

NEWSIN brief

Fire at Japan hospital kills 10

AFP, Tokyo

A fire that ripped through a hospital in Japan as patients slept killed 10 elderly people yesterday and prompted government demands for safety reviews across the country.

The blaze, which broke out in the middle of the night, left a further five people injured, police said, with the fire and disaster management agency saying four of them were in a serious condition. All of those who died were between the ages of 70 and 89, police said.

Israeli settler beaten to death in West Bank

AFP, Brosh

Suspected Palestinian militants bludgeoned to death a settler yesterday in the third killing of Israelis in the West Bank within as many weeks, police said, prompting calls to suspend peace talks.

The attack was followed by calls from rightwing Israeli MPs for the suspension of low profile peace talks between the two sides and of the expected release of more Palestinian prisoners.



Miss Universe apologises to India

AFP, New Delhi

Organisers of Miss Universe extended their "deepest apologies" to India over a photo shoot at the Taj Mahal that triggered a police case and accusations that she disrespected the famed monument to love.

Olivia Culpo visited the Islamic mausoleum on Sunday during a 10-day tour of India. During her time at the World Heritage site, she posed for cameras with branded shoe for promotion which is banned at the site.

Pakistan says Indian shelling kills one

AFP, Muzaffarabad

Indian troops fired mortars across the disputed border in Kashmir yesterday, killing a child and wounding three other people, Pakistani officials said. The latest incident came almost two weeks after the prime ministers of the two countries pledged to restore calm on their disputed border in Kashmir, at a meeting in New York.

Pak Taliban 'No 2' captured in Afghanistan

AGENCIES

Afghan officials yesterday said that the US military was holding a senior Pakistani Taliban commander captured in Afghanistan a week ago.

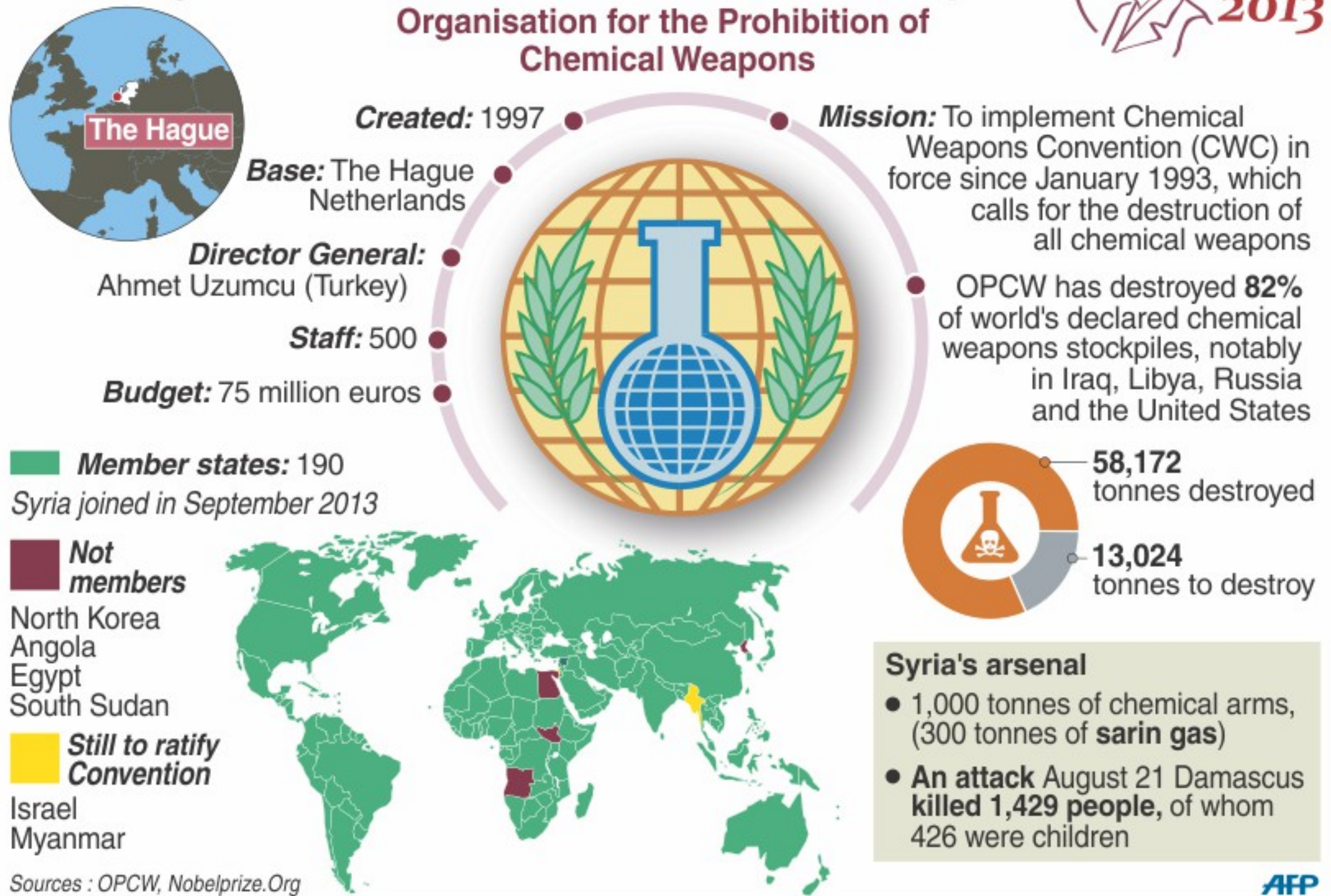
Latif Mehsud was arrested by American forces as he was driving along a main highway, Arsallah Jamal, the governor of eastern Logar province, said yesterday.

