

# NEWS IN brief

## Indian film festival drops Pak movie

AFP, Mumbai  
An Indian film festival dropped a Pakistani drama from its programme yesterday after protesters threatened to disrupt the screening -- the latest movie to fall foul of heightened tensions between the nuclear-armed neighbours. Organisers of the MAMI Mumbai Film Festival said they would not show the 1959 classic "Jago Hua Savera" following a complaint from an Indian NGO called Sangharsh.

## Thai king's death will not delay polls

REUTERS, Bangkok  
The death of Thai King Bhumibol Adulyadej will not affect plans to hold a general election in 2017, media reported yesterday, dismissing speculation that the military government would delay the poll as the country enters a year of mourning. Thais continued to flock from across the country to the Grand Palace in Bangkok to pay their respects to the king, a beloved father figure who died on Thursday.

## Myanmar fires border police chief

REUTERS, Yangon  
Myanmar has fired the police official charged with guarding its troubled border with Bangladesh, officials said yesterday, after deadly attacks that sparked fighting with insurgents allegedly inspired by Islamist militants. Nine police officers were killed when three police posts in northern Rakhine State were overrun on Oct 9 by attackers believed to belong to the mostly stateless Rohingya Muslim group.

## Nobel panel gives up knoeknockin' on Dylan's door

AFP, Stockholm  
The Swedish Academy says it has given up trying to reach Bob Dylan, days after it awarded him the Nobel Prize for Literature. "Right now we are doing nothing. I have called and sent emails to his closest collaborator and received very friendly replies. For now, that is certainly enough," the academy's permanent secretary, Sara Danius, told state radio SR yesterday.

## Eight dead in second Brazil prison riot

AFP, Rio De Janeiro  
Eight inmates were killed and burned yesterday in a fresh prison riot in Brazil, police said, a day after clashes between rival factions in another jail left 25 detainees dead. "There are thought to be eight people dead but the bodies are burned and the medical authorities will have to confirm" the toll, a local police spokesman told AFP after yesterday's riot at a jail in the northwestern state of Rondonia.



Iraqi Kurdish Peshmerga fighters fire a mortar shell from the top of Mount Zardak, about 25 kilometres east of Mosul, as they take part in an operation against IS jihadists yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Iraq troops make gains

AGENCIES  
Iraqi pro-government forces have made gains at the start of a large-scale operation to retake Mosul, the last major stronghold of the so-called Islamic State (IS) in the country.

A force of some 30,000 Iraqi and Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Sunni tribal fighters launched their push towards the city in the early hours of yesterday. The Kurds seized several villages in the first few hours of the operation.

Helicopters released flares and explosions could be heard on the city's eastern front, where Reuters watched Kurdish fighters move forward to take outlying villages. As the US-backed assault began, one Kurdish general said: "If I am killed today I will die happy because I have done something for my people."

An Iraqi military source said that combat units had inflicted heavy losses on IS forces as they moved in on the Hamdaniya district, east of Mosul. Pro-government forces have also made gains as they move on Mosul from the south, security sources said.

Meanwhile IS claimed that a number of suicide attacks targeting pro-government forces on the outskirts of the city had suppressed the advance.

The IS-linked news agency, Amaq, reported that eight suicide attacks had targeted Kurdish forces.

But the group has not made an official comment on the launch of the offensive.

The United Nations has said the battle would require the world's biggest and most complex humanitarian effort, which could leave up to 1 million people homeless and see civilians used as human shields or even gassed.

France said yesterday defence ministers from the international coalition fighting the Islamic State group in Mosul and elsewhere in Iraq and Syria will meet in Paris on October 25, reports AFP.

US Defence Secretary Ashton Carter will be among 13 ministers who will assess progress in the battle to drive IS jihadists from Iraq's second-biggest city.

Although the coalition includes around 60 countries, the meeting will only comprise Western nations providing air support.

They are: United States, France, Britain, Canada, Australia, Germany, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, Norway, Denmark and New Zealand.

President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday said Turkey would play a role in the US-backed Iraqi offensive to retake the city of Mosul from jihadists, saying it was unthinkable for Ankara to stay on the sidelines.

"We will be in the operation and we will be at the table," Erdogan said in a televised speech. "Our brothers are there and our relatives are there. It is out of the question that we are not involved."

