

NEWSINbrief

EU says 'shooting needs to stop' in Ukraine

AFP, Brussels

The European Union called yesterday for full implementation of a hard-won Ukrainian ceasefire, insisting that "the shooting needs to stop." The worst breaches of the ceasefire were reported around Debaltseve, a key transport hub located between Donetsk and Lugansk, the main rebel strongholds.

Hackers pull off \$1bn bank heist

BBC ONLINE

Up to 100 banks and financial institutions worldwide have been attacked in an "unprecedented cyber robbery", claims a new report. Computer security firm Kaspersky Lab estimates \$1bn has been stolen in the attacks, which it says started in 2013 and are still ongoing.

Top China official to face prosecution for corruption

BBC ONLINE

Former senior official Su Rong has been expelled from the Chinese Communist Party for corruption and faces prosecution, said the country's top anti-corruption body. Su was a vice-chairman of China's parliamentary advisory body. The Central Commission for Discipline Inspection said he had used his position to obtain "large bribes".

Greece delays presidential polls

AFP, Athens

The Greek government has delayed naming its candidate for president amid reports of internal bickering ahead of yesterday's crunch bailout talks in Brussels. The radical left ruling Syriza party will announce its candidate "after the important Eurogroup meeting" on Greece's demands to review its bailout, government spokesman Gabriel Sakellariadis said.



DETROITER LEVINE Working-class poet dies at 87

DETROIT FREE PRESS ONLINE

Not all of Philip Levine's poetry was about his hometown of Detroit, but a lot of it was. And as this son of Russian immigrants rose from the streets to win the Pulitzer Prize and even become poet laureate of the US, his literary voice never stopped pulsating with the sweat and soul of the blue-collar city where he was born.

Levine, whose poetry sang of the triumphs and tragedies of the working class, died Saturday at his home in Fresno, Calif. He was 87.

His wife, Frances Levine, told the Associated Press that her husband died less than a month after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

A graduate of what is now Wayne State University, Levine won the Pulitzer Prize for "The Simple Truth" in 1995 and two National Book Awards for "What Work Is (1991) and "Ashes: Poems New and Old" (1980). He served as the country's poet laureate in 2011-12. He wrote 25 books of poetry, the last, "News of the World" was published in 2009.

Levine spoke about the influence of Detroit on his work in a 2011 interview with the Free Press. "You grow up in a place and it becomes the arena of your discovery," he said.



Relatives of Egyptian Coptic Christians purportedly murdered by Islamic State group militants in Libya react after hearing the news yesterday in the village of al-Awar in Egypt's southern province of Minya. Egypt's President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi vowed to punish the "murderers" responsible for the beheading of 21 Egyptian Christians after the Islamic State group in Libya released a video Sunday purportedly showing the mass killing.

PHOTO: AFP

COPENHAGEN CRISIS

Two arrested suspected of helping suspect

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Two men have been arrested in Denmark on suspicion of helping alleged gunman Omar el-Hussein carry out his terror attacks in Copenhagen.

The 22-year-old had only been released from prison two weeks before his rampage, it has emerged, and police said he had a history of violent crime. He was serving a two-year sentence for grievous bodily harm.

His suspected accomplices were arrested on Sunday and they were due to face a custody hearing later yesterday.

Jens Madsen, head of the Danish intelligence agency PET, said el-Hussein was motivated by the Charlie Hebdo massacre and Isis propaganda.

He "could have been inspired by the events in Paris", Madsen said. "He could also have been inspired by material sent out by Isis and others."

Amedy Coulibaly, an accomplice of the Charlie Hebdo gunmen who took shoppers hostage at a Jewish grocery store, had pledged allegiance to ISIS in a video filmed shortly before his death.

Al-Qaeda followers Said and Cherif Kouachi claimed their massacre of 12 people at the satirical newspaper's office was to "avenge the Prophet" for their depictions of him.

A cartoonist who had drawn caricatures of the Prophet Mohamed was speaking there who had previously received death threats.

Lars Vilks, 68, said he believed he was the intended target after depicting the Muslim Prophet as a dog in 2007.

Agnieszka Kolek, another panellist, said she heard shouts of "Allahu Akbar" - "God is great" in Arabic.

A Danish film-maker, Finn Noergaard, was killed in that attack and nine hours later, volunteer security guard Dan Uzan, 27, was gunned down outside a bat mitzvah near a synagogue.

