

NEWS IN brief

Egypt train crash death toll hits 41

AFP, Alexandria
The death toll from Egypt's latest train disaster rose to 41 yesterday as cranes worked to clear the stricken railway line between Cairo and the Mediterranean city of Alexandria. The toll from Friday's accident when two trains collided near Alexandria also wounded 132 people, the health ministry said on Saturday.

5 dead as storms ravage Poland

AFP, Warsaw
Five people including two Girl Guides at a campground died in freak accidents early yesterday when violent storms hit Poland amid a heatwave, the fire brigade and police said. A total of 28 people were reported injured while power was cut to around half a million homes and businesses as violent winds downed trees and ripped off roofs in northern and southern regions.

Syria suicide blast kills 23 near Jordan border

AFP, Beirut
At least 23 rebel fighters were killed Friday and dozens more wounded in a suicide blast in southern Syria near the border with Jordan, a monitoring group said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the bomber detonated an explosive belt at a base used by Jaish al-Islam (Army of Islam) near the Nasib border crossing.

Flash floods kill 11 in northeastern Iran

AFP, Tehran
Flash floods triggered by heavy rain in northeastern Iran have left at least 11 people dead and two missing, the Red Crescent said yesterday. Friday's storms caused flooding in five provinces and some villages remained cut off yesterday.



KENYA VIOLENCE

(From left, clockwise) A woman cries during clashes in Kibera slum in Nairobi; Anti riot policemen clash with protesters supporting opposition leader Raila Odinga in Mathare, in Nairobi; aid workers help wounded protesters; and Incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta celebrates with Deputy President William Ruto after he was announced winner of the presidential election at the IEBC National Tallying centre at the Bomas of Kenya, in Nairobi, on Friday.

PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP



11 killed as 'riots' flare

REUTERS, Nairobi/Kisumu
Kenyan police killed at least 11 people in a crackdown on protests as anger at the re-election of President Uhuru Kenyatta erupted in the western city of Kisumu and slums ringing the capital, officials and witnesses said yesterday.

The bodies of nine young men shot dead overnight in Nairobi's Mathare slum had been brought to the city morgue, a security official told Reuters. The men were killed during police anti-looting operations, the official added.

Separately, a young girl in Mathare was killed by police firing "sporadic shots", a witness said. The run-down neighbourhood is loyal to 72-year-old opposition leader Raila Odinga, whose party rejected Tuesday's vote as a "charade".

A Reuters reporter in Kisumu, centre of post-election ethnic violence a decade ago in which 1,200 people died nationwide, said tear gas and live

rounds were fired. One man had been killed, a government official said.

The unrest erupted moments after Kenya's election commission announced late on Friday that Kenyatta, 55, had secured a second five-year term

POST-ELECTION VIOLENCE IN KENYA



Raila Odinga

in office, despite opposition allegations that the tally was a fraud.

Interior Minister Fred Matiangi said the trouble was localised and blamed it on "criminal elements" rather than legitimate political protest.

Odinga's NASA coalition provided no evidence for its rejection of the result. Kenya's main monitoring group, ELOG, yesterday said its tally matched the official outcome, undermining NASA's allegations of fraud.

As with previous votes in 2007 and 2013, this year's elections have exposed the underlying ethnic tensions in the nation of 45 million, the economic engine of East Africa and the region's main trading hub.

In particular, Odinga's Luo tribe, who hail from the west, had hoped an Odinga presidency would have broken the Kikuyu and Kalenjin dominance of central government since independence in 1963. Kenyatta, son of Kenya's first president, is a Kikuyu.

Even before the declaration, Odinga's NASA coalition had rejected the outcome, saying the election commission's systems had been hacked, the count was irregular and foreign observers who gave the poll a clean bill of health were biased.

WHITE NATIONALISTS RALLY

Virginia erupts in violence

CBS NEWS

One person was killed and several others were injured Saturday when a car plowed into a group of protesters in downtown Charlottesville, Virginia, hours after police broke up violent confrontations before a rally of white nationalists.

"I am heartbroken that a life has been lost here. I urge all people of good will -- go home," Mayor Mike Singer said on Twitter.

Nineteen others were injured and transported to the University of Virginia (UVA) Medical Center, a hospital spokesperson told CBS News.

A dozen medics were seen carting the injured back and forth on stretchers at the scene. The victims appeared to be counter-protesters but could be residents.

Video from the scene showed a grey coupe plowing into protesters marching through the downtown shopping district as bystanders screamed for help.

Footage from another angle showed the

car speeding in reverse in an attempt to flee the scene.

White nationalists clashed with counter-protesters hours before the collision in Charlottesville. Alt-right activists and white supremacists planned to protest the city's decision to remove a statue of Confederate General Robert E Lee from the city's Emancipation Park.

President Trump condemned the violence in a news conference yesterday afternoon.

