

Clashes shake Aleppo after ceasefire

Clashes and air strikes shook the Syrian city of Aleppo, a monitor said yesterday, as heavy fighting resumed after the end of three-day truce declared by government ally Russia. The unilateral truce ended without any evacuations by the UN, which had hoped to bring wounded civilians out of the rebel-held east and deliver aid after weeks of government bombardment and a three-month siege. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported heavy clashes overnight in several areas along the front line that divides the city, while rebels fired a barrage of rockets and mortar shells on the government-held neighbourhood of Hamdaniyeh. By yesterday morning, the city was quiet, but it was unclear if there would be any renewal of the truce, which Moscow and Damascus said was intended to allow civilians and rebels to leave the east.



(From top, clockwise) A displaced young Iraqi boy holds a pigeon at refugee camp in the town of Qayyarah, south of Mosul; Peshmerga forces prepare to launch a mortar during an offensive; smoke rises at Islamic State militants' positions in the town of Naweran, near Mosul; and displaced Iraqis are seen yesterday on the back of a pick up truck as they flee fighting near Qayyarah. Story on page 16.

WAR IN YEMEN Air campaign resumes as truce expires

Warplanes from a Saudi-led coalition attacked targets in Sanaa at dawn yesterday, hours after a three-day truce in Yemen's war expired, residents in the capital said. The ceasefire, agreed in order to allow an increased flow of humanitarian aid, ended without renewal after a day of heavy fighting between the Saudi-led Arab alliance and the Iran-allied Houthi movement. Each side accused the other of repeatedly violating the truce and UN attempts to extend it before it lapsed appeared to have failed. Air strikes were reported over some military sites in Sanaa in the Hafa camp to the east and in the Nahdein area in the South. Radar positions were also targeted in the Houthi-controlled city of Hodeida and in the contested southwestern city of Taiz, residents reported. The UN and diplomats had hoped a pause in the conflict would pave the way for talks to end a 19-month-old war which has killed at least 10,000 people. The coalition has been fighting Houthi rebels and forces loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh in Yemen since March 2015 to try to restore to power the internationally backed President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, who went into exile.

Clinton looks past Trump

Says she will focus on real issues from now on, not on the GOP candidate

Using her most dismissive language of the campaign, Clinton, buoyed by a new poll that gave her 12 point lead over her rival Donald Trump, said Saturday she is now more focused on electing other Democrats in the final days of the 2016 campaign than her Republican opponent. "I debated him for four and a half hours. I don't even think about responding to him anymore," Clinton said when asked about Trump's charge of a media conspiracy. "He can say whatever he wants to. He can run his campaign however he wants to, he can go off on tangents, he can go to Gettysburg and say he's gonna sue women who've made accusations against him. I'm going to keep talking about what we want to do." Clinton leads the Manhattan real estate mogul by 50 percent to 38 percent in a four-way contest with two minor party candidates, according to a national ABC News poll. That was up from Clinton's four percentage point edge in an ABC News/Washington Post poll conducted 10 days ago.

RACE TO WHITE HOUSE



New poll gives her 12 points lead

Trump vows to create 50m jobs, says he will sue all sexual accusers

Adult film actress accuses the GOP candidate of sexual advances

He again promised to sue every woman who had accused him of sexual assault or inappropriate behaviour as soon as his presidential campaign was over.

Before his speech in Gettysburg, Trump said the media were fabricating stories to make him "look as bad and dangerous as possible". Eleven women have come forward to accuse him of inappropriate behaviour, in the weeks since a video emerged of him boasting of groping women and kissing them. Trump has denied all accusations as outright lies to derail his campaign. On Saturday, Jessica Drake, an adult film actor, accused Trump of pressuring her to have sex with him 10 years ago when they met at a golf tournament. After that, she said a man, possibly Trump, called her to offer her \$10,000 if she would have sex with him, which she declined. Trump's campaign said the accusations were false. Trump, 70, said he was being attacked because he was an outsider who had never previously run for office, which he argues is a virtue. "The fact that Washington and the Washington establishment has tried so hard to stop our campaign is only more proof that our campaign represents the kind of change that only arrives once in a lifetime," he said.

