

NEWS IN brief

'US knew they were bombing MSF hospital'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

American special operations analysts knew they were bombing a hospital run by Doctors Without Borders, said an Associated Press report. The US chose to move forward with the airstrike because they believed a Pakistani was holding heavy weapons in storage and using the hospital as a command center, according to the AP's source. The 3 October bombings claimed the lives of 22 doctors, nurses and patients while wounding 37 others.

Nepal elects first woman speaker

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's parliament elected its first woman speaker yesterday, as the country continued forming its new government after the adoption of a landmark constitution last month. Maoist parliamentarian Onsari Gharti Magar was unanimously elected as the House speaker after her only competitor, Anuradha Thapa of Nepal Majdoor Kisan Party, withdrew her candidacy.

2 new Ebola cases in Guinea: WHO

AFP, Geneva

Two people have fallen ill with Ebola in Guinea after two weeks with no new confirmed cases of the disease in West Africa, the World Health Organization said yesterday. The worst Ebola outbreak in record in Africa has been largely stopped in its tracks after killing more than 11,000 people.

Pakistan, Russia sign gas pipeline deal

AFP, Islamabad

Pakistan and Russia yesterday signed an agreement to build a gas pipeline stretching hundreds of kilometres from Karachi on the Arabian Sea to the eastern city of Lahore. The 1,100-kilometre (680-mile) pipeline, with a capacity of 12.4 billion cubic metres (438 billion cubic feet) per year, will connect liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals in Karachi with those in Lahore.



(From top, anti-clockwise) A Palestinian posing as a journalist stabs an Israeli soldier with a knife before being shot dead near the West Bank city of Hebron; a fire rages after an arson attack on Joseph's Tomb in Jerusalem; Palestinian demonstrator clash with Israeli forces in West Bank and Gaza.



Deadly clashes erupt again

Palestinians torch revered Jewish shrine; 2 more shot dead in Gaza

AFP, Jerusalem

Palestinians torched a site revered by Jews in the West Bank in an incident that threatened to further inflame two weeks of deadly unrest, as fresh protests erupted yesterday.

Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas, under pressure over recent comments that some have labelled incitement, quickly condemned the fire at Joseph's Tomb, in the northern city of Nablus.

Video showed what looked like an extensive blaze, and the Israeli army called it "a despicable act" of desecration.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon strongly condemned the arson attack at the opening of an emergency session of the Security Council called to discuss the escalating violence.

The arson came as Palestinians called for a "Friday of revolution" against Israel, and police barred men under 40 from attending the main weekly prayers at the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque, seeking to keep young protesters away.

Israeli fire killed two Palestinians and wounded 98 others in clashes

along the border in the Gaza Strip.

Another Palestinian died in clashes in Beit Furik near Nablus, while protests also broke out in Bethlehem and Hebron.

Outside the West Bank settlement of Kiryat Arba, a Palestinian disguised as a news photographer stabbed and wounded a soldier before being shot dead.

Israeli security forces have deployed massively in Jerusalem after two weeks

ISRAEL-PALESTINE VIOLENCE

of Palestinian attacks in the city and across Israel.

Beginning Sunday, some 300 soldiers will reinforce police, stretched thin by the unrest.

On Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated his willingness to meet Abbas, while accusing him of inciting and encouraging violence.

US Secretary of State John Kerry, who plans to travel to the region "in

the coming days", also warned the Palestinian leader against incitement.

Joseph's Tomb, inside a compound in the Palestinian refugee camp of Balata in Nablus, has been the scene of recurring violence between Israelis and Palestinians.

Many Jews believe it to be the final resting place of the biblical patriarch Joseph, while Muslims believe an Islamic cleric, Sheikh Yussef (Joseph) Dawiqat was buried there two centuries ago.

The shrine is under Palestinian control and off-limits to Israelis except on escorted trips organised by the army.

Seven Israelis have been killed and dozens wounded in the violence so far, while 37 Palestinians have died, including alleged attackers, and hundreds more been wounded in clashes.

In the intifadas of 1987-1993 and 2000-2005, thousands of people were killed and many more wounded in near daily violence.

Israel yesterday rejected Palestinian calls for a protection force to be deployed in east Jerusalem to quell violence around the flashpoint Al-Aqsa mosque.

Putin predicts chaos in Central Asia after US's Afghan move

Forms joint force with ex-Soviet allies to deal possible crisis

AGENCIES

Russian President Vladimir Putin yesterday warned that violence in Afghanistan could spill over into ex-Soviet Central Asia, a day after the US announced it would keep thousands of troops in the conflict-racked country.

"The situation there (in Afghanistan) is genuinely close to critical," Putin said at a meeting of leaders from the ex-Soviet region in Kazakhstan.

"Terrorists of different stripes are gaining more influence and do not hide their plans for further expansion," Putin told the summit of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS).

"One of their aims is to break into the Central Asian region. It is important for us to be ready to react in concert to this scenario," Putin said in a speech posted on the Kremlin's website.

US President Barack Obama on Thursday said American troops would remain in Afghanistan past 2016, retreating from a major campaign pledge as he admitted Afghan forces were not ready to stand alone

against the resurgent Taliban. Kabul and Nato welcomed the US decision.

The leaders of ex-Soviet states, led by Vladimir Putin, also responded to growing instability in Afghanistan yesterday by agreeing to create a joint task force to defend their bloc's external borders if a crisis arises.

