

NEWS IN brief

Alaska plane crash kills 10

AFP, Washington

Ten people were killed when an air taxi airplane crashed Sunday at the airport in the US city of Soldotna, in the state of Alaska, city police told AFP.

The National Transportation Safety Board said late Sunday on its Twitter feed that it has sent a team to investigate the crash.

Alaska local media said the plane was a De Havilland DHC-3 Otter aircraft operated by Rediske Air.

Antarctic Lake Vostok 'might have fish'

BBC ONLINE

There could be some complex animals living in Lake Vostok, which lies close to 4km below Antarctica's ice sheet.

The possibility is raised by scientists who have sifted genetic material in ice drilled from close to Vostok's surface.

They found signatures for organisms such as bacteria that are often associated with marine molluscs, crustaceans and even fish.

Bus accident kills 12 in Pakistan

DAWN ONLINE

At least 12 passengers were killed and over 35 injured when a bus overturned near Dadu yesterday morning. The dead also included women and children.

According to a media reports, the passenger bus was heading to Karachi from Larkana when it overturned in Dadu near Khudabad Turn on Indus Highway, leaving six dead on the spot.

Myanmar's heroin 'Godfather' dies

AFP, Yangon

A notorious crony of Myanmar's former junta, dubbed by the US the "Godfather of Heroin" after decades as a global drug trafficker, has died aged 80, according to a family announcement yesterday.

Lo Hsing Han, a major heroin trafficker since the 1970s, avoided a death sentence in his early drug career only to reinvent himself as a tycoon at the head of one of Myanmar's largest firms in a roller-coaster life that saw him amass huge wealth.

Mrs Kerry hospitalized

AFP, New York

The wife of US Secretary of State John Kerry was hospitalized late Sunday with an unknown illness after reportedly being rushed by ambulance for treatment in a "critical condition."

Heinz Kerry, a multilingual philanthropist born to Portuguese parents in colonial-era Mozambique, arrived in a "critical but stable condition," the Boston Globe daily reported.



CHINA FLOODS

This picture shows people walking through a flooded street in Wuhan, central China's Hubei province, after a heavy storm. A strong storm hit Wuhan on July 6 and July 7, paralysing transport in multiple places, local media reported.

PHOTO: AFP

Egypt army intervention 'unacceptable'

Says Iran

AFP, Tehran

Iran deems "unacceptable" the Egyptian army's toppling of the country's first freely elected president Mohamed Morsi, the foreign ministry said yesterday.

"The intervention of armed forces in political affairs is unacceptable and disturbing," ministry spokesman Abbas Araqchi told the Mehr news agency when asked about the developments in Egypt.

"It cannot be denied that foreign hands are at work here," Araqchi said, adding: "The polarisation of Egyptian society is dangerous."

He did not specify which foreign hands he believed were behind the coup but said: "The West and the Zionist (Israeli) regime do not want a strong Egypt."

CHINESE GRAFT TRIAL

Ex-railways minister sentenced to death

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

China's former railways minister was handed a suspended death sentence yesterday for bribery and abuse of power in one of the country's highest-level corruption cases for decades.

Liu Zhijun was sentenced to death, suspended for two years, by a court in Beijing, according to the official Xinhua News Agency. After two years, such sentences typically are reduced to life in prison if the inmate shows good behaviour, but Liu will spend at least ten years in jail.

Liu, 60, who oversaw the ministry's high-profile bullet train development, was accused of accepting massive bribes and steering lucrative projects to associates.

Prosecutors accused Liu of using his position of influence to help about 11 business associates win promotions and project contracts and accepted 64.6 million Chinese yuan (\$10.5 million) in unspecified bribes between 1986 and 2011.

Bai Shanyun, Xin the ruling judge in the case said the circumstances of Liu's case called for a lenient sentence. Liu was remorseful and pleaded guilty, Bai said.

Xinhua's official microblog quoted Bai as saying that Liu had cooperated with investigations, responded truthfully about crimes that he committed, offered information on cases that the authorities had not known about and helped recover a large part of the misused funds.