MIGRANT CRISIS

2,400 rescued, 14 die off Libya coast

Horrific scenes unfolded in the Mediterranean off Libya Saturday as a full-to-capacity rescue ship was forced to sail away from desperate migrants trying to swim towards the rescuers. During a dramatic 24 hours, the crew of the Norwegian Siem Pilot and another aid boat rescued panicked migrants in the dark, with only limited resources and in the face of aggressive people smugglers. Around 2,400 migrants were rescued and 14 dead bodies pulled from the water on Saturday. "I've never had a SAR (search and rescue) like it. We were in the process of transferring 1,000 migrants from the Okyroe (tanker) to the Siem Pilot when suddenly, in the dark, rubber boats appeared. It looked hopeless," said Pal Erik Teigen, the officer in charge of the rescue operation.

Will Xi Jinping be more powerful than Mao?

The leaders of the world's most powerful political party gather in Beijing today for a conclave that could change the course of Chinese history. In meetings at the exclusive Jinxi Hotel, safe from the public's prying eyes, nearly 400 top members of the Chinese Communist Party will confer for four days, discussing changes to how the giant party will be managed. The meeting, according to the official Xinhua News service, will focus on the issue of "party discipline". The dry rhetoric hides what may be a ferocious, high-stakes battle for control over the world's second largest economy. The Sixth Plenum, as the meeting is known, comes as the party -- which has more than 88 million members -- faces a period of tectonic change. Since taking its helm in 2012, General Secretary Xi Jinping has sought to bend it to his will, and taken control of more levers of power than any leader since Mao Zedong. And his anti-corruption campaign has laid waste to the party's organisational chart, felling seemingly invincible bastions of power such as former security czar Zhou Yongkang, and paralysing lesser bureaucrats across the nation with fear. Xi has described the party as a "magic weapon" that can be used to implement reforms necessary to achieve his goal of the "Great Rejuvenation" of the Chinese nation, an idea that he frequently describes as the "Chinese dream". But attempts to rein in sclerotic state-owned enterprises -- which control strategic sectors of the economy and are sources of patronage for powerful politicians -- have met stiff resistance from entrenched interests. The meeting comes as speculation mounts that Xi could look to stay on in power after 2022, when he would normally be expected to step down. "He has been very ambitious," said Willy Lam, a China expert at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. The "major motivation" of any new rules passed during the plenum will be to "consolidate (Xi's) position as the big boss", he said. Several measures have already been introduced to make sure party members toe Xi's line, he added, including prohibitions against officials making "groundless criticism". "Only one person in the party, namely Xi Jinping, has the right to define what the political rules are," Lam added.



Opium spreads as Afghan Taliban gain ground: UN

The cultivation of opium poppy in Afghanistan, the world's main source of heroin, has risen to its third-highest level in more than 20 years, the United Nations confirmed yesterday, as the Taliban insurgency gains ground. In the key findings of its annual Afghanistan opium survey, the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said the total area of land devoted to poppy cultivation had risen 10 percent in 2016 to 201,000 hectares (497,000 acres). The survey shows a worrying reversal in efforts to combat the persistent problem of illicit drugs and their impact on development, health and security," UNODC Executive Director Yuri Fedotov said in a statement. The government's loosening grip on security in many areas contributed to a collapse in poppy eradication efforts, a

method championed by the United States after it led an invasion of Afghanistan in 2001 when the country was under Taliban rule, reports Reuters. "Eradication has dropped precipitously to 355 hectares - a fall of some 91 percent," Fedotov said. The report said cultivation was also spreading to new areas, as the number of poppy-free provinces fell to 13 from 14 out of a total of 34. The report confirmed a statement by Fedotov earlier this month that the area under cultivation in 2016 had exceeded 200,000 hectares, putting it in the top three years since the UNODC began providing estimates in 1994. Meanwhile, an Afghan Taliban delegation has arrived in Pakistan, militant sources said Saturday, raising speculation over efforts to revive peace negotiations days after reports of secret talks with Afghan officials in Qatar.

