

Mandela on dialysis, but responsive

CNN ONLINE

Former South African President Nelson Mandela has been getting kidney dialysis and opens his eyes when people talk to him, a source with direct knowledge of the situation said Friday.

Mandela, who is on life support, is not in a vegetative state, the source said.

The anti-apartheid icon has been hospitalized for nearly a month for a recurring lung infection.

Considered the founding father of South Africa's democracy, Mandela became an international figure while enduring 27 years in prison for fighting against apartheid, the country's system of racial segregation. He emerged from prison in 1990 and became the nation's first black president four years later.

His lung problems started during his years in prison under South Africa's now-defunct apartheid regime.



A girl cries by a Nelson Mandela portrait outside the Medi Clinic Heart hospital where former South African president Nelson Mandela lays in critical condition in Pretoria yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

US, UN condemn Egypt violence

Urge army to protect all

AFP, Washington

The United States and UN chief condemned clashes across Egypt on Friday and urged all leaders including the army to stop the violence after 37 people were killed following the toppling of president Mohamed Morsi.

"We condemn the violence that has taken place today in Egypt. We call on all Egyptian leaders to condemn the use of force and to prevent further violence among their supporters," State Department spokeswoman Jen Psaki said in a statement.

Tens of thousands of supporters of Morsi, who was deposed by the Egyptian military on Wednesday, protested across the country against his ouster.

"We expect the military to ensure that the rights of all Egyptians are protected, including the right to peaceful assembly, and we call on all who are protesting to do so peacefully," Psaki said.

"The Egyptian people must come together to resolve their differences peacefully, without recourse to violence or the use of force."

Washington is increasingly caught in a dilemma, not wishing to condone what could be seen as a military coup, while recognizing that the democratically elected Morsi had failed to bring in an inclusive government.

Meanwhile, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon warned Egyptians against adopting "retribution tactics" in the country's worsening political crisis and called on security forces to prevent clashes, a spokesman said.

"Egypt's political leaders have a responsibility to signal, by their words and their actions, their commitment to a peaceful and democratic dialogue which includes all of Egypt's constituencies, including women," he added.

SURVEILLANCE ROW

EU threatens to suspend data sharing with US

AFP, Brussels

European Union officials head into complex security talks in Washington on Monday threatening to suspend key data-swapping deals with the United States amid continuing anger over reports of US snooping.

Brussels this week warned Washington in a letter obtained by AFP that it was ready "to reconsider" two key anti-terrorist data-sharing deals failing US assurances of their "full compliance with the law".

The warning over hard-won agreements to share airline passenger data and SWIFT banking details as part of the global fight against terrorism comes amid public outrage over reports that US agencies spied on Europeans as well as on their institutions and embassies.

"We are experiencing a delicate moment in our relations with the US," the EU's

Home Affairs Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom said in a letter to Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano.

"Mutual trust and confidence have been seriously eroded and I expect the US to do all that it can to restore them."

Malmstrom said her staff would be in Washington next week for the first review of the 2012 Passenger Name Record (PNR) agreement -- enabling the transfer of EU air passenger data to US authorities -- as well as a review of the older Terrorist Financing Tracking Program (TFTP), which accesses the SWIFT global interbank transfer network.

Ties between Washington and Brussels have been strained since Edward Snowden, a former contractor with the National Security Agency (NSA), revealed that the US was systematically seizing vast amounts of Internet and telephone data around the world.

Mubarak back in court

AFP, Cairo

Lawyers for Egypt's ex-president Hosni Mubarak entered a not guilty plea when his retrial for alleged complicity in the killings of protesters in 2011 resumed yesterday.

The hearing comes coincidentally just three days after Mubarak's successor Mohamed Morsi was himself toppled and amid turmoil on the streets pitting Islamists against anti-Morsi protesters.

Mubarak and seven top security chiefs are charged with incitement in the killings of protesters who rose up against him in 2011.



EGYPT TURMOIL

Protests go on, clashes kill 37

AFP, Cairo

Islamists massed for further protests yesterday to demand the army restore Egypt's first democratically elected leader, after 24 hours of ferocious violence that killed 37 people and injured more than 1,000 nationwide.

