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World without nuclear weapons a necessity

By **Dr Mohammad Naqib Eishan Jan**

April 25, 2022 @ 12:00am



Rescuers work to remove debris from a building that was hit in a military strike, amid Russia's invasion, in Odesa, Ukraine. - REUTERS PIC

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The war in Ukraine has sounded the alarm about the possible use of nuclear weapons, especially when, on Feb 27, President Vladimir Putin ordered Russia's nuclear forces to be placed on a "special combat regime".

Following this, on March 14, United Nations secretary-general Antonio Guterres stated that "the prospect of nuclear conflict, once unthinkable, is now back within the realm of possibility".

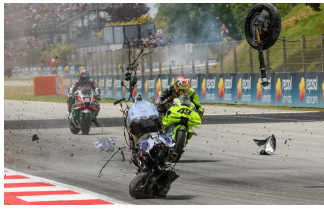
This is a "bone-chilling development", reinforced when UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs Izumi Nakamitsu warned later that month about possible risk of "mushroom clouds appearing on the battlefield".

However, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov ruled out the possibility of using nuclear weapons in the Ukraine war, saying Russia would only use them if it faced an "existential threat" and the conflict has "nothing to do with" any threat to Russia's existence.

The question is why weapons with such destructive power are accumulated in some countries. What is the benefit to humanity if they have no good use, except death and destruction? Why not eradicate them?

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Nine countries have stockpiles of "nuclear weapons", devices (bombs or missiles) that use "nuclear energy to detonate" and are perceived to have "the potential to wreck horrendous destruction".

These weapons, according to the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, are "the most dangerous weapons on earth" that a single one of it, if detonated, "can destroy a whole city, potentially killing millions, jeopardising the natural environment and lives of future generations through its long-term catastrophic effects".

There are reportedly "about 14,000 [nuclear weapons] stockpiled" in the world today. To date, "more than 2,000 nuclear tests" have been conducted.

Nuclear weapons were used twice in warfare, both in 1945, over the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There is no guarantee that they will not be used in the future. Otherwise, why are they stockpiled? Some may argue that they are kept as a deterrent in preventing possible aggressive wars against nuclear-weapon states.

That may be true for the security of nuclear-armed countries, which are few, but what about the security of the rest of the world which does not have nuclear weapons?

As weapons of mass destruction, nuclear weapons are so dangerous that, if used, "everyone's destruction [is] assured". Yet they remain until today a part of national armament of nuclear weapon states.

Countries with such weapons are aware of their destructive power, but have not yet shown interest in disarming completely.

The UN has repeatedly warned that nuclear weapons do no good to humanity, other than death and destruction, and must be eradicated, but countries with such weapons still do not listen.

The UN General Assembly resolution in 1946 sought "the elimination from national armaments of atomic weapons and of all other major weapons adaptable to mass destruction", but to no avail.

States possessing such weapons ignored this resolution and kept their arsenals as "a key part of the security order that emerged after the end of World War II".

This so-called security order may guarantee the security of countries with nuclear weapons, but as the war in Ukraine proves, it does not guarantee the security of countries without them.

Some of the most powerful nuclear-weapon states – the United States, Britain, Russia, France, and China – have ratified the 1968 Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, which prohibits nuclear proliferation, but allows them to maintain their nuclear stockpiles.

Other nuclear-weapon states such as India, Pakistan, North Korea and Israel have not even accepted this treaty.

In addition, none of the nuclear states have ratified the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons, which entered into force on Jan 22 last year and prohibits the developing, testing, producing and manufacturing, acquisition, possession or storage of nuclear weapons or other explosive nuclear services.

This treaty, if not ratified by states with nuclear weapons, remains just "a bargain between states without nuclear weapons, who pledged not to acquire such weapons".

This means that countries with nuclear weapons will continue to maintain their reserves, despite the prevailing view that the mere existence of such weapons threatens human survival.

It is not right to keep nuclear stockpiles because, as Guterres rightly put it, the existence of such weapons brings humanity "unacceptably close to nuclear annihilation".

It's still not too late to save humanity from possible annihilation. Nuclear-weapon states should ratify the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons to legally oblige them to disarm.

For now, they are morally obligated to destroy their nuclear arsenals, and they should do this for the sake of their own survival and that of others.

Remember, nuclear weapons do not discriminate between those who use them, those who are targeted, the neutrals or the innocents.

There is "nothing more important and urgent" than eradicating those weapons or else, as some warn, a "doomsday scenario" awaits humanity.

