

NEWSIN brief

US warns Duterte over rhetoric, crime war

AFP, Manila

Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte's fiery rhetoric and deadly crime war are becoming a growing concern around the world, top US envoy for Asia warned yesterday in Manila. US assistant secretary of state for East Asian and Pacific Affairs Daniel Russel met the Philippines' defence and foreign ministers, after Duterte last week announced his nation's "separation" from the US.

Gunmen kill Pak intel officer, IS claim attack

AFP, Peshawar

Two gunmen on a motorcycle shot dead an intelligence officer in northwest Pakistan yesterday, police said, in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group. Akbar Ali, an intelligence sub-inspector, was on his way to work and waiting at a bus stop near his home in Charsadda district when the gunmen opened fire, Suhail Khalid, district police chief, told AFP.

Five killed in Malta plane crash

AFP, Valletta

A reconnaissance plane working for France's defence ministry crashed in a ball of flames at Malta's international airport yesterday, killing all five people on board, officials said. The plane plummeted into the ground shortly after take-off. The Maltese government said in a statement that there was no indication of an explosion prior to the crash.

Indian mosque agrees to lift ban on women

AFP, New Delhi

An historic mosque in India yesterday agreed to scrap a ban on women entering its inner sanctum, after a bitter legal battle about the restriction in the deeply religious country. The Haji Ali Dargah trust has since 2011 barred women from the landmark mausoleum off the coast of Mumbai, insisting the presence of women near the tomb of a revered saint is a "grievous sin" in Islam.

Israeli forces hit Gaza after rocket launch

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel's air force hit a Hamas post in the Gaza Strip yesterday after a rocket was fired from the Palestinian enclave toward Israel, the military said. There were no initial reports that the rocket caused any casualties. "A rocket was fired at southern Israel from the Gaza Strip," an army statement said, but "no rockets hit Israeli territory."



Smoke rises after a US airstrike, while the Iraqi army pushes into Topzawa village during the operation against Islamic State militants near Bashiqa, Mosul, Iraq yesterday. *Inset*, a displaced man complains about the lack of food supplies outside a processing centre in Qayyara, south of Mosul. Story on page 16. PHOTO: REUTERS



Calais eviction begins

Fate of 1,300 unaccompanied children remains uncertain

REUTERS, Calais

France began clearing the sprawling "Jungle" migrant camp in Calais yesterday, with hundreds carrying suitcases queuing outside a hangar to be resettled in reception centres across the country.

The first buses departed less than an hour after immigration workers started the operation and officials predicted some 2,500 would leave on the first day.

Armed police fanned out around the warehouse and across the squalid shantytown after a night during which small groups of migrants burned toilet blocks and hurled stones at security forces in protest at the plans to dismantle the camp.

The Socialist government says it is closing the camp, home to 6,500 migrants fleeing war and poverty, on humanitarian grounds. It plans to relocate them to 450 centres across France.

"I hope this works out. I'm alone and I just have to study," said Amadou Diallo from the West African nation of Guinea. "It doesn't matter where I end up, I don't really care."

French Interior Ministry spokesman Pierre-Henry Brandet said that authorities had not needed to use force and that the large police presence at the camp yesterday was just for security.

Many of the migrants and refugees hail from countries like Afghanistan, Syria and Eritrea and had wanted had reach Britain.

But even as the process began, the fate of about 1,300 unaccompanied child migrants remained uncertain.

Discussions are underway with British authorities over who should take in children with no family ties in Britain, the interior ministry spokesman said, adding that 200 had left for Britain last week.

The migrants will be separated into families, adults, unaccompanied minors and vulnerable individuals, including elderly people and single women.

They will then be bussed to the reception centres where they will receive medical checks and, if they have not already done so, decide whether to

apply for asylum.

Meanwhile, migrants at a camp on the Greek island of Lesbos hurled stones at police and torched seven temporary offices used by asylum officials in an hour-long protest yesterday over conditions, officials said.

Jose Carreira, executive director of the European Asylum Support Office (EASO), said at least four containers where interviews were conducted were entirely destroyed, and three more were damaged.

EUROPE MIGRANT CRISIS

The camp has been housing 6,500 people in squalid conditions

France plans to relocate them to 450 centres

SHOOTOUT IN EASTERN INDIA

Police kill at least 21 Maoist rebels

AFP, New Delhi

Indian police yesterday killed at least 21 rebels in a shootout in eastern India, a local officer said, the deadliest such incident this year in a long-running Maoist insurgency.

Police said they ambushed a meeting of 30 to 40 Maoists in a forest near the border of Odisha and Andhra Pradesh states, triggering a gunbattle.

"Now 21 bodies of the Maoists have been recovered. The search operation is still on," sub-inspector C K Dharua told AFP by phone from Malkangiri district in Odisha where the attack occurred.

Dharua had earlier confirmed 18 deaths but warned the toll could rise as "there was a large number of people at the meeting".

A top Maoist leader and his son were suspected to be among those killed, the Press Trust of India news agency said, citing unnamed police.

Two police officers were also injured in the shootout that lasted about an hour, according to local media.

Weapons including four AK-47s and three self-loading rifles were recovered from site, some 640 kilometres (400 miles) from the state capital Bhubaneswar, Dharua said.

India's Maoist insurgency began in the 1960s, inspired by Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong, and has cost thousands of lives.



Rescue workers search at site after an explosion hit a town in Fugu county, Shaanxi province, China, yesterday. The explosion left seven people dead and 94 injured. A local newspaper reported the explosion might be related to unlicensed storage of explosives at a building nearby. PHOTO: REUTERS

SYRIA CONFLICT

16 dead in heavy bombing of Idlib

AFP, Idlib

Sixteen civilians, including three children, were killed yesterday in heavy bombardment across rebel-held Idlib province in northwest Syria, a monitoring group said.

