

NEWS IN brief

DR Congo doctor wins Sakharov prize

A doctor from the Democratic Republic of Congo has won Europe's top human rights prize for helping thousands of gang rape victims in the country.



The 59-year-old gynaecologist told the BBC the prize would make rape survivors in DR Congo "feel they are not alone". He set up the Panzi hospital in eastern DR Congo in 1999 to treat women subjected to horrific sexual violence. He has so far treated more than 30,000 rape survivors.

North Korea frees American prisoner

An American man held for five months in North Korea has arrived back in the United States, US television reported yesterday, showing this plane landing at an airport in Ohio. Jeffrey Fowle, 56 was released Tuesday. Pyongyang said the release was ordered by leader Kim Jong-Un following the "repeated requests" of US President Barack Obama.

Nepal calls off search for trekkers

Nepal yesterday called off a search for any more survivors of a Himalayan snowstorm that claimed some 43 lives, after more than a week of scouring the popular trekking region. Emergency workers have airlifted 518 people to safety, including 310 foreign tourists, since the snowstorm struck the Annapurna Circuit in central Nepal during peak season, catching trekkers, their guides and porters unawares.

Malala receives US Liberty Medal

Malala Yousafzai, the child rights activist and youngest ever recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize, received the Liberty Medal Tuesday and pledged her \$100,000 award to education in her homeland Pakistan. Yousafzai won the annual prize from the National Constitution Center for her "courage and resilience in the face of adversity and for serving as a powerful voice for those who have been denied their basic human rights and liberties," the NCC said.



Blackwater guards found guilty in Iraq killings

Four former employees of the Blackwater security firm were found guilty yesterday in connection with the 2007 shootings of more than 30 Iraqis in Baghdad that left 14 dead. The Blackwater employees were guarding a US diplomatic convoy on September 16, 2007 in Baghdad's Nisour Square when they opened fire. The killings exacerbated Iraqi resentment toward Americans, and was seen by critics as an example of the impunity enjoyed by private security firms on the US payroll in Iraq.

Jerusalem 'terror attack' hurts 9

Israeli police shot and wounded the driver of a car who rammed a group of pedestrians in Jerusalem Wednesday, injuring nine, in a suspected "terror attack." Shortly before 6:00 pm, a car hit pedestrians at the Ammunition Hill tram stop, which lies on the seamline between west and occupied east Jerusalem.

Iraqi Kurds to fight for Kobane

Turkey slams US after some arms aimed for Kurds fall to jihadists

Iraqi Kurdish lawmakers yesterday agreed to send much-needed reinforcements to fellow Kurds battling to stop the key Syrian border town of Kobane from falling into the hands of the so-called Islamic State group.

The approval came as Turkey criticised US air drops of ammunition and weapons to Kobane's Kurdish defenders, with President Recep Tayyip Erdogan saying some of the deliveries had fallen into the wrong hands.

Backed by air strikes from a US-led coalition, Kurdish militia have been defending Kobane against a fierce ISIS offensive for more than a month. Turkey said this week it would allow Iraqi Kurd peshmerga fighters to travel to the town to relieve Kobane's defenders and yesterday the Iraqi region's parliament approved the move. It was not immediately clear how many peshmerga fighters would be deployed or when they might be expected to arrive in Kobane.

After initially losing ground to the jihadists in Kobane, the Kurds have fought back hard, with the US military saying Tuesday they had halted the ISIS



an ISIS militant allegedly displaying the content of a US crate carrying grenades. PHOTO: AFP

advance and remained in control of most of Kobane. They were given a boost this week by the first US air drop of weapons and other supplies, though one of the 27 parachuted bundles was reported to have fallen into jihadist hands, with an ISIS video showing a masked fighter opening wooden boxes filled with rockets and grenades.

Erdogan said some of the weapons had ended up with jihadists and the Democratic Union Party (PYD) -- a Syrian Kurdish group that Ankara does not support.

Ankara sees the PYD as the Syrian arm of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) whose battle for self-rule in

FIGHT AGAINST ISIS

Iran says Iraq can beat jihadists without foreigners

US air strikes repel assault on Iraq's Mosul dam

Syria steps up airstrikes, destroys 'ISIS war planes'

Turkey's southeast has left 40,000 people dead over three decades.

Meanwhile, Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei on Tuesday told Iraq's visiting premier that the Baghdad government is capable of defeating the jihadists without foreign troops being deployed.

"We stand beside you and will seriously defend your government like the previous government," Khamenei, quoted by state television, said in a meeting in Tehran with Iraq's Prime Minister Haider al-Abadi.

"Iran recognises the security of Iraq, (our) neighbour and brother country, as its own security."

Fighting continued in Kobane yesterday, with at least six US-led air strikes reported to have hit ISIS positions.

An AFP reporter across the border in Turkey said heavy fighting broke out in the early evening in parts of the city, in what appeared to be a new IS offensive.

ISIS fighters are reported to have suffered heavy losses in Kobane, especially after the coalition dramatically increased strikes on their positions last week.