SNOWDEN LEAKS CONTINUE

He seeks LatAm escape

Cuba backs his asylum bid

AFP, Moscow

New reports emerged Sunday of US spying efforts around the world as fugitive intelligence leaker Edward Snowden remained holed up in a Russian airport seeking an escape route to Latin America.

Snowden remained hidden in a Moscow airport transit zone for the 15th day on Sunday, but was back in the press with claims that the US National Security Agency (NSA) operated broad spying partnerships with other Western governments that are now complaining about its programmes and intercepted millions of phone calls and emails in Brazil.

Brazil has requested clarifications from the US government about reports that its intelligence agencies monitored millions of emails and phone calls from Brazilian citizens, reported BBC.

The allegations were published by O Globo newspaper.

They were based on documents disclosed by fugitive American intelligence analyst Edward Snowden.

Brazil received the reports "with deep concern," Foreign Minister Antonio Patriota

said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Snowden won support from Cuba for his bid to seek asylum in Latin America as he began his third week in limbo at a Moscow airport yesterday.

Cuba, a key transit point from Russia on the way to Latin America, supported the leaders of Bolivia, Venezuela and Nicaragua, who have offered the 30-year-old fugitive a possible lifeline as he remains marooned without documents in the transit area of a Moscow airport.

Snowden told Germany's Der Spiegel that NSA spies were "in bed together with the Germans and most other Western states", in an interview the news weekly said was conducted before the 30-year-old former NSA contractor began his string of high-profile leaks last month.

In remarks published in German, Snowden said an NSA department known as the Foreign Affairs Directorate coordinated work with foreign secret services.

The partnerships are organised so that authorities in other countries can "insulate their political leaders from the backlash" if it becomes public "how grievously they're violating global privacy", he said.

Pope Francis visits migrant island

Condemns disregard of refugees

AFP, Lampedusa

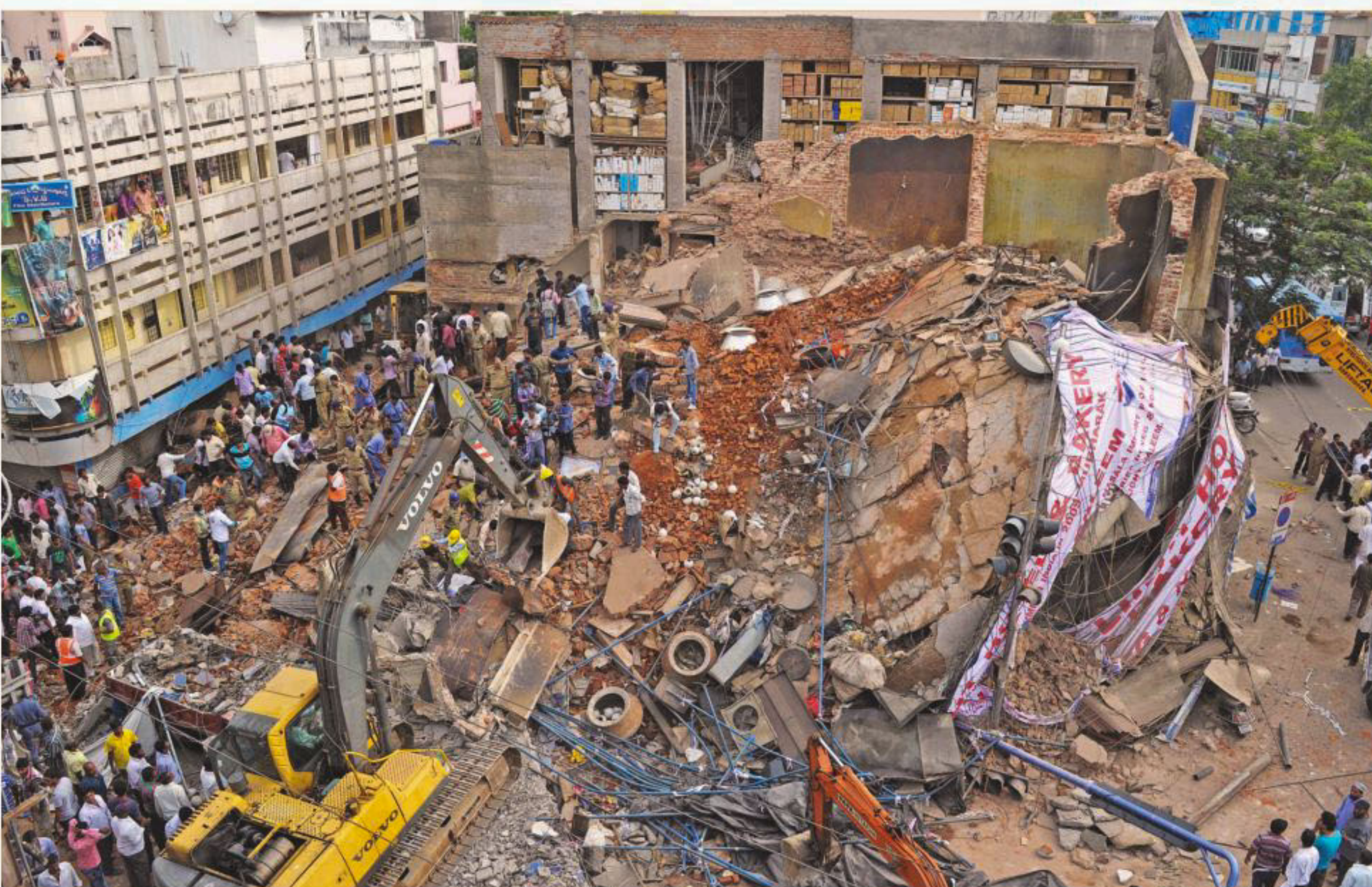
Pope Francis called for an end to "indifference" to the plight of refugees yesterday on a visit to an Italian island, where tens of thousands of migrants from Africa and the Middle East arrive, upon reaching Europe.

