controversial legislation Monday that would have banned gender-confirming treatments for transgender youth and has made the state a front in what he called "the cultural war in America." Hutchinson, a conservative Republican, said the bill represented overreach by the state into the private affairs of transgender children, their parents and doctors. "If House Bill 1570 becomes law, then we are creating new standards of legislative interference with physicians and parents as they deal with some of the most complex and sensitive matters involving young people," he said. — AFP

## Despite cough, fever, Navalny continues hunger strike

MOSCOW: Jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny on Monday said he was suffering from a heavy cough and fever but would continue a hunger strike he launched last week demanding adequate medical treatment. Navalny, 44, announced the hunger strike last Wednesday, complaining a prison doctor had only given him painkillers as treatment for severe back pain and numbness in his legs.

His team the next day said he had already lost eight kilograms (18 pounds) before going on hunger strike-down from the 93 kilograms (205 pounds) he weighed when he arrived at his penal colony-due to sleep deprivation. In a post on his Instagram Monday, Navalny reported new ailments. "I am quoting the official data from today's temperature measurement: 'Navalny A.A., strong cough, temperature 38.1,'" he wrote, referring to degrees Celsius, or 100.6 degrees Fahrenheit.

"PS. I am continuing my hunger strike, of course," Navalny said. Later the pro-Kremlin Izvestia daily said that Navalny had been transferred to a medical unit for observation, with "signs of a respiratory problem, notably a high fever". —AFP