Most of the coalition raids have focused on Iraq, and Washington yesterday said that a dozen air strikes had helped fend off an assault by ISIS on the country's strategic Mosul dam.

Syria meanwhile claimed to have destroyed two of three warplanes reportedly seized by ISIS fighters in the north of the country.

The jihadists were reported to have taken the three planes, believed to be MiG-21 and MiG-23 jets, from Syrian military airports now under IS control in the northern provinces of Aleppo and Raqa.

The minister downplayed the threat from the remaining plane, saying it was "unusable" and that Syrian forces would eventually track it down and destroy it.



Legendary editor Ben Bradlee dies

AFP, Washington

Legendary former Washington Post editor Ben Bradlee, who oversaw reporting on the Watergate scandal that brought down US president Richard Nixon, died Tuesday. He was 93.

Bradlee, who died of natural causes at his Washington home, leaves a lasting legacy at the Post and in the wider media, and has been hailed as a genius and for having "the courage of an army." He was also a friend to John F. Kennedy.

President Barack Obama, who awarded Bradlee the Presidential Medal of Freedom last year, led the tributes, saying that for the newspaper man, "journalism was more than a profession -- it was a public good vital to our democracy."

During Bradlee's leadership of the Post from 1968 to 1991, he inspired reporters who "told stories that needed to be told -- stories that helped us understand our world and one another a little bit better," the president added.

His wife, former Washington Post reporter Sally Quinn, revealed last month Bradlee had been diagnosed with dementia.

Donald E. Graham, who served as publisher of the Post and was Bradlee's boss, said: "Ben Bradlee was the best American newspaper editor of his time and had the greatest impact on his newspaper of any modern editor."

It was Graham's mother, Katharine Graham, who was publisher of the Post when Bradlee charged young reporters Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein with investigating the Watergate burglary.

The reporting uncovered a vast scheme of surveillance and dirty tricks, and the resulting coverage led to the impeachment and resignation of Nixon in 1974, and the prosecution of dozens of administration officials.

Bradlee's reign as editor saw the Post win the Pulitzer Prize for its Watergate stories, and the respected newspaper also played a role in the successful legal challenge to the publication of the Pentagon Papers revealing the political manoeuvres leading up to the Vietnam War.



(From left, clockwise) An police officer runs with his weapon drawn outside Parliament Hill in Ottawa yesterday after a gunman attacked the Parliament, injuring at least two people; a soldier is raced to an ambulance after he was shot in the abdomen. He later died in hospital; people inside the Conservative Party caucus room blocked the door with a stack of chairs in defense during the assault.

PHOTO: AP, REUTERS

UN chief to set up Gaza war inquiry

Kerry says Israel, Palestinians status quo 'unsustainable'

UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said he is setting up an inquiry into attacks on UN facilities during Israel's recent offensive in Gaza.

Ban was speaking at a UN Security Council on Tuesday after his visit to Gaza, including the Jabalia refugee camp, where civilians had sought protection during the conflict.

"I look forward to a thorough investigation by the Israel Defense Forces of this and other incidents in which UN facilities sustained hits and many innocent people were killed," he said.

"I am planning to move forward with an independent board of inquiry to look into the most serious of those cases, as well as instances in which weaponry was found on UN premises."

He said the independent investigation would look into most serious cases where innocent people were killed. He did not provide any further details about the investigation.

The inquiry will also analyse the reported use of UN facilities by Palestinian militants to store weapons.

Meanwhile, US Secretary of State John Kerry yesterday said that current relations between Israel and Palestine were "unsustainable" and that the United States was conscious of the urgency of the situation.

"The current situation, the status quo, is unsustainable," he said at a joint news conference with German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier in Berlin.

Some 2,100 Palestinians were killed in the conflict, along with 67 Israeli soldiers and six civilians in Israel.

The UN says that most of the Palestinian dead were civilians.

Israel launched the offensive in Gaza on 8 July, with the stated aim of stopping militants firing rockets and mortars at its territory.

Following several short-lived ceasefires, both sides agreed to an open-ended truce on 26 August which has so far held.

US restricts airport arrivals

AGENCIES

New US rules requiring air passengers from the three West African countries worst hit by Ebola to travel via one of five airports are coming into effect.

Travellers from Sierra Leone, Liberia or Guinea must now arrive at O'Hare in Chicago, JFK, Newark, Washington's Dulles or Atlanta, where they will undergo enhanced screening.

The World Health Organisation is due to convene an emergency meeting later. The current outbreak of the virus has already killed more than 4,500 people. Most of the deaths have been in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Travellers from these countries will have their temperatures checked as part of screening programmes, despite experts warning such moves are unlikely to have an impact.

The new security measures come as public concern grows in the US, where three people have been infected and one person has died from the virus.

The precautions stop short of the travel ban sought by some US Congress members.