The move could mean that Russian troops, as part of collective forces, will be deployed to Afghanistan's borders as the US-led coalition gradually withdraws from the country, leaving behind a power vacuum.

If Russian troops do move in, it would be a fresh sign of Putin's new military assertiveness, after his intervention in Syria.

They agreed on the creation of what is described in a summit document as a "grouping of border (forces) and other institutions from CIS member states designed to resolve crisis situations on the external borders".

There were no details on the composition of the force or on where it would be deployed. But Sergei Lebedev, the CIS executive secretary, mentioned Tajikistan, which has a border with Afghanistan, as the possible location for the deployment of joint forces.

Nigeria mosque attack kills 30

Military dubs Boko Haram as threat to sovereignty

AFP, Maiduguri

At least 34 people were killed in a wave of suicide bomb attacks in northeast Nigeria, as the military yesterday warned Boko Haram militants threaten the country's sovereignty.

Thirty died in a double bombing at a mosque in Molai on Thursday night, Mohammed Kanar, from the National Emergency Management Agency (NEMA) said.

Three female bombers blew themselves up and killed four others in nearby Umarari early yesterday, he added. Locals, however, said the death toll was higher from both incidents and that more than 60 may have been killed in total.

Both areas are on the outskirts of the Borno state capital of Maiduguri, which has been increasingly targeted by coordinated bomb and suicide attacks in recent weeks.

The attacks came just days after Nigeria's

President Muhammadu Buhari said he was "fully confident" of ending the six-year insurgency by the end of this year.

The military was "well-positioned to meet the December deadline which they have been given", he said in a statement on Wednesday.

Yesterday, Nigeria's most senior army officer, Chief of Army Staff Lieutenant General Tukur Buratai, told troops "the next few days will be crucial" in the counter-insurgency.

"It is also crucial to our country, Nigeria. Our sovereignty as a nation is threatened. The Nigerian Army and indeed the military as the symbol of our nationhood is being challenged.

"Our ability to stand and defeat the Boko Haram terrorists in the next few weeks will determine the future of our country. We cannot afford to lose the fight," he said.

The US military will provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance expertise, the White House said, after similar multiple suicide attacks in Cameroon, Chad and Niger.



National League for Democracy chairperson Aung San Suu Kyi (C) greets supporters after a campaign rally at Thandwe city in Rakhine State, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

Humans who can defy Ebola

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Scientists have found a group of women who appear to be immune to the deadly Ebola virus.

The team studied 60 women, including 25 from Guéckédou in Guinea where the current outbreak is thought to have started. One woman studied was found to have antibodies in her blood, despite never having the virus.

"These are phenomenal women who have had a horrendous story to tell," Professor Miles Carroll, a virologist at the UK government's chemical and biological weapons research facility, told The Guardian.

"They have had lots of contact with the virus, clearing up vomit, diarrhoea, sleeping with children with Ebola overnight, and they never presented with Ebola symptoms and somehow they have an immune response to the virus."

Ebola is highly contagious, and can be caught through exposure to bodily fluids once symptoms have appeared.

Nobody is yet sure how those women become immune. But further study could show what is happening in the body to allow them to be — and so provide extra information about what happens after people have recovered from the disease.

Hunter kills 'biggest elephant'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

A hunter has shot dead what is believed to be the biggest elephant killed for "sport" in Africa for 30 years, according to reports.

The animal, one of the largest elephants ever seen in Zimbabwe, was killed on 8 October in an area set aside for private hunting, which borders the Gonarezhou National Park, The Daily Telegraph reported.

A German hunter reportedly paid about £39,000 for a permit to shoot a large bull elephant and was led by an experienced local guide.



Elephants are being killed at such a rate — mainly by poachers — that there are fears they could become extinct within a generation.

Poachers are thought to kill around 50,000 elephants a year.

In July, an American dentist sparked an international uproar when he shot dead a lion known as Cecil with a bow and arrow. The 13-year-old animal was being studied by researchers and was well known for being friendly towards humans.

No migrant deal with EU yet: Turkey

UN demands probe after Afghan refugee shot dead in Bulgaria

BBC ONLINE

Turkish officials have stressed that a plan agreed by EU officials for joint action with Turkey on the migrant crisis has not been finalised.

The leaders agreed to speed up visa liberalisation talks for Turks if Turkey stems the influx.

They also promised to "re-energise" talks on Turkey joining the EU and to consider more aid.

However, Turkey's Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioglu said the agreement was still a draft.

He called the financial measures proposed by the EU "unacceptable",

according to the AFP news agency.

Earlier Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan had made scathing criticisms of Europe's reaction to the crisis.

"They announce they'll take in 30,000 to 40,000 refugees and then they are nominated for the Nobel for that. We are hosting two and a half million refugees but nobody cares," he said.

Nearly 600,000 migrants have reached the EU by sea so far this year, many of them travelling from Turkey.

Meanwhile, Hungary announced it is closing its border with Croatia at midnight local time (2200 GMT). Hungary has been a major destina-

tion for migrants during the crisis, who often aim to continue on to Austria and Germany. Last month it sealed its border with Serbia.

Meanwhile a migrant thought to be Afghan was shot dead by a Bulgarian border guard after entering the country from Turkey late on Thursday.

Angela Merkel said EU states were considering a Turkish request for €3bn (£2.2bn, \$3.4bn) in aid.

Merkel will travel to Turkey at the weekend.

Turkey is hosting some two million migrants, most of them fleeing the war in neighbouring Syria.