



News Bulletin

■GLOBAL

UNITED NATIONS Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon will push world leaders to endorse complete nuclear disarmament at an upcoming summit in Washington, D.C. Ban believes a new agreement between Russia and the U.S. to reduce nuclear stockpiles and new limitations of nuclear weapon use by U.S. President Barack Obama will help pave the way.

UNITED NATIONS - Dozens of countries continue to ignore a United Nations Security Council resolution aimed at restricting the trade in uranium. UN officials consider the noncompliance as a major gap in efforts to minimize the threat of nuclear terrorism and limit worldwide nuclear proliferation.

UNITED NATIONS Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for Central Asian countries to dial back the debate surrounding a hydroelectric dam project in Tajikistan. Anger over the project has led Uzbekistan to impose a block on rail shipments into Tajikistan. Tajikistan, the region's poorest country, has said that it will move ahead with plans - though the dam would reportedly block water from reaching cotton crops in Uzbekistan.

HUMAN RIGHTS - Myanmar's upcoming elections will be high on the agenda as members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations meet this week in Vietnam. Myanmar has faced broad international criticism over its election plans, including provisions that prevent political prisoners such as opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from contesting the poll.

CLIMATE CHANGE - Government leaders, ministers and advisers gathered in London for the first meeting of a panel set up by the U.N. Secretary-General to mobilise \$100 billion per year in fresh funding by 2020 to help developing nations address climate change. The High-level Advisory Group on Climate Change Financing has been tasked with creating practical proposals to raise funds for poor countries' strategies to curb greenhouse emissions, shift to low-carbon development and adapt to climate change. Meanwhile, in the Sahel region of Africa, where farmers have long battled droughts, more than 2,500 women are now growing greens, tomatoes, onions, aubergine (eggplant) and other nutritious crops in small plots near their homes.

ENVIRONMENT - Floods triggered by heavy rains Tuesday left dozens dead in Rio de Janeiro with authorities warning homes in the city's hillside slums may be in danger of collapse. Rescue workers have been trying to reach residents trapped in buildings and vehicles submerged by the water.

■AFRICA

D.R. CONGO - Congolese government forces backed by U.N. troops recaptured a provincial airport from rebels after heavy fighting in which three U.N. workers and several soldiers and police officers were killed, according to officials. The U.N. has also prepared a plan for a three-year phased withdrawal of the world body's biggest peacekeeping force from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, according to a U.N. report released on Monday.

KENYA will expand Africa's biggest refugee settlement to accommodate an additional 80,000 people, relieving severe overcrowding, a top U.S. official said. Dadaab, a settlement of three camps in northern Kenya, was designed to house 90,000 refugees but now hosts 270,000 people - one of the world's largest concentrations of refugees. Meanwhile, the number of Kenyans in need of food aid has fallen by more than 2 million in the last six months because of increased production of maize, the national staple, the UNWFP said.

SOUTH AFRICA - The High Court in Western Cape Province, South Africa, set 6 April as the deadline for evicting the last remaining foreigners from the Blue Waters safety camp, set up outside Cape Town after xenophobic attacks drove them from their homes in May 2008, but police have yet to carry out the eviction order.

■ASIA

AFGHANISTAN - Long the world's largest producer of opium, the raw ingredient of heroin, Afghanistan has now become the top supplier of cannabis, with large-scale cultivation in half of its provinces, the United Nations said. Between 10,000 and 24,000 hectares of cannabis are grown every year in Afghanistan, with major cultivation in 17 out of 34 provinces, U.N. drug agency UNODC said in its first report on cannabis production in Afghanistan.

INDONESIA - A major earthquake of 7.7 magnitude struck off the coast of Aceh in north-western Indonesia, triggering panic and power blackouts, but no deaths were reported and a tsunami alert was later lifted. Neighbouring Thailand and Malaysia also cancelled tsunami warnings.

■MIDDLE EAST

EGYPT - Security forces in Cairo arrested dozens of reform-minded protesters, who turned out to support of constitutional reform and an end to the use of an emergency law that curtails personal freedoms. The altercation came amid growing political uncertainty in the country ahead of parliamentary and presidential elections.

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