

NEWS IN brief

3,300 more migrants rescued off Libya

CNN ONLINE

Rescuers came to the aid of 3,300 migrants and refugees off the coast of Libya on Friday, the Italian coast guard said. Seven bodies were also recovered during the rescue operation. Between January and September this year, 127,600 migrants in total headed to Italy via the Central Mediterranean route, the agency said.

LoC clashes kill seven

Pak Rangers: India

TNN, New Delhi/Jammu

The Indian Border Security Force (BSF) said on Friday that it killed seven Pakistani Rangers personnel and a terrorist in retaliatory firing after a sniper attack by the Pakistani forces at Hiranagar in Kathua district of Jammu had injured an Indian trooper in the morning. The death of the seven Pakistan Rangers may delay the prospect of de-escalation of tension between the neighbours.

Russia chopper crash kills 19 in Siberia

AFP, Moscow

Nineteen people died when a helicopter carrying oil and gas field workers crashed in a remote area of Siberia in bad weather, Russian investigators said yesterday. The Mi-8 helicopter carrying 22 people including three crew crashed Friday night in the far-northern Yamalo-Nenetsky region some 2,400 kilometres (1,500 miles) northeast of Moscow, investigators said.

Turkey hits Syrian Kurd militia again

AFP, Ankara

Turkey hit Syrian Kurdish militia targets with rocket fires in northern Syria for the second time in less than 72 hours, the military said yesterday, quoted in state media. It did not say if any militia fighters were killed. Late Wednesday, Turkish jets struck YPG positions and the armed forces claimed they killed up to 200 YPG fighters but the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights put the toll lower.

First woman atop Everest dies at 77

AFP, Tokyo

The first woman to conquer Mount Everest, Junko Tabei of Japan, died aged 77, media reported yesterday. She completed the first conquest of Mount Everest by a woman in 1975, accomplishing the feat via the southeast ridge route. She went on to conquer soaring peaks in several continents -- Kilimanjaro in Tanzania, Mount McKinley in US and the Vinson Massif in Antarctica -- heralding the era of women climbers.



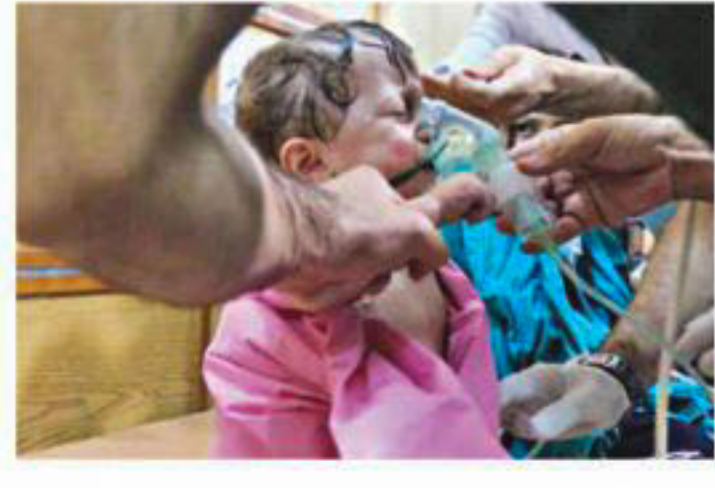
Civilians return to their village after it was liberated from Islamic State militants, south of Mosul in Qayyara, Iraq, yesterday. PHOTO: REUTERS

Aleppo truce expires

No evacuation as Russia accuses rebels of preventing civilians from leaving; UN says regime used chem gas

A ceasefire in the Syrian army's Russian-backed assault on rebel-held Aleppo appeared to expire yesterday with the UN saying it had been unable to evacuate anyone from the ravaged city. Moscow had extended the unilateral "humanitarian pause" into a third day until 1600 GMT yesterday, but announced no further renewal of the truce despite a UN request for longer to evacuate wounded civilians.

dors for evacuations, but just a handful of people crossed through a single passage, with the others remaining deserted. Syrian state media and Russian authorities have accused rebels in the east of preventing civilians



from leaving and using them as "human shields". More than 2,000 civilians have been wounded since the army launched its offensive to drive the rebels out of the eastern districts they have held since 2012. Nearly 500 people have been killed. The United Nations had hoped to use the ceasefire to

evacuate seriously wounded people, and possibly deliver aid. On Friday, UN experts said the Syrian army was responsible for a March 2015 chemical weapons attack on the village of Qmenas. But they said they were unable to determine who was responsible for two other chemical weapons attacks, one in the same month and the other in April 2014.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault yesterday urged the UN Security Council to issue a "clear condemnation" of chemical weapons use in Syria in a resolution "that places the perpetrators under sanctions". Meanwhile, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that the intervention was meant to "liberate" Syria and keep Assad in power. "Either Assad is in Damascus, or Al-Nusra is," he said, referring to former al-Qaeda affiliate the Fateh al-Sham Front. "There is no third option here."