"We ask forgiveness for the indifference towards so many brothers and sisters," Francis said at a mass near the port on his first trip outside of Rome, since his election in March.

Speaking within sight of dozens of the abandoned boats used by the migrants, he paid tribute to the hundreds who drown every year trying to reach Europe and said he had come to Lampedusa "to reawaken consciences".

"The culture of well-being makes us think about ourselves, renders us insensitive to the cries of others," he said, urging "brotherly responsibility" and condemning a "globalisation of indifference".

Later on Monday he also wished Muslim migrants on the start of their Ramadan period of fasting and prayers and said the Catholic Church was close to them "in your search for a more dignified life".



Indian rescue workers remove bodies from the rubble at the site of the City Light Hotel building collapse in Secunderabad, the twin city of Hyderabad yesterday. The two-storey hotel collapsed in the southern Indian city of Secunderabad, killing 12 and injuring 16 others.

PHOTO: AFP

13 bombs were planted in Mahabodhi temple

Says Indian home minister

PTI, Talegaon/gaya

As many as 13 bombs were planted inside the Mahabodhi temple complex in Bodhi Gaya of which ten had exploded injuring two monks, home minister Sushilkumar Shinde said yesterday.

"Today, I have the information of 10 blasts. A total of 13 bombs were placed there. I will not go into details where they were kept and all. Two persons have been injured -- 50-year-old Dorji and Bala Sanga (30)," Shinde told reporters here.

Shinde was speaking on the sidelines of a function for inauguration of a hospital of Central Reserve Police Force in Talegaon, about 100 kilometers from Pune.

One person held; bandh hits life in city

The NIA detained one person on Monday in connection with the serial blasts at the Mahabodhi temple in Bodhi Gaya in which two monks were injured.

DIG, Magadh range, Nayyer Hasnain Khan said an identity card was found within the temple premises on Sunday on the basis of which the person was detained.

"One suspect hailing from Barachatti block in Gaya has been detained and we are questioning him. We have been analysing the footage and based on that some more people would be questioned soon," a senior police official said.

Solar Impulse plane completes journey

BBC ONLINE

The Solar Impulse plane has landed at New York's JFK airport, completing the final leg of a journey across the US on solar power alone.

