

TRAGEDY IN KOLKATA

(From left, clockwise) A man is seen trapped amid the debris of an under-construction flyover after it collapsed in Kolkata; rescue workers and volunteers carry away a body next to rubble of the huge structure; an aerial view of the collapsed flyover, yesterday. Hundreds of emergency workers in India battled yesterday to rescue dozens of people still trapped after the flyover collapsed onto a busy street, killing at least 21 people and injuring nearly 100. (Story on page 16.)

PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP



UN tribunal acquits Serb leader of war crimes

AFP, The Hague

UN war crimes judges yesterday acquitted radical Serb leader Vojislav Seselj on all nine charges of committing atrocities in the 1990s Balkans wars, in a surprise judgement which was swiftly denounced by Croatia. "The chamber by majority holds that the prosecution has not provided sufficient evidence to establish that the crimes were committed" by Seselj, Judge Jean-Claude Antonetti said at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY). "Following the verdict, Vojislav Seselj is now a free man." Seselj, 61, had faced nine charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity over his alleged ruthless quest to unite "all Serbian lands" in a "Greater Serbia".



Vojislav Seselj

Prosecutors had alleged he was behind the murder of many Croat, Muslim and other non-Serb civilians, as well as the forced deportation of "tens of thousands" from large areas of Bosnia-Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia.

But the judges found that although crimes were committed, Seselj had not had "hierarchical" responsibility for his paramilitary forces after they came under the control of the Serbian army and could not be held responsible for their crimes.

They said the prosecution's case was full of "confusion" and "ambiguities" and had failed to clarify the broader context in which events in Croatia and Bosnia took place.

The prosecution had given "at best an interpretation that hides the way the events unfolded and at worst distorts them in relation to the evidence presented to the chamber," Antonetti said.

The prosecutor's office said it took note of the verdict and would carefully review it to see if there are grounds to appeal. Seselj, who was excused from attending the judgement on medical grounds after treatment for colon cancer, welcomed the verdict.

Croatia's Prime Minister Tihomir Oreskovic however slammed the acquittal, saying: "The verdict is shameful. It is the defeat

Auschwitz survivor Kertesz dies

REUTERS, Budapest

Hungarian novelist and Auschwitz survivor Imre Kertesz, winner of the 2002 Nobel Literature Prize, died yesterday at the age of 86 after a long illness, the state news agency MTI reported, citing his publisher.

As a Jew persecuted by the Nazis, and then a writer living under repressive Hungarian Communist rule, Kertesz went through some of the most acute suffering of the 20th century and wrote about it in both direct and delicate prose.

In his work, Kertesz returns repeatedly to the experience of Auschwitz, the camp in German-occupied Poland where more than one million Jews and other victims of Hitler's Third Reich died.

Punish women who get illegal abortions

Says Donald Trump, backtracks after outcry

AFP, Washington

Women who have illegal abortions should be punished, Republican presidential frontrunner Donald Trump said Wednesday, before backpedalling after a firestorm erupted over his latest controversial comment.

Democratic frontrunner Hillary Clinton branded Trump's remark "horrific," Bernie Sanders called it "shameful" and even major pro-life groups spoke out strongly against punishing women who have abortions.

Trump's comment came during a combative interview on MSNBC, with host Chris Matthews pressing the billionaire reality TV star to specify how a woman should be punished, if abortion were banned in the United States.

Trump tried to sidestep the question, saying he hadn't determined what kind of punishment a woman should face for having an abortion, but acknowledged "the answer is that there has to be some form of punishment."

Asked if the man who gets the woman

pregnant should be punished, Trump responded, "I would say no."

Women's health provider Planned Parenthood, which conservatives oppose for its abortion practices, said Trump "is now inciting violence against women for making a decision that's theirs to make."

The Trump campaign later Wednesday issued a statement on abortion, without mentioning his remarks to MSNBC, but reversing the stance he took in the interview.

If abortion were to become illegal under US law, then the doctor or any other person involved in performing the procedure would be legally responsible, the statement said.

"The woman is a victim in this case as is the life in her womb. My position has not changed -- like Ronald Reagan, I am pro-life with exceptions," said the statement.

It was the latest twist for Trump, who has taken contradictory or competing stances on issues including torture, bans on Muslims entering the United States, violence at his rallies and the racist Ku Klux Klan movement.

PARIS TERROR AT

Belgium to extradite Abdeslam

AFP, Brussels

Belgian authorities yesterday decided to extradite Paris attacks suspect Salah Abdeslam to France.

Abdeslam, the sole surviving suspect in the November terror attacks in Paris in which 130 people were killed, was arrested in Brussels on March 18 after four months on the run as Europe's most wanted man.

Four days after his arrest, the Belgian capital was



Migrants and refugees wait in the line for food distribution in the makeshift camp at the Greek-Macedonian border, near the Greek village of Idomeni yesterday, where thousands of people are stranded by the Balkan border blockade.

PHOTO: AFP

EU-TURKEY MIGRANT DEAL 500 set to return to Turkey on Monday

AFP, Athens

Migrant returns from Greece to Turkey are to begin Monday under the terms of an EU deal reached this month, officials said yesterday as Athens struggled to manage the overload on its soil.