Toxic gas sends scores to hospital near Mosul

REUTERS, Qayyara

Up to 1,000 people have been treated for breathing problems linked to fumes from a sulphur plant set ablaze during fighting with Islamic State in northern Iraq and US officials say US forces at a nearby airfield are wearing protective masks.

A cloud of white smoke blanketed the area around the Mishraq sulphur plant, near Mosul, mingling with black fumes from oil wells that the militants torched to cover their moves.

Local residents and the US military said Islamic State militants deliberately set the sulphur plant ablaze as they strive to repel an offensive by Iraqi government forces to drive them from Mosul, their last major stronghold in the country.

Up to 1,000 people have been admitted to the nearby Qayyara central hospital with respiratory problems since Friday morning and later released, according to hospital director Abdul Salam Jabbouri. No deaths have been reported at the hospital. However, AFP reported two deaths.

The Qayyara West airfield is the main US hub to support Iraqi-led operations to retake Mosul. There are about 5,000 US troops in Iraq but the U.S. military has not disclosed the number of personnel at the airfield.

US officials said Islamic State set the sulphur plant ablaze on Thursday during fighting around al-Mishraq, south of Mosul. Iraqi state TV said the fire had been "brought under control" yesterday, but the Reuters reporter on the scene said smoke was still visible from a distance late in the day.

Operation Inherent Resolve, the official name of the US-led anti-Islamic State coalition, said in a statement on Saturday it had provided more than 24,000 protective chemical masks to the Iraqi security forces and the allied Kurdish Peshmerga fighters during training for the Mosul offensive.

Separately, the coalition said Qayyara airfield started receiving cargo aircraft on Friday, after US Air Force engineers repaired it.

'It's impolite and arrogant'

Nobel academy member slams Dylan silence

AFP, Stockholm

A prominent member of the academy which awards the Nobel literature prize slammed this year's laureate Bob Dylan as arrogant on Friday, citing his total silence since the award was announced last week.

The US singer-songwriter has not responded to repeated phone calls from the Swedish Academy, nor reacted in any way in public to the news.

"It's impolite and arrogant," said the academy member, Swedish writer Per Wastberg, in comments aired on SVT public television.

On the evening of October 13, the day the literature prize winner was announced, Dylan played a concert in Las Vegas during which he just sang his songs and made no comment at all to his fans.

He ended the concert with a version of the Frank Sinatra hit "Why Try To Change Me Now?", taken to be a nod towards his

longstanding aversion to the media. Every December 10, Nobel prize winners are invited to Stockholm to receive their awards from King Carl XVI Gustaf and give a speech during a banquet.

The Swedish Academy still does not know if Dylan plans to come.

"This is an unprecedented situation," said Wastberg.

Anders Barany, a member of the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences, recalled that Albert Einstein snubbed the academy after being awarded the physics prize in 1921.

In 1964 French writer and philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre refused the literature prize outright.

Dylan, 75, whose lyrics have influenced generations of fans, is the first songwriter to win the literature prize.

Other contenders for this year's prize included Salman Rushdie, Syrian poet Adonis and Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o.



Mourners gather outside of the Grand Palace to sing for a recording of the royal anthem in honour of Thailand's late King Bhumibol Adulyadej, in Bangkok, Thailand, yesterday. Tens of thousands of black-clad Thais gathered for the event in a striking display of devotion to the recently deceased King. PHOTO: REUTERS

'Seriously illegal act'

China slams 'provocative' US sail-by in South China Sea

AFP, Beijing

China has slammed the US for sailing a warship near disputed territory in the South China Sea, saying the move was a "serious illegal act" and "deliberately provocative".

In a statement on its website late Friday night, the country's defence ministry said two Chinese naval vessels warned off a US ship after it entered "Chinese territorial waters" near the Paracel Islands, known as Xisha in Chinese.

China controls all of the islands, which are also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan.

The ship's "entrance into China's territorial waters is a serious illegal act and a deliberately provocative act," it said, adding that the ministry had made "solemn representations" to Washington.

