

VOA NEWS

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This is VOA News. I'm Joe Ramsey.

The World Health Organization on Wednesday declared the mpox outbreaks in Congo and elsewhere in Africa a global emergency. AP Correspondent Ed Donahue reports.

Confirmed cases of mpox, also known as monkey pox, have been reported among children and adults in more than a dozen countries, and the WHO's doctor, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, says few vaccine doses are available in Africa.

"... the detection and rapid spread of a new clade of mpox in eastern DRC, its detection in neighboring countries that had not reported mpox and the potential for further spread within Africa and beyond is very worrying."

People with mpox get lesions on their body. It mostly spreads through close contact with infected people, including through sex.

I'm Ed Donahue.

Talks aimed at ending Sudan's shattering 16-month-old civil war began on Wednesday in Switzerland, although the absence of the military dampened hopes for imminent steps to alleviate the country's humanitarian crisis.

U.N. officials have warned Sudan is at a breaking point and that there will be tens of thousands of preventable deaths from hunger, disease, floods and violence in the coming months without a larger global response.

Ukraine's forces advanced further into Russia's Kursk region on Wednesday as Kyiv said its gains would provide a strategic buffer zone to protect its border area from Russian attacks.

Kyiv's surge into Russian territory last week caught Moscow by surprise. Russian forces that began a full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022 had been grinding out steady gains all year.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said he met top officials to discuss the humanitarian situation and establishing a military commandant's offices "if needed" in an occupied area.

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Palestinian health officials say Israeli strikes across the Gaza Strip overnight and into Wednesday killed at least 17 people, including five children and their parents.

The strikes came on the eve of new talks aimed at reaching a cease-fire in the 10-month war. The United States, Qatar and Egypt are hoping to broker an agreement, but the sides remain far apart on several issues after months of indirect negotiations.

A top Hamas official has told The Associated Press the group is losing faith in the U.S. as a mediator in the Gaza cease-fire talks.

Thailand's prime minister was dismissed on Wednesday by the Constitutional Court [for the breach of] for a breach of ethics. Reuters correspondent Rachel Judah reports.

Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin had appointed a former lawyer who was briefly imprisoned in 2008 to his cabinet. But the court ruled that in doing so the prime minister had violated the constitution by appointing a minister who did not meet ethical standards.

Srettha now becomes the fourth Thai premier in 16 years to be removed by verdicts from the same court.

Srettha's removal after less than a year in power means Parliament must convene to choose a new premier while an interim leader steps in and the cabinet assumes a caretaker role. But with that comes the prospect of more uncertainty in a country dogged for two decades by coups and court rulings that have brought down multiple governments and political parties.

Reuters correspondent Rachel Judah.

Tropical Storm Ernesto strengthened into a Category 1 hurricane on Wednesday as it churned away from the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico, leaving more torrential rains in its wake and cutting power to hundreds of thousands of homes and businesses. Reuters correspondent Jillian Kitchener reports.

Many public buildings were closed Wednesday in both Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands, with the Hurricane Center warning that floodwaters were covering some streets and causing mud slides.

Ernesto is the second named Atlantic storm in a week after slow-moving Debbie hit Florida's Gulf Coast before soaking some parts of the Carolinas.

Hurricane Beryl, the first of the season, was the earliest recorded Category 5 hurricane on record in the Atlantic when it swept through the Caribbean and the U.S. Gulf Coast last month, killing dozens of people and costing an estimated \$6 billion in damages.

Reuters correspondent Jillian Kirchner.

Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said on Wednesday he would step down next month, succumbing to public disaffection over political scandals and rising living costs that marred his three-year term and setting off a scramble to replace him.

The ruling Liberal Democratic Party will hold a contest in September to replace him as president of the party and, by extension, as prime minister.

I'm Joe Ramsey.