Five police officers were wounded in the shootings.

Breaches threaten ceasefire

Rebels say no arms pull-back until 'full ceasefire'

AFP, Kiev

A shaky truce in Ukraine was already at risk on its second day yesterday with both the Kiev government and pro-Russian separatists accusing each other of attacks holding up an agreed pull-back of heavy weapons from the frontline.

Pro-Russian rebels in east Ukraine said yesterday they will only start pulling back weapons from the frontline under a peace deal once there is a "full ceasefire".

"In accordance with the Minsk agreement, the withdrawal of military hardware can only happen under certain conditions and one of them is a full ceasefire," Eduard Basurin, a spokesman for the defence ministry of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic was quoted as saying by the rebels' official news agency.

"If the Ukrainian army does not stop shooting and violating the Minsk agreement then the forces of the Donetsk People's Republic will not withdraw their arms," Basurin said.

"There is no question at the moment of us withdrawing heavy

weapons" because of persistent rebel attacks, a Ukrainian military spokesman, Vladyslav Seleznyov, told AFP.

The main hotspot was Debaltseve, a key transport hub located between Donetsk and Lugansk, where fighting is unabated.

AFP journalists and an OSCE monitoring team near Debaltseve observed shelling in the area. They were unable to enter the town because of the hostile

UKRAINE CRISIS

ities between thousands of government troops inside, and the rebels who have mostly surrounded it.

A municipal official who fled the town, Natalia Karabuta, told AFP that around 5,000 civilians were still trapped inside, with little food and water.

After a lull on Sunday, "today (yesterday) it all flared up

again, and non-stop explosions were heard," she said.

The separatists also said Ukrainian troops had fired on Donetsk airport as journalists were being shown around. No casualties were reported.

Kiev said five Ukrainian troops have been killed and 25 wounded in the town of Shyrokin, near the coastal city of Mariupol, since the ceasefire started.

Under the terms of a European-mediated peace plan agreed last week, two days of a "comprehensive" ceasefire were meant to lead to a withdrawal of heavy weapons from the frontline, starting at midnight (2200 GMT) yesterday.

Other steps, including a prisoner swap and negotiations over increased autonomy for separatist-ruled areas, were then to follow.

Ukraine's Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin said during a visit to Bulgaria that "the Ukraine armed forces are fully observing the ceasefire regime but unfortunately in response we have received 112... attacks in the past 24 hours from the terrorists of Donetsk and Lugansk".

Russia vows to respond to 'illogical' EU sanctions

AFP, Moscow

Moscow said yesterday it would respond to the latest EU sanctions over the Ukraine conflict which target several prominent figures including a popular singer, condemning them as "inconsistent and illogical".

"Such decisions... will be followed by an appropriate response," the foreign ministry said in a statement.

"We note how inconsistent and illogical it is that every time that a hope appears of a solution to the crisis inside Ukraine, the European Union rushes to bring in new anti-Russian restrictions."

The latest EU measures target five Russians including deputy defence ministers Anatoly Antonov and Arkady Bakhtin, as well as Iosif Kobzon, an MP who is also a popular crooner often compared to Frank Sinatra.

The foreign ministry complained that the sanctions "go against common sense" and "look particularly ridiculous" after the European-mediated ceasefire agreement reached last week.

It said the decision to impose the travel bans and asset freezes, which were agreed last month after deadly attacks by rebels on the port city of Mariupol, was "not beneficial" to efforts to resolve the conflict.

Moscow accused Brussels of not bothering to understand the situation in east Ukraine and "doing the bidding of the party of war in Kiev".

Italians rescue 2,000 migrants

BBC ONLINE

The Italian coastguard has rescued more than 2,000 migrants in a major operation off the Libyan coast, officials said.

During the rescue, search teams were threatened by Kalashnikov-wielding men who approached in a speedboat from Libya, Italian officials said.

Last week, at least 300 migrants perished in the Mediterranean Sea.

They were travelling in dinghies that ran into trouble during stormy weather after leaving the coast of Libya.

On Friday another 600 migrants were rescued about 80km off the coast of the North African country.

The latest rescue effort on Sunday involved a plane, four coastguard ships, two tugboats and a navy vessel, according to the AFP news agency.

Local media reported that the migrants had been aboard 12 boats and had been taken to Italy. According to Italy's transport ministry, four men with Kalashnikov rifles sped out from the Libyan shore during the rescue and ordered the coastguard to return a boat that had been emptied of migrants.