In a separate online statement, the foreign ministry said the action had "seriously violated China's sovereignty and security interests, and had seriously broken relevant

Chinese law and international law." The Pentagon said Friday it had sent the destroyer USS Decatur close to the Paracel Islands, but that the ship had not passed within the 12 nautical mile zone that international law defines as territorial waters.

The manoeuvre was the third South China Sea "freedom of navigation" operation conducted this year by the US, which has repeatedly stressed it will ignore China's "excessive" maritime claims.

Friday's operation was the first since a tribunal at the Permanent Court of Arbitration in The Hague in July ruled there was no legal basis to China's claims to nearly all of the sea -- a verdict Beijing dismissed vehemently.

Several other nations across the region including the Philippines and Vietnam have rival claims to various parts of the South China Sea.



US warship in South China Sea

World hates Obama: Trump

UN expert accuses him of peddling 'lies and xenophobia'

AGENCIES

Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump has claimed countries are turning against the United States because "the world hates our president".

Trump told supporters in Jonestown, Pennsylvania a "weak US" led by Barack Obama has caused the likes of the Philippines to abandon decades of close alliance in favour of China.

He said: "The world hates our president. The world hates us. You saw what happened with the Philippines after years and years and years.

"They're now looking to Russia and China, because they don't feel good about the weak America."

Obama cancelled a meeting with Rodrigo Duterte last month after the Philippines' controversial new president appeared to call him a "son of a whore".

On Thursday Duterte declared "America has lost" and he has called

for closer links with Russia and China rather than the West.

Although Duterte later appeared to backtrack, saying it was not in his country's interests to completely cut ties with the US.



Meanwhile, a United Nations investigator on terrorism has accused Donald Trump of peddling "lies and xenophobia" with repeated attempts to link Syrian refugees and IS.

The Republican candidate has made the claim on numerous occasions and repeated the assertions during his third and final television debate with

Hillary Clinton.

Trump claimed his rival was "taking in tens of thousands of Syrian refugees who probably, in many cases - not probably - who are definitely, in many cases, IS-aligned".

Ben Emmerson, the UN's special rapporteur on the protection of human rights in counter-terrorism, said there was "almost no statistical support" for the Presidential candidate's claims.

Emmerson said Trump's comments were "one of the clearest examples", amounting to "the peddling of lies and xenophobia."

His report on the impact of counter-terrorism measures on the human rights of migrants and refugees has been presented to the UN General Assembly.

In another development, an envelope containing a white powdery substance was sent to Hillary Clinton's campaign offices in New York, though police initially ruled out any danger.

South Africa quits ICC

AFP, Pretoria

South Africa announced Friday that it would withdraw from the International Criminal Court, dealing a major blow to a troubled institution set up to try the world's worst crimes.

The decision followed a dispute last year when Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir visited the country for an African Union summit despite facing an ICC arrest warrant over alleged war crimes.

South Africa refused to arrest him, saying he had immunity as a head of state.

Justice Minister Michael Masutha told reporters in Pretoria that the ICC was "inhibiting South Africa's ability to honour its obligations relating to the granting of diplomatic immunity".

"There is a view in Africa that the ICC in choosing who to prosecute has seemingly preferred to target leaders in Africa," Masutha added to AFP.

The ICC, set up in 2002, is often accused of bias against Africa and has also struggled with a lack of cooperation, including from the United States which has signed the court's treaty but never ratified it.

Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International slammed the move. The US said it was "concerned" by Pretoria's decision.

Bashir has evaded arrest since his ICC indictment in 2009 for alleged war crimes in Sudan's Darfur conflict in which 300,000 people were killed and two million forced to flee their homes.

Earlier this month Burundi said it would leave the court, and Namibia and Kenya have also raised the possibility.

Welcoming South Africa's decision to withdraw from the ICC, Sudan urged other African member nations to follow suit.

Burundi's foreign minister Alain-Ayme Nyamitwe, meanwhile, said the country expected others to follow, adding that it was important to note that "the ICC is not popular in Africa".

Cameroon rail accident kills dozens

AFP, Yaounde

At least 60 were killed when a packed passenger train derailed between Cameroon's two main cities, a hospital source in the capital Yaounde said yesterday, giving a new toll the day after the accident.

Almost 600 people were injured when the train, travelling from Yaounde to the economic hub of Douala, came off the rails near the central city of Eseka at around midday Friday.

The train was crammed with people because a collapsed bridge had made travelling the same route by road impossible. State-run television reported that many of the injured were in a critical condition and that the cause of the accident had not been discovered.