PM Nawaz to blame if 'third-power' steps in

Imran warns ahead of lockdown

Pakistan Tehreek-i-Insaf (PTI) Chairman Imran Khan has said that only Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif will be responsible if a 'third power' steps in as a result of the PTI's November 2 lockdown of Islamabad. The party has said the upcoming protest is for the premier's 'resignation or accountability' following Panamagate. Speaking to journalists on Sunday in Islamabad, the PTI chief said, in a reference to Nawaz Sharif, that only "one person will be responsible if democracy is derailed." He did not mention which force or institution would be derailing democracy following the protest but clarified that, "We [PTI] are not doing this to bring in a 'third power'." "Protest is the PTI's democratic right. The government will have to bear a severe loss if it tries to stop us." Speaking further, Imran Khan accused the government of defaming the Army. The PTI chief alleged that the premier's daughter Maryam Nawaz's media cell was involved in a 'leak' of information from a recent high-level meeting on national security. Earlier this week, PM Nawaz heavily criticised the PTI, saying the party's leaders are only found on containers. "Forget about Pakistan, the PTI will have washed their hands of KP by 2018," he said, adding that the province would be ruled by the PML-N after the next general election. Imran Khan responded to the premier's statements, demanding a response to accusations of corruption levelled against Nawaz and his family after Panamagate. "2018 is far away," he said. "Nawaz has to answer now on the Panama leaks." The apex court is to hear petitions on Panamagate on Nov 1. The hearing had earlier been adjourned for two weeks, but the Supreme Court changed the date on Friday, set off a debate on the significance of the hearing a day ahead of the planned siege of the city.

US threatens to 'act alone' against Pak terror groups

In a blunt message, the US has warned Pakistan that it will not hesitate to act alone, when necessary, to disrupt and destroy terror networks as the country's powerful spy agency ISI was not acting against all terror groups operating on its soil. "The problem is that there are forces within the Pakistani government -- specifically in Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence or ISI -- that refuse to take similar steps against all the terrorist groups active in Pakistan, tolerating some groups -- or even worse," Adam Szubin, Acting Under Secretary on Countering the Financing of Terrorism, told a Washington audience. "We continue to urge our partners in Pakistan to go after all terrorist networks. We stand ready to help them. But there should be no doubt that while we remain committed to working with Pakistan to confront ongoing terrorist financing and operations, the US will not hesitate to act alone, when necessary, to disrupt and destroy these networks," Szubin warned.

SUICIDE EPIDEMIC IN JAPAN Pensioner blows himself up in park

A 72-year-old retired soldier blew himself up in a park in the Japanese city of Utsunomiya yesterday, killing himself and injuring three other people in an apparent suicide, state broadcaster NHK reported. A second explosion, separate from the blast that killed the former Self Defence Force member, caused a fire in a nearby parking lot, while the man's home 8 km (5 miles) from the park burnt to the ground, the report said. The police in the city, which is about 100 km (62 miles) north of Tokyo, said they had discovered a suicide note written by the man and were investigating the three incidents, but did not give further details. Images broadcast by NHK showed two burnt out cars, one of which belonged to the dead man, about 200 metres (650 feet) from the park and a charred broken bench at the edge of the park, where a folk art festival was underway. The explosion in the park injured two men aged 64 and 58, who were being treated for shrapnel wounds. The third victim was a 14-year-old school boy, NHK said. Witnesses told the broadcaster they heard a series of loud explosions. Suicide rates have declined in Japan in recent years, but remain among the highest in the world, with around 30,000 people a year taking their own lives. Experts have pointed to the financial stress of surviving on small pensions for pushing some retired people to end their lives. In 2015, a 71-year-old man set himself on fire on a bullet train in an incident that also claimed the life of a 52-year-old woman traveling in the same carriage.