Mehsud, a former body-guard and close confidante of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) chief Hakimullah Mehsud, was reported to have been elevated to the position of deputy ameer in the proscribed militant group.

According to the Associated Press, the Pakistani Taliban confirmed Latif Mehsud had been captured by the Afghan army at the Ghulam Khan border crossing in the eastern province of Khost on Oct 5.

Chemical arms watchdog wins Nobel

OPCW recognised «for its extensive efforts to eliminate chemical weapons»



HRW accuses Syria jihadists of massacre

AFP, Damascus

Jihadists in Syria were accused of war crimes yesterday over the killing of 190 civilians from President Bashar al-Assad's Alawite minority, in the largest atrocity attributed to rebel fighters.

Human Rights Watch said another 200 people -- the vast majority women and children -- were taken hostage in the operations that took place in August and are still being carried out.

The report, which urged an arms embargo on groups suspected of war crimes or crimes against humanity, said at least 67 of the victims were "executed or unlawfully killed".

It comes as Nato chief Anders Fogh Rasmussen said he sees no

military solution to the 31-month conflict in Syria, which has killed more than 115,000 people.

HRW said the killings began on August 4, the first day of the Eid Al-Fitr holiday ending the Muslim fasting month of Ramadan, in a sweep of villages in Latakia province, an Alawite stronghold.

"These abuses were not the actions of rogue fighters," said HRW's Joe Stork. "This operation was a coordinated, planned attack on the civilian population."

"Violators on all sides should be sent a message by the UN Security Council" which should refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court.

Russia, meanwhile, accused Syrian rebels of receiving chemical weapons training in lawless parts

of Afghanistan and planning attacks on the territory of Iraq.

On the ground, a second team of inspectors from the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons arrived in Damascus on Thursday to help supervise the destruction of Syria's chemical arsenal under the terms of a UN resolution.

At the same time, the Security Council backed a plan by UN leader Ban Ki-moon for a joint mission of up to 100 experts with the OPCW to destroy the weapons, diplomats said.

The OPCW was yesterday named this year's winner of the Nobel Peace Prize, in what French President Francois Hollande called a "vindication" of its work in Syria.

US GOVT SHUTDOWN Progress, but still no deal

AFP, Washington

A glimmer of hope for a breakthrough flickered in the fiscal impasse yesterday which has crippled Washington and threatened serious damage to the global economy.

After more than a week of deadlock, something positive emerged Thursday when Republicans offered President Barack Obama a short term extension of the US government's borrowing authority, so as to stave off a possible debt default.

In the process, they spurred a bumper day on Wall Street and Asia reacted well Friday, too. Shares in Tokyo rose 1.48 percent, and stocks were also up in Sydney, Seoul and Hong Kong and elsewhere.

Signs of movement coincided with a new poll showing Americans have developed a sharply negative view of congressional Republicans during a crisis which has also partially shuttered the US government since October 1.

Republican leaders presented their plan to President Barack Obama at the White House -- and in a departure from recent bad tempered encounters, both sides described the meeting as useful and constructive.

The White House said Obama would be open to the Republican proposal for a six week extension to the \$16.7 trillion debt ceiling -- though would prefer longer.

The sticking point appears to lie in the Republican Party's request for Obama to open talks on a budget deal as a condition for reopening the government.

Obama says he will only discuss long-term budget issues once the government returns to work and hundreds of thousands of federal employees are back at their desks.