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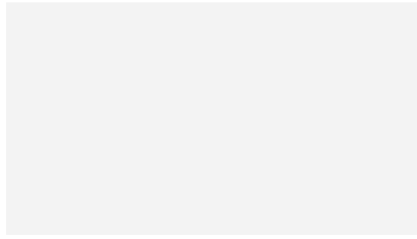
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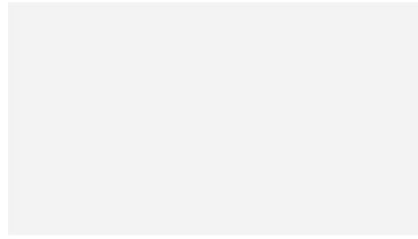
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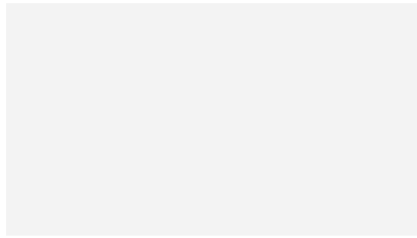
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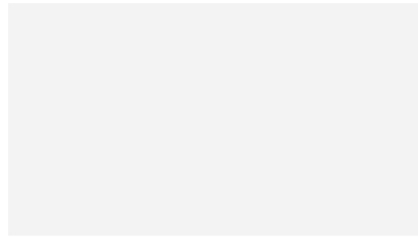
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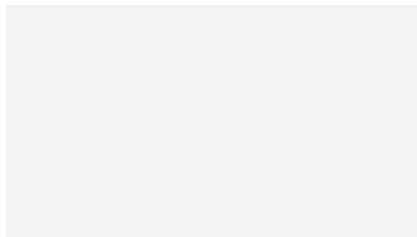
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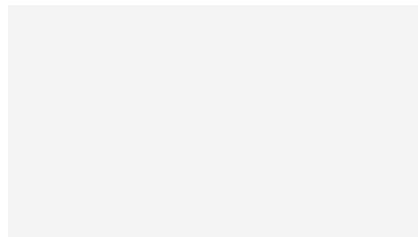
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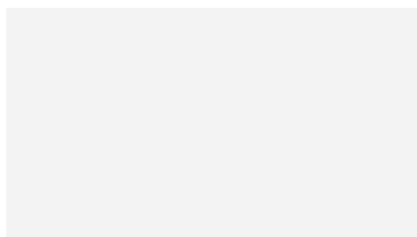
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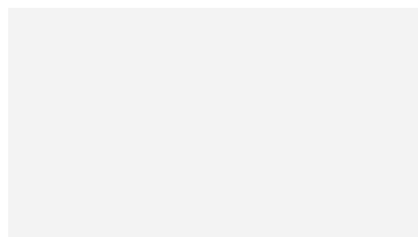
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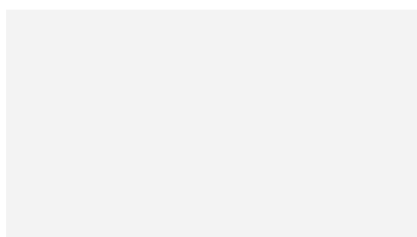
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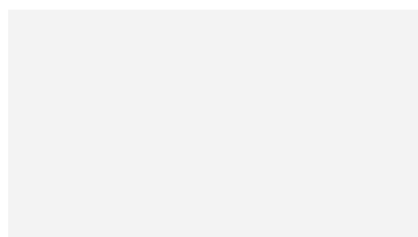
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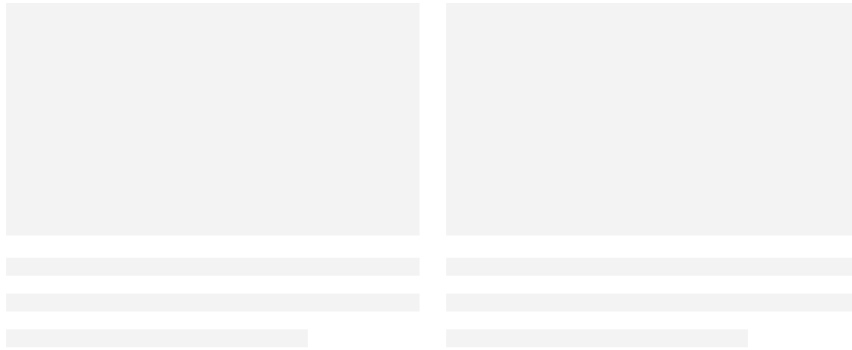
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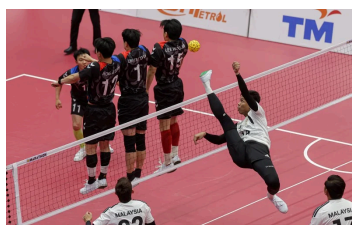
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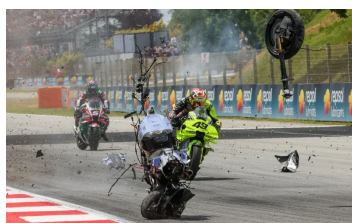
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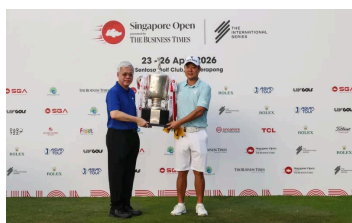
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