The atmosphere was tense as interim leader Adly Mansour held talks with ministers, aides and the Tamarod rebel group that engineered the mass demonstrations culminating in the ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi.

Crowds were swelling late afternoon outside Cairo's Rabaa al-Adawiya mosque, where Morsi supporters have been camped out for 10 days.

A nearby bridge was still littered with rocks and burned out tyres from the overnight confrontations.

Anti-Morsi protesters meanwhile set up checkpoints in Cairo's iconic Tahrir Square after a night of deadly fighting nearby.

A coalition of Islamist groups early yesterday vowed "civilised protests and peaceful sit-ins in Cairo until the military coup is reversed and the legitimate president is restored".

NEWS IN brief

India cuts fuel subsidy to Bhutan

TNN, New Delhi

India has withdrawn all subsidy on cooking gas and kerosene being provided to Bhutan -- arguably India's only unquestioned friend among its neighbours -- creating a huge crisis in the tiny, landlocked kingdom and bringing the bilateral ties under strain.

Gas and kerosene prices have more than doubled in Bhutan, and predictably, this will hit the poor the hardest. The subsidy cut has come as Bhutan gave sign that it would give more importance to China, irking many in New Delhi.

US missile defence test fails

AFP, WASHINGTON

America's missile defense system failed on Friday in a test over the Pacific, with an interceptor failing to hit an incoming ballistic missile, the Pentagon said.

The miss represented yet another setback for the costly ground-based interceptors, which have not had a successful test result since 2008. The United States has 30 of the ground-based interceptors in Alaska and California, at a cost of about \$34 billion to counter threats from North Korea.

Pakistan train accident kills 14

AFP, Lahore

At least 14 people, including two children, were killed yesterday when a train collided with a packed motorcycle rickshaw in Pakistan's eastern Punjab province, officials said.

Dalai Lama turns 78

AFP, Bangalore

Spiritual leader Dalai Lama yesterday said he was counting on young people to create a "happier" century as he celebrated his 78th birthday in southern India with tens of thousands of fellow Tibetan exiles.

"The present-day generation can create better conditions and build a world where everyone can live in harmony and in a spirit of coexistence," the Dalai Lama, who fled Tibet in 1959 after a failed uprising against Chinese rule, told the crowd.



Islamists kill 42 in Nigeria school attack

AFP, Kano

Gunmen believed to be Boko Haram Islamists attacked a secondary school in Nigeria's restive northeast yesterday, killing 42 people, many of whom were students, a medical worker and residents said.

But a military spokesman said 20 students and one teacher were killed in the dawn attack at Yobe state.

The attackers rounded up students and staff of the school and placed them in a dormitory before throwing explosives inside and opening fire, said Haliru Aliyu of Potiskum General Hospital, quoting witnesses who escaped.

"We received 42 dead bodies of students and other staff of Government Secondary School (in) Mamudo last night. Some of them had gunshot wounds," Aliyu told AFP, adding that many also had burns.

Aliyu said security personnel were combing the area around the school in search of wounded students who have fled the attack.

"So far six students have been found and are now in the hospital being treated for gunshot wounds," he said.

Mamudo is some five kilometres (three miles) from Potiskum, the commercial hub of the state of Yobe, which has been a flashpoint in the Boko Haram insurgency in recent months.



Participants hold red scarves as they celebrate the opening of the San Fermin Festival at Castle square in Pamplona, northern Spain yesterday. Ten of thousands of people packed Pamplona's streets for a drunken kick-off to Spain's best-known fiesta: the nine-day bull-running festival.

PHOTO: AFP

From Dracula to Islamic sultan

The surprising family tree of UK royal baby

AFP, Paris

Even before the birth of the new British royal baby to Prince William and his wife Kate, genealogists are looking into its family tree, and are coming up with many surprises.

The baby's relations will stretch from a simple Parisian actress via the Dracula princes in Romania, to even an Islamic sultan from Seville in Spain, who descended from the Muslim Prophet Mohammed, experts say.

The family tree of the baby's father Prince William, who is second in line to the throne, is strongly tied to the European Gotha line.

There one finds, alongside all Britain's kings, the sovereigns of Greece, Denmark, Sweden, Russia, Austria, Spain and a good number of German sovereigns.

