

## TRANSASIA TRAGEDY Pilot shut off wrong engine: probe report

REUTERS, Taipei/singapore

The pilot flying a TransAsia Airways (6702.TW) ATR mistakenly switched off the plane's only working engine seconds before it crashed in February, killing 43 people, Taiwan's Aviation Safety Council (ASC) said in its latest report yesterday.

The ASC's report also showed that Captain Liao Jian-zong had failed simulator training in May 2014, in part because he had insufficient knowledge of how to deal with an engine flame-out on take-off.

"Wow, pulled back the wrong side throttle," Liao, 41, was heard to say on voice recordings seconds before the crash.

There appeared to be confusion in the cockpit as the two captains tried to regain control of the plane after one engine lost power about three minutes into the doomed flight.

Liao reduced the throttle on the working engine but did not appear to realize his mistake until it was too late.

Seconds later the almost new ATR 72-600, which had 58 people on board, crashed upside down into a shallow river in Taipei after it lurched between buildings, clipping an overpass and a taxi. Fifteen survived but all three pilots and 40 passengers and other crew died in the crash.



Rescuers search for survivors at the site of the capsized passenger ferry off Ormoc City, central Philippines, yesterday. Inset, A survivor of the ferry tragedy cries after arriving at the pier in Ormoc City, central Philippines.

PHOTO: AFP

## Ferry tragedy kills 38 in Philippines

AFP, Ormoc City

A ferry loaded with nearly 200 people capsized off a central Philippine port on yesterday, officials said, killing at least 38 people in the latest of the country's long string of maritime tragedies.

Around 27 people are still missing after the 33-tonne, wooden-hulled Kim Nirvana tipped over shortly after setting sail from Ormoc city at midday, the coast guard said.

Ormoc public safety officer Goody Edcas said that at least 125 survivors had now been found out of the 189 passengers and crew on board, adding that finding more survivors were unlikely.

The authorities were puzzled how the accident had happened in relatively calm waters, after initial reports of choppy seas, and discounted speculation that the ferry was overloaded.

The captain of the boat survived the incident and will be investigated, officials said.

The Kim Nirvana was on its normal route to the islands, which sit about an hour's sail from Ormoc city.

## NEWSINbrief

### Tunisia arrests 12 over beach attack

REUTERS, Tunis

Tunisian authorities have arrested 12 people they suspect are linked to the Sousse beach hotel attack on foreign tourists, and are hunting for two men who trained in a Libyan jihadist camp with the Sousse attacker, an official said.

Thirty-eight foreigners, most British holidaymakers, were killed in Friday's attack before the gunman was shot by police. In March, two gunmen killed 21 people at the Tunis Bardo museum, before they were also shot.

### DSK still popular with French voters!

AFP, Paris

He lost his job over a rape allegation and had the sordid details of his sex life laid bare in a prostitution trial, but that is not enough to turn French voters against Dominique Strauss-Kahn. A new poll published Thursday says the disgraced former finance minister is the second most popular choice only after current Prime Minister Manuel Valls among a list of left-wing politicians for the 2017 presidential election, way ahead of the incumbent, Francois Hollande.

### After 40 years, White House lifts selfie ban

AFP, Washington

The White House on Wednesday lifted a 40-year ban on visitors taking photos, and much-prized selfies, on tours of 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. The First Lady Michelle Obama announced the decision to the broader public on her Instagram account, ceremoniously ripping up the previous "No Photos" sign.

### BBC to cut more than 1,000 jobs

AFP, London

The BBC yesterday said that it is cutting more than 1,000 jobs, mostly in management, as part of a long-term drive to reduce costs that has been accelerated by changing viewing habits. More people are watching programmes online, leading to a sharper than expected decline in the numbers paying the BBC licence fee levied on all households with a television, the British broadcasters said.

## DEADLY CONFRONTATION WITH ISIS IN SINAI Egypt to wipe out terror

AFP, Cairo

Egypt yesterday vowed to crush an escalating insurgency in the Sinai Peninsula after Islamic State group jihadists killed dozens in their most spectacular assault yet in the strife-plagued region.

The violence poses a major test for President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, the former army chief who has pledged to wipe out the militants.

