

Rescued from sex slavery, red tape traps Bangladeshi girls in India

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Twitter admits phone numbers meant for security used for ads

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EGHBE: Slaughtered birds of prey are displayed by activists from the Committee Against Bird Slaughter (CABS) at their birds observation camp in the village of Eghbe in the Lebanese mountains, northeast of Beirut. —AFP (See page 8)

# UN in the red, staff salaries at risk

## ‘Worst cash crisis facing the United Nations in nearly a decade’

**UNITED NATIONS:** The United Nations has an overall annual operating budget of several billion dollars, covering everything from humanitarian work to disarmament, but right now, it's just trying to make sure its employees get paid after this month. How did the world body end up more than \$200 million in the red? The answer: Member states who have not paid their expected contributions, including the United States. On Tuesday, Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned of the "worst cash crisis facing the United Nations in nearly a decade."

He cautioned the UN "runs the risk of depleting its liquidity reserves by the end of the month and defaulting on payments to staff and vendors." Several member states are behind in their dues payments. The UN will not publicly identify those countries, but sources told AFP the main culprits are the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico and Iran. In all, 64 countries owe money to the UN. Also on the list of budget delinquents are Venezuela, North Korea, South Korea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The last country to have paid up is war-racked Syria, UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said Tuesday at his daily press conference. In a letter sent Monday to the 37,000 employees at the UN

secretariat, which was obtained by AFP, Guterres said the UN had a deficit of \$230 million as of the end of September. On Tuesday, he indicated that if the world body had not taken the initiative to cut spending since the start of the year, the hole would have been even bigger in October - possibly \$600 million - and could have affected last month's General Assembly attended by world leaders.

### Travel cuts

In his statement on Tuesday, Guterres thanked the 129 member states who have paid up "and urged those who have not paid to do so urgently and in full." To limit expenditures from now until year's end, the UN chief has raised the possibility of postponing conferences and meetings, limiting all but essential official travel, and reducing services.

A UN official speaking on condition of anonymity said Guterres had raised the budget issues with member states as early as this past spring, asking them to pay up, but they refused. Not including what it pays for peacekeeping operations, the UN's operating budget for 2018-2019 is close to \$5.4 billion, with the United States contributing 22 percent. The portion still owed? Nearly \$1.4 billion. Washington is also the largest contributor to the UN



NEW YORK: In this file photo, UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres speaks at the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. The United Nations is running a deficit of \$230 million, Secretary General Antonio Guterres said and may run out of money by the end of October. —AFP

peacekeeping tab. President Donald Trump's administration has taken a hard line on UN funding, cutting contributions and pushing for cost-saving reforms. —AFP

## Turkey femicide trial opens after viral video

**KIRIKKALE:** A high-profile trial began yesterday over the murder of a Turkish woman whose stabbing by her ex-husband was caught on video and triggered a debate over a spike in femicide. The killing of 38-year-old Emine Bulut in August sparked outrage across Turkey and reignited the debate over mounting violence against women in the country.

Bulut, who had divorced her husband four years earlier, was stabbed in a cafe in front of her 10-year-old daughter in the central Anatolian city of Kirikkale. She later died in hospital. A video of the aftermath of the attack was posted online showing Bulut in the cafe, covered in blood, screaming to her daughter: "I don't want to die." The tearful girl says: "Mum, please don't die." Bulut's ex-husband Fedai Varan, 43, faces life imprisonment for "deliberately killing with monstrous feeling" if convicted.

He told police Bulut had insulted him. He appeared via video link at the courtroom in Kirikkale, near Ankara where proceedings struggled to get underway due to the huge number of journalists and lawyers trying to watch proceedings. According to the women's rights group We Will Stop Femicide, 121 women were killed in 2011. In 2017 that figure was 409, while 440 were killed in 2018. A total of 354 women were killed in the first nine months of 2019.

### 'Provoked'

Experts say the violence is partly the result of women exercising greater freedoms - not always welcome in conservative sections of Turkish society. Divorcing or launching criminal complaints against violent partners can also lead to assault and murder in a society where many men still do not see woman as equal.

Activists have criticized the fact that, in some murder cases, Turkish courts have handed down reduced prison sentences for defendants who contend that they were "provoked". Women's rights groups have called for demonstrations outside the courthouse yesterday. Turkey has ratified the Council of Europe's 2011 Istanbul Convention on preventing domestic violence and has relevant laws covering the scourge. But activists say the government must be much more proactive in applying the laws and working to protect women.

They point to a lack of shelters for women in need and underscore the importance of addressing the broader issue of gender inequality in Turkish society. "There needs to be widespread education. The laws must be applied as necessary by judges, prosecutors and by the police force," Nuray Cevirmen of the Human Rights Association in Ankara said. "Mechanisms to prevent violence against women and the number of refugees must be increased," she added. Cevirmen criticized suggestions in some court cases that women's actions or clothes had in some way brought on the violence against them. —AFP

## 2 killed in shooting in Germany's Halle

**BERLIN:** At least two people were shot dead on a street in the German city of Halle yesterday, police said, with media and witnesses reporting that a synagogue and a Turkish restaurant were the targets. "Early indications show that two people were killed in Halle. Several shots were fired," said police on Twitter, urging residents in the area to stay indoors. Police had earlier said the "perpetrators fled in a car" before saying later that one suspect had been caught.

It was not immediately clear whether there were other assailants. The central train station has been closed while the area is under lockdown, rail company Deutsche Bahn said. According to Bild daily, the shooting took place in front of a synagogue in the Paulus district, and a hand grenade was also flung into a Jewish cemetery. Police could not be reached immediately for confirmation. Jews around the world were marking Yom Kippur, one of the holiest days in the Jewish calendar yesterday.

An eyewitness, Konrad Roesler, told news channel NTV he was in a Turkish restaurant about 600 meters away from the synagogue when "a man wearing a helmet and military uniform" flung a hand grenade at the store. "The grenade hit the door and exploded," he said. "(The attacker) shot at least once in the shop, the man behind me must be dead. I hid in the toilet and locked the door." Speaking to NTV, a police spokesman said the motive of the suspect or suspects was not clear. "We don't have any indication about the motive of this act."

### 'Big threat'

Yesterday's shootings came three months after the shocking assassination-style murder of local prominent politician Walter Luebecke in the western city of



LANDSBERG: Police secures the area between Wiedersdorf and Landsberg near Halle, eastern Germany, where shots were fired yesterday. —AFP

Kassel, allegedly by a known neo-Nazi. Luebecke's killing has deeply shaken Germany, raising questions about whether it has failed to take seriously a rising threat from right-wing extremists. Investigators have been probing the extent of suspect Stephan Ernst's neo-Nazi ties and whether he had links to the far-right militant cell National Socialist Underground (NSU). Interior Minister Horst Seehofer last month warned

of the rising danger of the militant far right, calling it "as big a threat as radical Islamism". Seehofer said that police had uncovered 1,091 weapons including firearms and explosives during probes of crimes linked to the far right last year, far more than in 2017 when 676 were found. At the same time, Germany has also been on high alert following several jihadist attacks in recent years claimed by the Islamic State group. —AFP