The British family was called Saxe-Coburg-Gotha until 1917, date on which, mired in a war with Germany, it opted for the name Windsor.

The future king or queen of the United Kingdom will be cousin with a large number of his or her subjects as Kate's mother's side has largely working class ancestry.

But there are other surprises in store in the royal family's family tree. Through Queen



Mary, the wife of King George V, who ruled from 1910 to 1936, the line stretches back right to the princes of Transylvania and Walachia in Romania.

That leads back in the fifteenth century to the Princes Dracula. Among them figures the Voivode Vlad III who inspired, by his cruelty, the Irish writer Bram Stoker's famous vampire.

Via a French woman, a protestant noblewoman born in 1639 in France's region of Poitou, the child will even be a cousin of late French president Francois Mitterrand, while her mother is related to the first president of the United States, George Washington.

Through its grandmother Diana, the royal baby will have a link with the families of Winston Churchill and Lord Marlborough, who inspired a popular French folk song.

But the most astonishing discovery is a little-known ascendancy of one of its distant ancestors, the queen of France, Marie de Medici, descendant of Alphonse VI of Castilia, who died in 1109. His fourth wife Zaida, who was an Islamic princess converted to Roman Catholicism, had as an ancestor, according to Beaucamot, "a king of Seville considered a direct descendant of the Prophet Mohammed".

BJP leader vows Ram Temple in Ayodhya

THE HINDU ONLINE

Bharatiya Janata Party general secretary and Uttar Pradesh in-charge Amit Shah yesterday raked up the issue of Ram Mandir and said that the party would soon build a grand temple at Ayodhya.

"I came here to pray to Lord Rama. I wish we will soon build a grand temple for Lord Rama here and restore Lord Rama to his rightful place," he told reporters in Ayodhya before attending a meeting with party workers from the Awadh region.

Shah's comment comes amid growing speculation that the BJP might look to invoke Hindutava in the State, where it made reasonable gains during the early 1990's.

The comments gain further prominence with recent reports saying that Gujarat Chief Minister Narendra Modi could contest next year's Lok Sabha elections from Varanasi, an important city for Hindus.

India urges stronger military ties with China

PTI, Beijing

Calling for closer military ties between India and China, defence minister A K Antony yesterday said that it would be easy to maintain peace along the borders if both the forces have trust, mutual respect and confidence.

"If the military leadership on both sides from the top to the ground formations can maintain both trust and mutual respect, and confidence, then it is easy to maintain peace and tranquility at the border areas," Antony told Political Commissar of National Defence University General Liu Yazhou.

Antony visited the academy of People's Liberation Army here yesterday on the second day of his official visit.

During the meeting, the defence minister and Liu agreed to enhance military exchanges between the two countries.

Antony yesterday held wide ranging discussions with Chinese Premier Li Keqiang and defence minister Gen Cheng Wanquan on a host of issues including maintaining peace and tranquility at the borders.

In his interaction with Liu, Antony recalled his meeting with Premier Li and Gen Cheng.

"India and China are close neighbours. Our relations are expanding in many areas," he said, adding he had a detailed discussions with the Chinese leadership on bilateral ties.

"Both sides are and have clear consensus that we must maintain peace and stability at our borders. In that endeavour military-to-military cooperation is an important aspect," he said.

Accompanied by a high-powered delegation consisting of top officials from Indian Army, Navy and Air Force, Antony went round the sprawling 15,000 sq mts varsity campus evincing keen interest in China's defence forces' training programmes for the officers of all its three forces.

Two Koreas hold rare talks on joint zone

AFP, Seoul

North and South Korea held rare talks yesterday on re-opening a joint industrial zone seen as the last remaining symbol of cross-border reconciliation.

But the meeting dragged on into late yesterday, showing little signs of making headway.

Negotiations got off to a faulty start, with the two sides talking across each other over what to discuss first.

Although the opening session was attended by a full contingent of three delegates from each side, both the North and South's chief delegates had to repeatedly meet separately in an attempt to narrow down their differences.

The talks -- delayed by nearly two hours -- follow months of friction and threats of war by Pyongyang after its February nuclear test attracted tougher UN sanctions, further squeezing its struggling economy.