**WAR AGAINST IS IN MOSUL**

30,000 federal forces are leading the offensive

Anti-IS coalition to take stock on Oct 25

Turkey to take part in operation: Erdogan

# No sense in war

Says Philippine leader ahead of China visit

REUTERS, Beijing  
There is no sense in going to war over the disputed South China Sea as talks are far better, Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte told China's official Xinhua news agency, praising China for not criticising his country, unlike Western nations.

Duterte goes to China today with at least 200 members of the Philippine business elite to pave the way for what he calls a new commercial alliance, amid deteriorating ties with longtime ally the United States.

On Sunday, Duterte said he would raise a controversial arbitral ruling on the South China Sea with China's leaders and vowed not to surrender any sovereignty or deviate from the July award by the tribunal in the Hague.

The ruling dealt a blow to China's extensive claims in the South China Sea. Beijing has refused to recognise the case and has chided any country telling it to abide by the ruling.

In the Xinhua interview published yesterday, Duterte said he wanted negotiation, not confrontation, over the South China Sea.

"There is no sense in going to war. There is no sense fighting over a body of water," Duterte said. "China never criticises," Duterte said in the Xinhua interview. "They help us quietly."

In Brunei, Philippine Foreign Secretary Perfecto Yasay said the South China Sea issue was not the sum total of the relationship between China and the Philippines, but the time was not yet right to discuss resolving it.

# Residential blocks bombed in Aleppo

Dozens of civilians, including children, killed

AFP, Aleppo  
Dozens of civilians including 12 from the same family were yesterday killed in heavy bombardment of east Aleppo despite Western warnings of sanctions against Syria's regime over attacks on the city.

Once Syria's thriving commercial hub, Aleppo has been ravaged by bombing raids and intensifying clashes as President Bashar al-Assad's forces fight to capture rebel-held parts of the city.

World powers were expected to follow up yesterday on last-ditch efforts at the weekend aimed at ending Syria's five-year conflict.

The latest air strikes on Aleppo killed 13 civilians in the rebel-held district of Marjeh, including 12 members of the same family, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

"Nine of the family members were minors, including a 17-year-old girl and her newborn," said the Britain-based monitoring group's head Rami Abdel Rahman. The deaths brought to 47 the number of people killed since Sunday morning

in east Aleppo, the Observatory said.

Bombardment has been so heavy in recent days that streets have been blocked off by massive piles of rubble from destroyed buildings, an AFP correspondent said.

The deadliest raids were overnight on a residential block in Qaterji, where the Observatory said Russian strikes killed 18 civilians.

"There are still families under the ruins. We pulled out seven or eight bodies and dozens of wounded," said ambulance driver Abu Mohamed.

"The hospitals are full of casualties. It's a disaster."

One of those rescued was Maarouf, a 12-year-old whose leg had been trapped under rubble on the upper floor of a residential building.

A White Helmet volunteer in a crane could be seen approaching the boy, who was clad in a dust-covered shirt and wriggling in vain to get himself free. Maarouf was extracted and his injured right leg treated at a field hospital.

But White Helmets rescuers later emerged with a dead baby cradled in a blanket, her face caked in dust.



# Donald Trump blames 'animals' backing Clinton

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK  
Donald Trump has blamed "animals representing Hillary Clinton" for an apparent firebomb attack on one of the Republican's campaign offices.

The presidential candidate took to Twitter after the office in Orange County, North Carolina, had been damaged when a petrol bomb was thrown through a window.

The walls of the office were charred and a sofa burned in the attack, but no one was hurt.

Graffiti reading "Nazi Republicans leave town or else" was sprayed on a nearby building, along with a swastika.

Trump immediately blamed Hillary Clinton's supporters, tweeting: "Animals representing Hillary Clinton and Dems in North Carolina just firebombed our office in Orange County because we are winning".

He added "All safe in Orange County, North Carolina. With you all the way, will never forget. Now we have to win. Proud of you all!"

Clinton condemned the attack, calling it "horrific and unacceptable". She said she was "very grateful that everyone is safe".

The North Carolina Republican Party account thanked her for her "thoughts and prayers".

Sources said it was lucky no one was harmed in the attack, as the firebomb reportedly landed near a sofa where campaign volunteers often take naps.