For the first time, it seemed that both sides were seeking an end to the crisis, which even led to the suspension of death benefits to families of soldiers killed on duty.

Late Thursday, Obama signed into law a bill reinstating the payments, marking the end of a deeply embarrassing development for the administration, feuding lawmakers and the Pentagon.

If the US debt ceiling is not raised by October 17, the Treasury would run out of money and could begin defaulting on US obligations for the first time in history, with likely dire consequences for the world economy.

US arms halt to Egypt largely symbolic

AFP, Cairo

By suspending military aid to Egypt, Washington is pressing Cairo to end the bloodshed on the streets but its largely "symbolic" act is unlikely to have a concrete impact, analysts say.

They say the "half-measured" move reflects the lack of a clear US foreign policy on Egypt, where a political crisis since strongman Hosni Mubarak was toppled in 2011 has worsened after the July 3 ouster of Islamist president Mohamed Morsi.

On Wednesday, Washington suspended deliveries of major military hardware and cash assistance of \$260 million to the Egyptian military, which ousted Morsi in a coup.

The decision will stop deliveries of big-ticket items such as Apache helicopters, F-16 fighters, M1A1 Abrams tank parts and Harpoon missiles.

Washington says the suspension will remain in place until Egypt moves towards an elected and "inclusive" democratic civilian government.

Egypt said it would not succumb to the latest US move. Egypt, traditionally a key US ally in the Arab world, said it "will

continue to take decisions regarding its domestic affairs with full independence and without foreign pressure".

For analysts, Washington's decision is the latest example of a short-sighted policy towards Egypt with no significant impact.

They said that the decision would not force Egypt's military to look elsewhere for its future arms needs as "you can't overnight overhaul your military systems."

Hisham Kassem, an independent political analyst, said Washington's decision also showed that the United States was concerned only about Israel's security.

"Washington is sending a message that Obama is only bothered about Israel's security and not of Egypt," he said.

Kassem referred to the fact that the United States will continue to offer Cairo assistance aimed at securing Egypt's borders and for bolstering "counterterrorism, proliferation, and security in Sinai," which neighbours Israel and Gaza.

The 1978 Camp David peace accords between Israel and Egypt have until now been a cornerstone of Washington's military aid to Egypt.

Gaddafi spy chief set for Libya trial

AFP, The Hague

The International Criminal Court yesterday ruled that Libya can try slain dictator Muammar Gaddafi's former spy chief, having previously demanded he be handed over to The Hague.

Because Abdallah al-Senussi is being tried in Libya, ICC judges "concluded that the case is inadmissible before the court, in accordance with the principle of complementarity", it said.

The ICC stressed that the Senussi decision had no bearing on the case against Gaddafi's son Seif al-Islam, who is still wanted in The Hague.

Gaddafi's former heir apparent and others including Senussi are accused of crimes during the revolt against Gaddafi two years ago.

Judges ruled that "the case against Senussi is currently subject to domestic proceedings conducted by the Libyan competent authorities and that Libya is willing and able genuinely to carry out such investigation".

The court said the decision could be appealed if it appeared Senussi was not getting a free trial.





The Cool 3-wheeler

MAIL ONLINE

A narrow three-wheeled electric vehicle could offer commuters the freedom to squeeze through traffic jams as if were driving a motorbike, while offering the stability and safety of being inside a car.

Toyota's i-ROAD personal mobility vehicle is designed for negotiating busy city streets and is no wider than a standard motorbike, but can be driven like a car thanks to intelligent front wheels that automatically adjust to suit the driver's actions.

The trike uses 'Active Lean' technology that allows its wheels to move up and down to calculate the best position for going round tight corners, or weaving in and out of traffic.

The two-seated vehicle can typically travel at up to 45km per hour but has a maximum speed of 60kph. The trike uses a lithium-ion battery to power its two 2kW motors mounted on the front wheels and emits no emissions.

Another migrant boat sinks off Lampedusa

Dozens feared dead; 120 rescued

BBC ONLINE

A boat with more than 200 migrants on board has capsized off the Italian island of Lampedusa late yesterday and a rescue operation is under way, officials said.

Italian and Maltese ships - backed by helicopters - were scrambled to the scene and are searching in darkness.

At least 120 people are said to have been saved, but dozens of bodies have been reportedly spotted in the water.

Last week more than 300 people drowned when a boat carrying African migrants sank off Lampedusa.

Italy's coast guard and Maltese officials said the boat capsized about 120km off Lampedusa yesterday. Italy's Ansa news agency reports that about 50 people died, among them women and children, but this has not been officially confirmed.

The nationalities of those on board the boat were not immediately known.