"There is a major engagement on the part of Greece and Turkey towards sending 500 people back on April 4, barring a last-minute problem," a European Commission source told AFP, though Athens and Brussels later declined to confirm how many would be sent back.

Those returning will be "Syrians who have not requested asylum, Afghans and Pakistanis", the official added, confirming that this is the first return set to take place under the deal agreed by Brussels and Ankara on March 18.

The official did not specify from which of the five Aegean Sea islands currently hosting refugees and migrants the operation will take place, nor whether it will take place via sea or air.

In Brussels, EU spokeswoman Natasha Bertaud confirmed that Monday was the "target day" for the start of the return of asylum-seekers whose claims had "been declared inadmissible because they can get protection in Turkey."

At the same time, she said, the EU would start resettling Syrian refugees living in camps in Turkey.

The official declined however to put a figure on the number of readmissions planned for Monday.

In Turkey, Hurriyet daily cited officials as saying that a "readmission centre" would be set up near the coastal town of Dikili in Izmir province for those sent back from Greece.

A local official said the migrants would be processed within 24 hours and sent on to Izmir, or to refugee camps elsewhere in Turkey, Hurriyet said.

struck by coordinated Islamic State group bombings at the airport and a metro station carried out by suicide attackers with links to Abdeslam and the Paris attacks cell.

Abdeslam's lawyer earlier said that his 26-year-old client had agreed to be transferred to France under a European arrest warrant, clearing the way for a fast-track extradition.

"What Salah Abdeslam wants to make known is that he wants to cooperate with the French authorities. These are the words he wants to make known," his lawyer Cedric Moisse told reporters in Brussels.

He has refused to talk since the Brussels bombings.

French President Francois Hollande announced immediately after Abdeslam's arrest that he wanted him returned to France as quickly as possible to face justice over the attacks.

He is believed to have acted as a logistics coordinator for the Paris massacre and has told investigators he was meant to carry out a suicide attack at the Stade de France stadium but backed out.

'Cannibalism was 'rampant' at Nazi concentration camp'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The only British survivor found at the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp at the end of the Second World War detailed in newly-released documents how victims of Nazi atrocities had resorted to cannibalism to stay alive.

Harold Le Druillenec said that he spent all his time at Belsen heaving bodies into graves in a graphic account recounting the horrors that he had seen while surviving three concentration camps. More than 70,000 people died at Bergen-Belsen in 1941-45.

He was arrested in Jersey the day before D-Day in 1944 for helping his sister to harbour an escaped Russian prisoner-of-war and for non-cooperation with German occupying forces in the Channel Islands. He went on to give evidence at the Belsen trials after the war at which dozens of SS men and women were convicted for their roles in crimes at the camp.

"I survived three concentration camps by a lot of luck and the ability to 'live outside the carcass'. I retain this trait," Le Druillenec wrote in his note released today by the

National Archives in which he sought compensation for his disability.

He said there was no food, water and sleep was impossible at Belsen, the worst of the three camps where he was held.

He wrote: "Jungle law reigned among the prisoners; at night you killed or were killed; by day cannibalism was rampant."

"The bulk of Auschwitz had been transferred to Belsen when I arrived and it was here that I heard the expression 'there is only one way out of here - through the chimney!' (crematorium)."

He was freed after 10 months' imprisonment, during which he lost more than half his body weight, and spent almost a year recovering from the dysentery, scabies, malnutrition and septicaemia that he suffered.

The Foreign Office eventually agreed to pay him compensation, awarding him £1,835 - around £30,000 today - for the time he spent imprisoned and his disabilities, which were deemed to be "less

Shebab attack on Somalia hotel kills 6

AFP, Mogadishu

Somalia's Shebab insurgents said they carried out a suicide attack at a hotel in the central town of Galkayo yesterday in which six people died, including a senior local government official.

"There was a blast, a suicide bomber blew himself up killing several people including a senior official," said police officer Abdiweli Adan.

Witnesses said there was large blast near a cafe where people had gathered to drink tea.

Somalia's Al-Qaeda-affiliated Shebab rebels said they carried out the attack, in a statement broadcast on the insur-

Sea 'could rise 1m by next century'

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Sea levels are set to rise by more than a metre over the next century - more than twice the previous forecast, according to alarming new research.

The threat posed by rising sea levels is much greater than had been thought because scientists have underestimated the effect of atmospheric global warming on Antarctic ice sheets - having tended to concentrate more on climate change's role in warming the water than increasing the air temperature.

But the rising temperature of the atmosphere is likely to have an even bigger effect on the water level because the melting ice that will drive up the sea level is found on the land rather than in the sea.

This means that the sea level could rise by as much as 15 metres by 2500 unless greenhouse gases are significantly curbed as the melting Antarctic ice sheet massively increases the volume of water in the ocean.



"At a time in the past when global average temperatures were only slightly warmer than today sea levels were much higher... most of which much have been caused by retreat on Antarctica," said co-author Robert DeConto, of the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

The Antarctic is the primary contributor to sea level rise because much of its ice sits on the ground.

Floating ice, like that of the Arctic Ocean, is already in the water and if it melts does not raise the sea level.

Although only parts of the Antarctica ice sheet will melt - even in a worst-case scenario - the melting forecast in this new research could be sufficient to double the recent estimates by the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change for sea level rise over the next 100 years.