

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE

An inspiration for Arab world

World leaders and international organisations hailed Tunisia's national dialogue mediators as a beacon of hope for the region after they won the Nobel Peace Prize for helping guide the country's transition to democracy.

IT'S A TRIBUTE TO TUNISIA MARTYRS: A JOINT WINNER

The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Tunisian national dialogue mediators is a "tribute to martyrs" of the country's democracy, the head of a labour union within the quartet said.

AN INSPIRATION TO THE REGION: UN CHIEF

The Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet offers hope that serious political challenges can be overcome through dialogue and consensual politics, Ban Ki-moon said in a statement.

PRIZE REWARDS DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION: FRENCH PRESIDENT

French President Francois Hollande said the awarding of the Nobel Peace Prize to Tunisia's national dialogue mediators was a reward for the north African country's successful transition to democracy.

A BEACON OF HOPE FOR THE REGION: UK PM

British Prime Minister David Cameron tweeted that the mediators deserved the prize for "helping make Tunisia a beacon of hope for the region".

A DESERVED REWARD FOR WORK FOR DEMOCRACY: MERKEL'S SPOKESMAN

German Chancellor Angela Merkel's spokesman said: "It is a deserved reward for work for democracy, for holding to the idea that people who have rejected a dictatorship deserve better than another dictatorship."

AWARD RECOGNISES PATH OF CONSENSUS: TUNISIA PRESIDENT

The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Tunisian national dialogue mediators recognises the "path of consensus" chosen by the country after the 2011 revolution, President Beji Caied Essebsi said.

WINNERS SHOW WAY OUT OF REGIONAL CRISES: EU

The Nobel Peace Prize to the National Dialogue Quartet in Tunisia shows the way out of the crises in the region: national unity and democracy, EU foreign policy chief Federica Mogherini tweeted.

Nobel Prize 2015 Peace National Dialogue Quartet (Tunisia) Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) The European Union (EU) Ellen Johnson Sirleaf (Liberia) Leymah Gbowee (Liberia) Tawakkul Karman (Yemen) Liu Xiaobo (China)



Demonstrators demanding the closure of the Parramatta Mosque yell at a counter-protester during a rally outside the mosque in western Sydney, Australia yesterday. Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull called for calm as police prepared for clashes between protesters at the rally outside the Sydney mosque that was attended by a teenager who killed a police officer a week ago.

IS advances on Aleppo despite Russia air war

AFP, Beirut

The Islamic State group advanced yesterday to the outskirts of Syria's Aleppo in an offensive that also took the jihadists to within a few kilometres of regime troops defending the city.

"Dozens of combatants were killed on both sides," said Rami Abdel Rahman of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

After a night of fierce clashes, IS militants had driven out rebels from the localities of Tall Qrah, Tall Soussin, Kafar Qares and the military base of Madrasat al-Mushat by 5:00 am, he said.

The seizure of these positions brought the jihadists to about three kilometres from the Sheikh Najjar industrial zone, where forces loyal to President Bashar al-Assad are positioned just outside the northern city. IS fighters are about 10 kilometres from the northern edges of Aleppo city, Abdel Rahman told AFP. "IS has never been so close to the city of Aleppo, and this is its biggest advance

towards" the country's pre-war commercial capital, said Abdel Rahman, whose Britain-based group relies on a network of sources on the ground across Syria.

The Islamic State group claimed territory mostly to the northeast of Aleppo, where it controls towns and regions including Al-Bab, one of its strongholds.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards announced one of its senior commanders was killed by IS in the Aleppo region on Thursday, without revealing the exact circumstances.

A Guards statement said Hamedani had played an "important role... reinforcing the front of Islamic resistance against the terrorists" but was killed "during an advisory mission".

Germany and Spain yesterday urged Washington and Moscow to work together to help unlock a political solution to the Syrian war, after Russian air strikes there raised tensions.

SYRIA CRISIS US, Russia urged to help unlock a political solution Iran Revolutionary Guards commander killed

US to stop training Syria rebels

BBC ONLINE

The US is to end its efforts to train new Syrian rebel forces and says it will shift to providing equipment and weapons to existing forces.

Its \$500m programme was heavily criticised after it emerged that US-trained rebels had handed vehicles and ammunition over to extremists and that four or five of the fighters were in Syria.

The programme had aimed to train and equip 5,400 fighters this year and a further 15,000 in 2016.

A senior administration official said the programme was being put on "pause".

The programme had suffered from "significant challenges", the official said.

The US will no longer vet every individual recruit but just the leaders of the groups they decide to work with, who will face "very vigorous vetting".

Of the initial two groups sent into the country under the previous programme, the first was rounded up by Jabhat al-Nusra, an offshoot of al-Qaeda, in July. The second handed much of its equipment over to the same group in September, reportedly in exchange for safe passage.

Quoting an anonymous US Department of Defense source, the New York Times reported that the US would no longer recruit Syrian rebels to go through its training programmes in Jordan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates.

EU RELOCATION PLAN First asylum seekers leave Italy

Sweden poised for 150,000 refugees

AFP, Rome

A small group of Eritreans left Italy for Sweden yesterday, the first contingent of asylum seekers to be relocated under a much-contested European Union scheme to ease the burden of the migration crisis on frontline countries.

Grinning shyly before the media, 19 young Eritreans -- five women and 14 men -- waved and blew kisses as they boarded a small propeller plane at Rome's Ciampino airport after hugging members of the Red Cross and UN Refugee agency goodbye.

"Today is an important day for the European Union, it is a day of victory... for those who believe in Europe, for those who believed in saving human lives," Italian Interior Minister Angelino Alfano told journalists after the departure.