In Khan Sheikhun, a town in the province's south, air strikes killed seven people, including two women and a child, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The Britain-based Observatory said the raids were carried out by either Syrian or Russian aircraft.

Another seven people, including four women and two children, were killed in raids on Kafr Takharim, further north in the province.

Those raids hit three residential buildings, a local government building, and a stadium, shortly after midnight, AFP's correspondent in the town said.

In the morning, rescue workers were still trying to pull bodies out of the rubble.

"My sister's house was standing right here. She and her daughter are dead, along with another family," Abu Mohammad told AFP.

"There was no military base here. All the military positions are outside the town," the devastated man said.

Another man and a woman were killed in rocket fire in the nearby town of Kafr Awid.

CO2 in atmosphere hits new high: UN

AFP, Geneva

The concentration of carbon dioxide (CO2) in the atmosphere averaged a record 400 parts per million in 2015, an ominous milestone for the planet's health, the UN said yesterday.

The greenhouse gas has previously passed the 400 ppm threshold on certain months in specific locations but never on an annual global basis, the United Nations World Meteorological Organization said.

In its latest Greenhouse Gas Bulletin, WMO also reported that CO2 concentration rates had "surged again to new records in 2016" and predicted the annual average would stay above 400 ppm "for many generations."

The concentration of CO2 spiked in part because of a strong El Nino, the weather phenomenon that occurs every four to five years with a broadly warming effect.

El Nino "triggered droughts in tropical regions and reduced the capacity of 'sinks' like forests, vegetation and the oceans to absorb CO2," WMO said.

But the head of the Geneva-based agency, Petteri Taalas, warned against complacency just because El Nino has subsided for now.

"The El Nino event has disappeared. Climate change has not," he said.

Taalas called CO2 "the elephant in the room" in the battle to rein in climate change.

He applauded the landmark deal reached in Rwanda's capital Kigali earlier this month to phase out hydrofluorocarbons, a category of dangerous greenhouse gases widely used in refrigerators and air conditioners.

Trump a 'sore loser'

Says Clinton; new poll shows Democratic candidate up by 12 points over her rival

AGENCIES

Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton called Donald Trump a "sore loser" on Sunday because of his refusal at their debate last week to commit to accepting the results of the Nov 8 election.

Clinton, a former secretary of state, said Trump's comments were more consistent with what dictators in non-democratic countries might say about their opponents, reports Reuters.

"To say you won't respect the results of the election, that is a direct threat to our democracy," Clinton told a rally at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. "The peaceful transfer of power is one of the things that makes America America."

"And look, some people are sore losers, and we just got to keep going," she added.

According to a national ABC News poll, Clinton leads the Republican real estate mogul among likely voters

by 50 percent to 38 percent.

That is her highest score since the start of the race to succeed Barack Obama in the White House.

Earlier on Sunday, Kellyanne Conway, a top Trump adviser, acknowledged that the Republican presidential candidate was lagging behind Clinton ahead of the election.

Conway said Clinton had "tremendous advantages," including a large campaign war chest that had allowed her to spend millions on television ads.

"We are behind," Conway said on NBC's "Meet the Press." But she added the Trump campaign was looking to sway undecided voters not ready to support Clinton.

As the polling gap has widened, Trump has said repeatedly the election is being "rigged" against him. He has not offered evidence and numerous studies have shown that the US election system, which is decentralized and run by the states, is sound.



CCP MEET BEGINS

Xi seeks to tighten his control over party

AFP, Beijing

A key conclave of China's Communist Party (CCP) elite kicked off yesterday in Beijing, the official Xinhua news service reported, as leader Xi Jinping seeks to tighten his control over the organisation.

Nearly 400 top members of the world's most powerful political party have gathered at the exclusive Jingxi Hotel to discuss changes to party structure and management for four days.

They will focus on reforming the "norms for political life" and the party's internal rules for supervising cadres, Xinhua said.

The dry rhetoric around the Sixth Plenum, as the meeting is known, hides what may be a ferocious, high-stakes battle for control over the world's second-largest economy.

"This year's plenum on party-building is key to Xi's entire political project, and could very well turn out to be the most important of his first term," said Trey McArver, China analyst at Trusted Sources.

It "looks certain to further consolidate his grip over the party", he added.

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.

His most powerful tool for bringing the party to heel has been an anti-corruption campaign that is now "the longest-lasting, (and) widest-ranging in party history", McArver said.

Somali pirates' hostages 'ate rats' to survive

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

One of the 26 Asian sailors released after held hostage by Somali pirates has revealed how the group survived their four-year ordeal.

Filipino sailor Arnel Balbero told the BBC how the group was forced to eat anything they could, including rats.

"You eat anything, even if you not like, but you feel hungry, you eat", he said. "We eat rat, we cook it." Balbero, speaking in Nairobi, said the pirates treated them "like animals" and only gave them small amounts of water.

He said the four-and-a-half years as a hostage had left him feeling like the "walking dead".

The crew of the FV Nathan 3 were taken captive when their boat was seized south of the Seychelles in March 2012, when pirate

attacks were common in the area.

The sailors, from China, the Philippines, Cambodia, Indonesia, Vietnam and Taiwan, had one of the longest periods of captivity among hostages seized by pirates in the African country.

Balbero also spoke about the difficulties of adjusting to life after being held hostage for so long:

"I don't know what is... outside of this world when we finish, so it's very hard to start again."

Pirate Bile Hussein said a \$1.5 million (£1.2m) ransom was paid for the sailors' release. The claim could not be independently verified.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying said in a statement Sunday night that 10 of the hostages were from the Chinese mainland and two were from self-governing Taiwan.

