

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

Every major global climate record was broken last year and 2024 could be worse, the World Meteorological Organization said on Tuesday, with its chief voicing particular concern about ocean heat and shrinking sea ice.

[Ukraine ...]

It comes as the U.N. weather agency said in its annual State of the Global Climate report average temperatures hit the highest level in 174 years of record-keeping by a clear margin, reaching 1.45 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on Tuesday sought to convince European allies that President Joe Biden's administration is still committed to supporting Ukraine even as Washington has essentially run out of money to continue arming Kyiv. Reuters correspondent Chris Dignam has more.

"Ukraine won't back down, and neither will the United States."

But experts say Austin faced a skeptical audience at a meeting known as the Ukraine Defense Contact Group as the U.S. Congress continues to delay critical aid for Ukraine.

"The United States will not let Ukraine fail."

Austin did not say how the U.S. would support Ukraine without additional funding and did not specifically mention Congress. Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson has so far refused to call a vote on a bill that would provide \$60 billion more for Ukraine.

Reuters correspondent Chris Dignam.

Officials say Russia plans to evacuate about 9,000 children from a border region because it's being continuously shelled from the Ukrainian side. Kyiv's forces have been increasingly striking at targets beyond the front line and that's moved little after more than two years of war.

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Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spurned a plea from Joe Biden to call off a planned ground assault of Rafah, the last refuge in Gaza for more than a million displaced people, where Israel believes Hamas militants are holed up.

Netanyahu told lawmakers on Tuesday he had made it "supremely clear" to the U.S. president, quote, "that we are determined to complete the elimination of these battalions in Rafah, and there's no way to do that except by going in on the ground."

The two leaders spoke by phone on Monday.

Hamas is a U.S.-designated terrorist group.

The U.S. Supreme Court on Tuesday ruled a controversial Texas law criminalizing [unauthor...] unauthorized border crossings could go into effect for now. Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner reports.

The 6-3 decision rejects a request by President Joe Biden's administration to halt the law while its challenge to the statute proceeds in the lower courts.

"I have used a clause in the Constitution that empowers states to defend themselves."

That was Texas Governor Greg Abbott, almost two months after he signed SB 4, authorizing state law enforcement to arrest people suspected of entering the United States illegally, giving local officers powers long delegated to the U.S. government.

Abbott said the law was needed due to Biden's failure to enforce federal laws criminalizing illegal entry or re-entry, leaving Texas to "fend for itself."

The Biden administration sued to block the measure, arguing that the state law violates the U.S. Constitution and federal law by interfering with the U.S. government's power to regulate immigration.

Reuters correspondent Freddie Joyner.

Gambia's parliament moved to repeal its ban on female genital mutilation on Monday.

Lawmakers voted 42 - 4 to send the bill to a committee before returning it to parliament for a third reading.

Amnesty International says passing the bill would set a dangerous precedent for women's rights and tarnish Gambia's human rights record.

Supporters of the bill argue that the ban stops them from practicing a cultural and religious obligation.

The World Health Organization says the practice has no benefit.

Gambia's Parliament moved to repeal its ban on female genital mutilation on Monday. If approved, Gambia would be the first country to reverse the legal protection for millions of women and girls. Mohammed Yusuf reports.

Gambian lawmakers have voted overwhelmingly in favor of repealing a 2015 ban on female genital mutilation, which protected millions of women and girls from the practice. Supporters of the bill argued that the ban was stopping them from practicing their cultural and religious obligation that allows young girls and women to go through the practice.

The World Health Organization says the practice has no benefit.

The bill will go to a committee before returning to parliament for a third reading.

Mohammed Yusuf, VOA News, Nairobi.

Former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has been formally accused of falsifying his COVID-19 vaccination status, marking the first indictment for the (em)battled far-right leader, with more allegations potentially to come.

The indictment said Bolsonaro and his aides changed their vaccination records in order to cheat health restrictions.

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