Some of the gunmen then jumped onto the boat and took off with it, added Transport Minister Maurizio Lupi.



Members of Turkey's Bar Associations hold a banner reading "The state of law, not state of police!", and a poster depicting slain Ozgecan Aslan, in Ankara, yesterday during a march to protest against a law that strengthens the police's power. Anger mounted in Turkey yesterday over the murder and attempted rape by a bus driver of the 20-year-old female student whose burned body was discovered on Friday, as a court placed three suspects in pre-trial detention over the brutal killing.

PHOTO: AFP

JAMMU & KASHMIR GOVT FORMATION Talks hit last-mile hurdle

NDTV ONLINE

Talks between the Peoples Democratic Party or PDP and the BJP for government formation in Jammu and Kashmir have hit a last-mile hurdle, say sources.

The roadblock, said sources, is a written assurance that the PDP wants stating that the present constitutional status of J&K will be maintained. The regional party placed first, with the BJP coming second in elections held nearly two months ago, that threw up a hung assembly.

Negotiations between the two parties, seen as unlikely partners, have been on for weeks. The PDP, which swept the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley, has been firmly opposed to any attempt to weaken Article 370, which is seen as vital for the autonomy of the state by residents. It makes the consent of the state government necessary for laws except those related to defence or national security.

In the past, BJP leaders have suggested that the need for Article 370 should be

debated because it promotes separatism.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will reportedly now take a final call on the common minimum programme on the basis of which the two parties plan to govern J&K. He is expected to meet PDP chief Mufti Mohammad Sayeed once the differences on the common minimum programme are ironed out.

Sayeed, 79, is expected to be chief minister in such an alliance. Junior partner, the BJP, will get the post of Deputy Chief Minister for its 59-year-old leader Nirmal Singh, sources have said.

As a regional party, the PDP has also asked for phased withdrawal of the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, which gives the army the authority to make arrests without warrants. It is said to have suggested that the mechanism could be reinstated if necessary.

The two parties had indicated last week that they had reached an agreement that helped bridge the gap between them on these issues.

Attempt to oust Benjamin Netanyahu

Israel's Arab leaders join forces; influence future government

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

For years Arabs have been effectively marginalised in Israel's political life. But at the weekend leaders of the country's substantial Arab minority launched an alliance which puts them on course to become a powerful force in next month's general election - with the potential to tip the outcome against the Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Five previously fractious political groupings that divided the Arab vote between them agreed to field a single "Joint List" with the aim of toppling the Israeli leader, whom they blame for a further deterioration in their own standing and conditions, and for harming fellow Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

"We are no longer investing our energy in defeating each other; on the contrary we are joining our forces to grow bigger and bigger," said Aida Touma, a socialist and feminist from

the Hadash party who shares prominence on the list alongside such others as Masoud Ganaim, an Islamic fundamentalist.

Such an alliance was previously unthinkable because of ideological and personal rivalries. But Arab leaders



judged it imperative after the Israeli parliament, the Knesset, changed the law raising the threshold for a party to enter parliament from 2 per cent of the overall vote to 3.25 per cent.

For smaller parties, it was either join together or die. The alliance also answers the demands of Arab voters for

a united legislative effort, and its formation has raised hopes for a degree of empowerment and change.

Arab citizens, who are the descendants of Arabs who were not displaced during Israel's creation in 1948, make up about 20 per cent of Israel's population but their Knesset representation has always been markedly smaller, due to fragmentation of the vote and a lower turnout than among Jewish Israelis.

According to a poll last week by Maariv newspaper, Mr Netanyahu's Likud party is on course to secure 24 seats in the 17 March election and his Labour party-led challenger, the Zionist Camp, is likely to win 23. The Joint List is forecast to secure 13 seats, which would make it the third-largest grouping in parliament, and list leaders have set their sights on 15, which would be four more than the separate Arab groupings held in the previous Knesset.

QUOTE of the day



"We're very grateful for Netanyahu's concern but having said that, we are Danish -- we're Danish Jews but we're Danish -- and it won't be terror that makes us go to Israel!"

Said spokesman Jeppe Juhl for the Jewish Community in Denmark yesterday as they turned down an offer by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to emigrate to Israel following a weekend attack on a synagogue in Copenhagen.