"It is a defeat for those who claim it is better for the Mediterranean to become a lake of death... and believe that scaring the European people is the way forward," he added.

Meanwhile, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Lofven said yesterday up to 150,000 people could seek asylum this year in the Scandinavian country, which is struggling to find housing for the new arrivals.



A migrant waves as he boards a plane before being relocated to Sweden at Ciampino military airbase in Rome, Italy yesterday.

EU must improve Russia ties: EC chief

BBC ONLINE

The EU must restore a "practical relationship" with Russia and not let the US "dictate" that policy, the European Commission chief has said.

Jean-Claude Juncker criticised US President Barack Obama's description of Russia as merely "a regional power".

EU-US sanctions were imposed on Russia because of its intervention in Ukraine. Obama had a frosty meeting recently with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"Russia must be treated decently," Juncker said during a visit to Passau in Germany.

"We must make efforts towards a practical relationship with Russia... We can't go on like this," he said.

Last year the West imposed visa bans and asset freezes on dozens of senior Russian officials.

The sanctions also restricted Russian access to Western bank credits and industrial technology in the defence and energy sectors. In retaliation, Russia banned most imports of Western food and drink.

Passau has become a major transit hub for non-EU migrants seeking a new life in Germany, and Juncker's visit was focused on the EU's efforts to handle the migrant influx.

The civil war in Syria is driving rising numbers of Syrians into Turkey and onwards to Central Europe. Turkey already hosts about two million Syrians in basic refugee camps.

Middle East press foretells doom for IS

BBC ONLINE

Russia's intensification of its military intervention in Syria, with the launch Wednesday of cruise missiles against Syrian targets, has sparked a war of words in the regional press.

Newspapers in Syria and its ally Iran are naturally delighted, since Russia's avowed target is the militant group Islamic State (IS).

But the Turkish press is still disgruntled about Russian warplanes' incursions into Turkish airspace.

Some regional commentators are convinced that Russian military intervention is a positive move, one which could put an end to "terrorism" in the region.

Pundit Nourhan el-Sheikh in Egyptian state-owned daily Al-Ahram says it "is a clear message that Russia will not allow extremist powers to blow away Syria and Moscow's interests in the region".

Syrian daily Al-Ba'th, the mouthpiece of the ruling party, suggests that - despite conflicting reactions from the US and the West - all parties could benefit from the move.

"What is certain right now is that this is a new turning point in the conflict and there is no turning back," says the paper.

Iranian conservative newspaper says: "If the West does not create obstacles, it could pave the way for the restoration of security in the region as well as the world."

Meanwhile, Turkish papers are unhappy with Russian incursions into their airspace, with HaberTurk quoting President Recep Tayyip Erdogan as saying: "I will not call Putin again."

Mustafa Balbay in Cumhuriyet notes that "the one who is most offended by Russia becoming our southern neighbour is the president. How could his old friend Putin take a step that puts him into such a difficult position!"

Libya rivals urged to sign peace deal

Form a national unity govt

AFP, Tripoli

World leaders urged Libya's warring parties yesterday to sign a proposed peace deal installing a national unity government, after a cool response from some lawmakers in the country's rival parliaments.

Libya has had two administrations since August last year when a militia alliance that includes Islamists overran the capital, forcing the internationally recognised government to take refuge in the east.

The country descended into chaos after the fall of Moamer Gaddafi in 2011, with the two sides vying for power as well as several groups battling for control of its vast resource wealth.

The new government proposed by UN envoy Bernardino Leon would be headed by Favez el-Sarraj, a deputy in the Tripoli parliament, and include three deputy prime ministers, one each from the west, east and south of the country.

A graduate in business management, Sarraj has been involved in dialogue that tried to bring together the various actors of Libyan society to end the crisis.

"After a year of work in this process, after working with more than 150 Libyan personalities from all the regions... finally the moment has come in which we can propose a national unity government," Leon told a news conference in Morocco.

India anger at Saudi arm chopping

BBC ONLINE

India's foreign ministry has complained to the Saudi Arabian authorities following an alleged "brutal" attack on a 58-year-old Indian woman in Riyadh.

Kasturi Munirathinam's right arm was chopped off, allegedly by her employer, when she tried to escape from their house last week, reports say. Munirathinam was working as a domestic help. She is recovering in hospital.

Her family has alleged that she was being tortured by her Saudi employers. Saudi authorities have not commented on the incident yet.

Indian Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj wrote on Twitter: "This is unacceptable. We have taken this up with Saudi authorities. Our embassy is in touch with the victim."

Nepal to elect new PM tomorrow

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal yesterday announced plans to elect a new prime minister this weekend, three weeks after the country adopted a new constitution that triggered deadly protests and a border blockade.

Incumbent prime minister Sushil Koirala had pledged to step down after the constitution -- Nepal's first to be drawn up by elected representatives -- was adopted on September 20.

He announced on October 2 he would ask the president to begin the process of forming a new government.

After parties failed to agree on a consensus candidate for prime minister, President Ram Baran Yadav asked parliament to vote, speaker Subash Chandra Nembang told lawmakers.

"I have fixed the election for the post of the prime minister... on Sunday at 11 in the morning," Nembang said.

Parties have a day to register their nominations. If none of the candidates is able to secure a simple majority, the speaker will set a date for re-elections to be held.

The constitution marks the final stage in a peace process that began when Maoist rebels laid down their arms in 2006 after a decade-long insurgency.

The charter was meant to end years of inequality and cement peace but bitter disputes over its provisions have sparked violent protests and a blockade of a key trade route by demonstrators that has forced nationwide fuel rationing.