The boat is believed to have encountered

difficulties just before sunset.

Reports say people on board had crowded to one side of the vessel as they tried to get the attention of a passing aircraft, causing it to capsize.

The BBC's Matthew Price in Lampedusa says that darkness is now hampering the operation

Lampedusa, which lies 290km (180 miles) off the coast of Africa, is a key destination for migrant vessels bound for Europe.

Last Thursday, at least 319 people - mostly Somalis and Eritreans - died when their boat sank near the island.

Only 155 people were rescued of more than 500 believed to have been on board.

Earlier at least 500 more migrants travelling in separate boats were rescued in coast-guard operations in the same region.

Also yesterday, a separate boat accident off the Egyptian port of Alexandria claimed the lives of at least 12 migrants.

Snowden's dad meets the fugitive in Russia

AFP, Moscow

The father of US intelligence leaker Edward Snowden has held an "emotional" meeting with his son for the first time since the fugitive took refuge in Russia to escape US justice, a report said yesterday.

Lon Snowden met his son after arriving in Moscow from the United States on Thursday, Interfax quoted an informed source as saying, without specifying the time or place of the meeting.

"The meeting has already taken place. It was very emotional," the source told the agency, saying further details would not be given for security reasons.

Russia has granted Edward Snowden one year temporary asylum but the United States wants him to be extradited to face espionage charges over his leaking of sensational details of US surveillance programmes at home and abroad.

The former National Security Agency (NSA) contractor spent over a month in transit at a Moscow airport before being granted asylum on August 1. Since then his whereabouts have been a mystery.

Earlier this week, a group of four retired US intelligence workers and activists who now seek to promote ethics within the profession handed Snowden an award in Moscow.

The Government Accountability Project said Snowden received the Sam Adams Award -- a "symbolic candlestick" -- at a ceremony in Moscow late Wednesday.



LAL MOSQUE RAID Musharraf remanded for 14 days

AFP, Islamabad

A court in Pakistan yesterday ordered former military ruler Pervez Musharraf to be held for 14 days over a 2007 raid on a radical mosque, a decision that means he must remain confined to his villa.

Police arrested Musharraf late on Thursday over the military raid on the Red Mosque which left dozens dead a day after a court granted him bail in a separate case.

The 70-year-old has been confined to his villa on the edge of Islamabad, which has been declared a "sub-jail" since April over a string of cases.

The Supreme Court on Wednesday granted him bail over the death of a rebel leader, a move that could have seen him freed once release procedures were completed.

Malala wants to be PM

AFP, New York City

Teenage rights activist Malala Yousafzai told an audience in New York Thursday that she would like to become prime minister of Pakistan to "save" the country.

In an interview with CNN's Christiane Amanpour at a sold-out public event, she also said winning the Nobel Peace Prize would be a "great honor." However, she missed out that honour as OPCW won the prestigious prize this time.

Asked about her conflicting dreams of becoming a doctor or a politician, and whether she would like to become premier, Malala said she wanted to help her homeland.

"I want to become a prime minister of Pakistan," she told Amanpour to cheers from the audience. "I think it's really good because through politics I can save my whole country," she added.

"I can spend much of the budget on education and I can also concentrate on foreign affairs."

Meanwhile, the Pakistani Taliban yesterday said they were "delighted" that Malala missed out on the Nobel Peace Prize.

The Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) shot Malala in the head on her school bus on October 9 last year for speaking out against them.

Spokesman Shahidullah Shahid told AFP the 16-year-old had done nothing to deserve the Nobel, which went to the

Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for its work to rid the world of chemical arms.

"We are delighted that she didn't get it.... Malala is against Islam, she is secular."

Malala won the European Parliament's Sakharov rights prize on Thursday, which the TTP condemned in similar terms, claiming "her struggle against Islam" was the reason the West was honouring her.



Feted by world leaders and celebrities for her courage, Malala has addressed the UN, this week published an autobiography, and would have been the youngest ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate if she had won.

The Pakistani Taliban have threatened to try to assassinate her again and security was tight for her public event in New York late Thursday.

"They can only shoot a body, they cannot shoot my dreams," Malala said.

ODDLY enough

'Vampire' father eats daughter's flesh in PNG

AFP, Sydney

A man has been arrested on cannibalism charges in Papua New Guinea after he took his young daughter's life by biting her neck and sucking out her blood.

The three-year-old child's murder has shocked the country, which has become hardened to numerous cases of witchcraft and brutal killings.

Police said the murder of the child had left the community all horrified and resulted in the local paper, The Post Courier, running a front page headline declaring: 'Vampire Father'.