The military deployed F-16 warplanes on Wednesday to bomb ISIS fighters who battled security forces on the streets of the North Sinai town of Sheikh Zuweid after launching a surprise dawn blitz on army checkpoints.

The military said 17 soldiers and 100 militants had been killed. Medical and

security officials said at least 70 people, mostly soldiers, had died along with dozens of jihadists. The reason for the discrepancy in the tolls was unclear.

"We have the will and determination to root out this black terrorism," the military said in a statement. "We will not stop until Sinai is cleansed of all the dens of terror."

The White House condemned the unprecedented wave of attacks, which came two days after state prosecutor Hisham Barakat was assassinated in a Cairo car bombing, the most senior government official killed in the jihadist insurgency.

The Sinai attacks were the most brazen in their scope since jihadists launched an insurgency in 2013 after the army overthrew Islamist president Mohamed Morsi.

## GULF OF MEXICO SPILL BP agrees to pay \$18.7b

AFP, London

British energy giant BP yesterday announced it had agreed to settle US federal and state claims worth up to \$18.7 billion over the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill.

"With this agreement we provide a path to closure for BP and the Gulf," said BP chairman Carl-Henric Svanberg.

The head of the US Justice Department, Attorney General Loretta Lynch, hailed what she said was a record deal.

The deal has been struck with the US federal government and five Gulf Coast states -- Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi and Texas -- affected by the explosion on the Deepwater Horizon drilling rig.

Eleven people died and millions of barrels of oil were spilled into the Gulf, decimating wildlife and devastating the ecology of a region dependent on the seafood and tourism industries.



## RESTORATION OF DIPLOMATIC TIES China welcomes US-Cuba deal

AFP, Beijing

China yesterday welcomed the re-establishment of formal ties between the US and Cuba, despite the move representing a reconciliation between Beijing's longstanding Communist ally and its greatest diplomatic rival.

Washington and Havana on Wednesday agreed a historic deal to re-establish full diplomatic relations, severed 54 years ago in the heat of the Cold War.

Presidents Barack Obama and Raul Castro exchanged letters agreeing to unfreeze ties on July 20, when embassies can be reopened.

Beijing's foreign ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said the decision was an "important step" that "serves the common interests of the two countries and two peoples, contributes to regional stability and development and also meets the long-term and universal aspiration of the international community". She urged the US to remove its remaining embargoes and sanctions against Cuba.

## ISIS threatens to topple Hamas in Gaza

REUTERS, Cairo

Islamic State insurgents threatened to turn the Gaza Strip into another of their Middle East fiefdoms, accusing Hamas, the organization that rules the Palestinian territory, of being insufficiently stringent about religious enforcement.

The video statement, issued from an Islamic State stronghold in Syria, was a rare public challenge to Hamas, which has been cracking down on jihadis in Gaza who oppose its truces with Israel and reconciliation with the U.S.-backed rival Palestinian faction Fatah.

## Greek govt 'may resign' if referendum goes against it

AFP, Athens

Greece's radical left government suggested it would resign if it fails to get its way in a make-or-break referendum Sunday that could decide the country's financial future.

Greek Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis said the government "may very well" quit in a radio interview yesterday in which he also said "we are on a war footing" to ensure the rushed referendum happens in time.

International creditors and markets are stepping back after days of dizzying drama over the Greek crisis to watch the outcome of the consultation at the weekend.

Ordinary Greeks, though, are left in financial limbo under capital controls imposed all this week to stem a bank run. They are reduced to 60-euro (\$67) daily ATM withdrawal caps, adding hardship to lives already

ground down by years of austerity.

Although Athens insists the referendum is narrowly on tough austerity conditions attached to a bailout that expired on Tuesday, EU leaders say it is a vote on whether Greece wants to remain in the euro.

The Greek government led by Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras is fiercely campaigning for a 'No' vote, believing rejecting the bailout conditions would strengthen its hand in negotiations with creditors.

On Tuesday, it failed to repay 1.5 billion euros to one of those creditors, the International Monetary Fund.

Athens is in danger of failing in arrears to two other major creditors, the European Union and the European Central Bank, if it also fails to pay 3.5 billion euros on July 20.



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