Dallas Woodhouse, the Republican Party's executive director in the state, told The Charlotte Observer the attack was "political terrorism".



Members of the Syrian Civil Defence, known as the White Helmets, carry the body of a girl dug out from the rubble of a destroyed building following reported air strikes in the rebel-held Qaterji neighbourhood of the northern city of Aleppo yesterday.

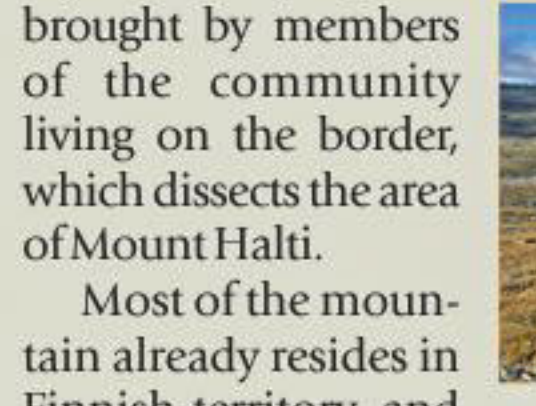
PHOTO: AFP

# Norway refuses to give mountain to Finland

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK  
After months of deliberations, Norway has decided not to gift a mountain peak to Finland to mark its 100 years of independence from Russia, in a decision that will disappoint campaigners.

Norwegian Prime Minister Erna Solberg rejected a proposal brought by members of the community living on the border, which dissects the area of Mount Halti.

Most of the mountain already resides in Finnish territory, and moving the border just a few hundred feet to the northeast would have seen the 4,478-foot summit change hands. The change would have made little difference to Norway, which has countless higher Arctic mountains, some almost twice as tall. But it would have made the peak of



Mount Halti the highest point in Finland, overtaking the current highest point, a spur a short distance down the mountain.

In a letter to the local mayor of Kafjord, Solberg welcomed the idea as a sign of strong cross-border relations, but said it was too legally contentious to change the border of Norway.

"This creative proposal has received a very positive response from the public," she said, referencing the more than 17,000 supporters of a Facebook group calling for the move.

The prime minister said: "I welcome this and I see a clear sign that Norway and Finland have a close relationship," adding that "the alteration of borders between countries causes too many judicial problems that could affect, for example, the Constitution".

# Myanmar ferry sinks, killing 32

AFP, Yangon  
Searchers have recovered 32 bodies after an overloaded ferry sank in central Myanmar and expect to find dozens more dead, officials said yesterday, as workers began raising the boat from the riverbed.

A total of 154 people were rescued alive after the ferry sank early Saturday on the Chindwin River, about 72 kilometres (45 miles) north of the city of Monywa.

But rescuers have found only bloated corpses floating in the water since then, and fear the toll could reach 100 once they raise the craft.

"So far we have recovered 32 dead bodies," said Sa Willy Frient, director of the local relief and resettlement department who is overseeing the operation.

"We are trying to raise the boat using a crane after tying it with strong ropes. After we lift it out, the death toll will be higher."

Sa Willy Frient estimated 240-250 people -- around 100 more than its capacity -- were on the boat, along with heavy cargo.

Survivor Hnin Lei Yee, a 27-year-old schoolteacher, was travelling with her husband and one-year-old daughter to celebrate the Buddhist Thadingyut festival with her family. Her baby was killed in the disaster. She still does not know her husband's fate. "It happened very fast," she told AFP. "The window was open so I had a chance to get out of the boat."

# Refugees being driven to suicide on Nauru

REUTERS, Sydney  
Many of the 410 asylum seekers held on a tiny Pacific Island are being driven to attempt suicide to escape the prison-like conditions they face in indefinite detention on behalf of Australia, rights group Amnesty International said yesterday.

Under Australia's tough immigration policy, asylum seekers intercepted trying to reach the country by boat are sent for processing at a camp in Nauru or to Manus Island in Papua New Guinea (PNG) and are not eligible for resettlement in Australia.

"I met children as young as nine who had already tried to kill themselves and were talking openly about ending their lives," said Anna Keistat, an Amnesty official, who is one of a handful of international observers to have visited Nauru.

for comment on the report. Many of the 410 men, women and children Australian figures show to have been in detention on Nauru by August 31 have been confirmed as refugees and have been there for several years.