The craft set off at 04:56 on Saturday from Washington DC, and landed about 23:15.

A Statue of Liberty fly-pass had to be cancelled, due to a 2.5-metre tear in the fabric of the left wing.

The Across America transcontinental bid began in San Francisco in early May - at a top speed of 70km/h.



It included stopovers in Phoenix, Arizona, Dallas, Texas, and St Louis, Missouri.

Neither the pilot nor the plane appeared to be in any danger because of the wing tear, officials said.

The Solar Impulse HB-SIA has the same wingspan as an Airbus A340 but at a weight of just 1.6 tonnes. By comparison, a fully laden A340 weighs about 370 tonnes.

The plane's wing and stabiliser are covered with nearly 12,000 solar cells, which drive its four propellers and charge the plane's 400kg of lithium-ion batteries for night-time flying.

SNC expects advanced weapons

REUTERS, Istanbul

The new head of the opposition Syrian National Coalition said he expected advanced weapons supplied by Saudi Arabia to reach rebel fighters soon, strengthening their currently weak military position.

Ahmad Jarba, who has close links to Saudi Arabia, told Reuters in his first interview since being elected president of the coalition on Saturday that the opposition would not go to a proposed peace conference in Geneva sponsored by the United States and Russia unless its military fortunes improve.

"Geneva in these circumstances is not possible. If we are going to go to Geneva we have to be strong on the ground, unlike the situation now, which is weak," Jarba said on Sunday after returning from the northern Syrian province of Idlib.

Anti-Muslim riots haunt shattered Myanmar city

AFP, Meiktila

The thugs ordered Kyaw not to look as they killed his classmates, but the terrified teenager still caught glimpses of the merciless beatings as a wave of anti-Muslim killing engulfed his school town in central Myanmar, leaving dozens dead.

"They used steel chains, sticks and knives... there were hundreds of people. They beat anyone who tried to look at them," the 16-year-old told AFP.

Kyaw's small madrasa (Islamic school) on the outskirts of Meiktila town was razed during sectarian bloodshed in March that triggered an outbreak of Buddhist-Muslim violence across the country.

Officially 44 people were killed -- although some fear the toll was much higher -- and thousands were left homeless.

Kyaw, whose name AFP changed to protect his identity, escaped serious injury, but his school friends -- who he saw as "brothers" -- were not so fortunate.

"Five students from my class were killed," he said, with a quiet precision belying his haunted expression.

March 20 began as usual for the students,

who traded jokes as they gathered in the school's mosque.

But by afternoon the centre of town was already seething after an argument in a gold shop and the brutal murder of a Buddhist monk.

As word spread that Muslim areas were being torched, the students took shelter in nearby undergrowth, hiding overnight as a mob descended and set the school alight.

The next morning, security personnel evacuated local Muslims. Kyaw and his friends were marched through a hostile crowd which hit them with stones and sticks. A few students retaliated. Some strayed or were pulled out and set upon.

The horrors that followed have been pieced together by rights group Physicians for Human Rights who, quoting eyewitnesses, described a Buddhist mob -- including men in monks' robes -- hunting down and killing some 20 students and four teachers.

Witnesses recounted seeing one pupil being decapitated and several being burned alive, according to a May report by the US-based group.

ODDLY enough



A real life Mowgli!

STAR DESK

Folklore and fairy-tales always mention that wild animals do not hurt the young ones of any species. But that theory hasn't exactly been tested out in the real world, and there have been cases where babies were reportedly killed by man-eating lions or tigers.

But that's what makes Tippi Degre's story that more special. Now 23 years old, Tippi is the only child of French wildlife photographer parents, Alain Degre and Sylvie Robet.

Her parents' profession and their work in Africa made the young girl's childhood unique, giving her the opportunity to interact with wild animals in incredible ways. She was named after actress Tippi Hedren, who is said to have kept fully-grown lions as pets in her home, and little Tippi was no different from her namesake, demonstrating early on the ability to form unusual bonds with the creatures of the wild.