VOA NEWS

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From Washington, this is VOA news. I'm Richard Sheehe reporting.

The Kremlin hinted Tuesday at possible legal repercussion(s) for Russian opposition leader Alexi Navalny over his calls for a boycott of the March presidential election.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman wouldn't comment on the election commission's decision to bar him from running but said the calls for boycott are to be carefully studied to see if they are breaking the law.

As expected, Russia's top election body on Monday formally barred Navalny from a presidential run. He is an anti-corruption campaigner and Putin's most prominent rival.

He promptly put out a video statement saying that the ban shows "Putin is terribly scared and is afraid of running against me."

He called on supporters to stay away from the vote in protest.

Liberians went to the polls on Tuesday for a presidential election there, which they hope [which] will mark their first democratic transfer of power in more than seven decades despite allegations of fraud.

Candidates are bidding to succeed in a runoff vote delayed for more than a month after other candidates alleged widespread fraud in October's first round vote, a challenge to that (the )Supreme Court rejected last month.

Peru's ailing [leader] former President, Alberto Fujimori, on Tuesday asked for the public's forgiveness, two days after receiving a presidential pardon that sparked street protests.

He said he was aware that the results of his government were well received on one side, but "I admit that I've let down other compatriots." He asked for forgiveness.

The 79-year-old had been serving a 25-year sentence for corruption and human rights abuses committed during his time in office from 1990 to 2000.

He was transferred from prison to a hospital on Saturday after suffering from low blood pressure and an irregular heartbeat.

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A powerful storm that struck the Philippines killing at least 164 and leaving dozens more missing was downgraded officially to a tropical depression on Tuesday. The storm also failed to make landfall in Vietnam as some had feared.

As the search for the missing continues (in) the Philippines, others are getting their first look at the devastation caused by the storm.

Disaster officials said over 70,000 people had been forced from their homes in the southern Philippines following the weather disturbance.

Officials say that many residents did not heed warnings to evacuate and were later surprised by the strength of the storm.

The shops in Mali are full of imported goods from Europe, (the) Middle East and Asia and that's a sign of just how things have changed for Mali's economy.

As Bram Posthumus explains for us, Mali's captains of industry are trying to get more goods made locally.

This used to be a very familiar sound throughout most of Mali's territory. From Gao to Sikasso, factories produced a wide range of consumer goods. But a lot of that is gone.

"We are," says industry representative Cyril Achcar, "now essentially a nation of traders. There used to be industry, mostly run by the state. But eighty percent of that has disappeared. What's needed now is more government action to ensure that investments come, budding industries are protected and unfair competition is eliminated."

Made in Mali? As far as the country's industry leaders are concerned, all one has to do is believe in it.

Bram Posthumus, for VOA news, Bamako.

Egypt executed 15 Islamic militants convicted of carrying out a deadly attack on an army outpost in the Sinai Peninsula in 2013.

Tuesday's executions carried out simultaneously in two prisons located north of Cairo is the largest mass execution carried out in Egypt since six convicted jihadists were hanged in 2015.

All 15 militants executed on Tuesday were hanged as well.

Egypt's president has ordered the military to step up efforts to crush Islamic State militants following the massacre of more than 300 people in an attack on a Sinai mosque last month.

Sinai-based Islamic forces have killed hundreds of policemen, soldiers and civilians in the regions in recent years.

A British woman has been convicted in Egypt of trying to smuggle a banned prescription painkiller into the country.

A court sentenced 33-year-old Laura Plummer to a three-year prison term Tuesday. Plummer was arrested in October when she arrived in a resort city along the Red Sea and customs officers found hundreds of pills in her luggage.

She said she brought them for her boyfriend who suffers from chronic back pain.

She is appealing the verdict.

I'm Richard Sheehe in Washington.

That's the latest world news from VOA.