EBOLA CRISIS

- WHO to hold crisis talks
- Rwanda imposes Ebola checks on US travelers
- Cuba sends 83 more doctors, nurses in Africa
- US hails chance to cooperate with Cuba

The WHO was set to convene an emergency meeting on Ebola in Geneva yesterday to discuss whether additional measures were needed to fight the outbreak in West Africa.

Meanwhile, Rwanda has boosted travel restrictions to stem the spread of the Ebola virus, ordering travellers who have been in the United States and Spain to send daily updates, the

health minister said yesterday.

The United States on Tuesday welcomed having the chance to cooperate with its old Cold War rival Cuba in the fight against Ebola.

"We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with Cuba to confront the Ebola outbreak. Cuba is making significant contributions by sending hundreds of health workers to Africa," the source told AFP.

Cuba - a country the size of Portugal with a population of just 11 million -- has sought to place itself at the forefront of the international response to the Ebola epidemic, sending 165 doctors and nurses to Sierra Leone to combat the disease.

Meanwhile, a contingent of 83 doctors and nurses departed Cuba late Tuesday for Guinea and Liberia, bringing to 256 the number of medical workers sent by Havana to fight the Ebola outbreak in Africa.

In Sierra Leone, two people died in a riot sparked when health workers struggling to contain the Ebola epidemic tried to take a blood sample from an elderly woman, doctors told AFP yesterday.

'Sweetie' catches its first prey

Australian becomes the first to be convicted in child sex sting

An Australian man caught in a global sting which used a virtual girl called Sweetie to trap child sex predators has become the first person convicted from the operation, the rights group behind it said yesterday.

Dutch rights groups Terre des Hommes said in November last year it had used a computer-generated Filipina girl -- dubbed "Sweetie" -- in Internet chat rooms to ensnare paedophiles.

Over a 10-week period more than 20,000 predators from 71 countries approached the virtual 10-year-old asking for webcam sex performances and more than 1,000 paedophiles had been identified as a result, it said at the time.

The group has said that several offenders have since been arrested after the information was passed onto police, including in Australia, Poland and the United States.

The Australian is the first person to be convicted in the online sting, Terre des Hommes' Jakarta-based Leny Kling told AFP.

Court officials said 38-year-old Scott Robert Hansen had been sentenced on three charges, including using a carriage service to transmit indecent communications to a person aged under 16, and possessing child exploitation material on Tuesday.

He was also charged with failing to comply with a sex offenders order.

Australian Federal Police are understood to have searched Hansen's home following a web chat with "Sweetie" in which he was naked and masturbated, news.com.au reported.



Terre des Hommes has said they did not approach anyone on the Internet but instead waited for people to approach Sweetie and ask for sex acts.

"Sweetie attracted a lot of paedophiles," said Kling.

He said the group wanted to raise the alarm about webcam child sex tourism, a form of child exploitation that has tens of thousands of victims in the Philippines alone.

The problem is also present in Cambodia and Thailand, she said.

Lowest temperature ever in universe recorded in lab

TNN, New Delhi

Scientists at an Italian institute have set a world record of the lowest temperature ever achieved in the universe. They cooled a copper vessel with a volume of one cubic meter to -273.144 degrees Celsius.

This is stunningly close to 'absolute zero', which is equal to -273.15 degrees Celsius. Theoretical physics says that temperature can never go below this limit.

No experiment on Earth has ever cooled a similar mass or volume to temperatures such a low; similar conditions are also not expected to arise in nature.

This gives CUORE the distinction of being the coldest cubic meter in the known universe.

The cooled copper mass, weighing approximately 400 kg, was the coldest cubic meter in the universe for over 15 days.

3-yr-old schoolgirl 'raped' in India

BBC ONLINE

Indian police were investigating the alleged rape of a three-year-old girl in her school in the city of Bangalore yesterday.

The child returned from school on Tuesday and complained of pain that had been caused by "an uncle in school", her parents told the police.

Police say they are questioning school staff and are waiting for a report on the child's medical condition.

The incident comes three months after a six-year-old was raped by a staff member in another Bangalore school. That led to street protests by parents and activists, with many accusing the school of not handling the allegations properly.

He said police were looking at security cameras for any leads. There have been no arrests yet.

The alleged assault on the three-year-old is the latest in a series of brutal gender-related crimes that have caused outrage in India.

Qadri ends Islamabad sit-in

BBC ONLINE

Supporters of a leading cleric in Pakistan are ending a two-month sit-in in the capital, Islamabad, to demand PM Nawaz Sharif's resignation.

Tahirul Qadri said his party was taking the protest to other cities instead. He launched his campaign in August, saying he wanted revolutionary change in how Pakistan was run.

Another opposition leader, ex-cricketer Imran Khan, said his supporters would keep protesting in Islamabad until Sharif resigned.

Imran Khan has already expanded his protest by holding huge anti-government rallies in Karachi and other major cities of Punjab province.

Struggling to sustain his sit-in, it seems Qadri had little choice but to follow suit, the BBC's Shahzeb Jillani reports.