"We're closely following the terrible events unfolding in Charlottesville, Virginia. We condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence, on many sides," he said.

Trump said he spoke with Virginia Gov. Terry McAuliffe over the phone and agreed "that the hate and division must stop and it must stop right now."

He added, "What is vital now is a swift restoration of law and order, and the protection of innocent lives."

Trump mulling 'military option' on Venezuela

Caracas calls threat 'craziness'; Peru, Venezuela expel each other's envoys

AFP, Westminster

US President Donald Trump said Friday he was considering military options as a response to the escalating crisis in Venezuela, a move the South American country quickly shot down as "craziness."

Washington has slapped sanctions on President Nicolas Maduro and some of his allies, and branded him a "dictator" over his attempts to crush this country's opposition. Venezuela has in turn accused America of "imperialist aggression."

But Trump's latest comments were the first sign that he is mulling military intervention. "We have many options for Venezuela, including a possible military option if necessary," Trump told reporters. "We have troops all over the world in places that are very far away. Venezuela is not very far away and the people are suffering and they're dying." The White House said Trump would only

agree to speak with Maduro "as soon as democracy is restored in that country," after the Venezuelan leader requested a phone call with the American president.

Meanwhile Peru on Friday ordered the expulsion of Venezuela's ambassador over his country's "break with democratic rule" under Maduro, and Caracas followed hours later with its own tit-for-tat response.

Trump's military warning came two days after his administration imposed new sanctions on Venezuela, targeting members of a loyalist assembly installed last week to bolster what

Washington calls Maduro's "dictatorship." On Thursday, Maduro declared that Venezuela's new Constituent Assembly holds supreme power over all branches of government, even over his position, and that its work -- ostensibly to rewrite the constitution -- would return "peace" to the country.



Members of the Syrian civil defence volunteers, also known as the White Helmets, bury their fellow comrades during a funeral in Idlib yesterday, after seven were shot dead early in the morning during a raid on their base, according to the organisation. PHOTO: AFP

25 killed in Nepal landslides, floods

AFP, Kathmandu

Floods and landslides caused by torrential monsoon rains have killed at least 25 people in the last two days across Nepal, officials said yesterday.

Heavy rains have hit more than a dozen districts in the country's far eastern region as well as some areas in the west since Friday morning, the home ministry said.

Flooding has occurred across the densely populated lowlands that border India, while some remote districts in the hilly areas of the far east have been hit by landslides triggered by the monsoon rains.

"We are still collecting the details of the loss. According to the preliminary reports to the ministry over 25 people are feared dead," Home Ministry spokesman Deepak Kafle told AFP.

The Prime Minister's office issued a statement putting the death toll at more than two dozen since Friday.

Thirteen people died in eastern districts and at least four others are missing, the head of the region's police Ramesh Bhattarai said.

Telephone and electricity lines have also been affected by the heavy downpour making it difficult to confirm the full extent of the damage in remote areas, the police chief added.

GROWING CHAOS OVER MIGRANT POLICY

MSF suspends Med rescue ops

AFP, Rome

Doctors Without Borders (MSF) yesterday said it was suspending its migrant rescues in the Mediterranean because it felt threatened by the Libyan coastguard and the Italian government's policies have made its job harder.

The aid group's decision is the latest development in mounting tensions between Rome and NGOs as migration dominates Italy's political agenda ahead of elections early next year.

"We are suspending our activities because now we feel that the threatening behaviour by the Libyan coastguard is very serious ... we cannot put our colleagues in danger," the president of MSF's Italian arm Loris De Filippi told Reuters.

Almost 600,000 migrants have arrived in Italy over the past four years, the vast majority setting sail from lawless Libya in flimsy vessels operated by people smugglers. More than 13,000 migrants have died trying to make the crossing.

Charity boats have played a growing role in rescues, picking up more than a third of all migrants brought ashore so far this year against less than one percent in 2014.

However, Italy fears the groups are facilitating people smuggling and encouraging migrants to make the passage, and it has proposed a Code of Conduct governing how they operate.

Some groups, including MSF, have refused to sign the code.

They object to a requirement that Italian police officers be on their boats and that the boats must take migrants to a safe port themselves, rather than transferring them to other vessels to allow smaller boats to stay in the area for further rescues.

MSF operates one rescue ship in the Mediterranean, the Vox Prudence, currently docked in the Sicilian port of Catania.

In the last six weeks the number of migrant arrivals in Italy has slowed sharply and Rome has begun collaborating more closely with the Libyan coastguard, which De Filippi said was threatening the NGOs and preventing them from working.

He said the Libyan coastguard had demanded the NGOs should leave an area of hundreds of kilometres around its coast, whereas previously they had been allowed to conduct search and rescue operations as close as 11 nautical miles to the mainland.

Kurds refutes US request to halt independence vote

REUTERS, Erbil

Iraq's Kurds are sticking to a plan to hold an independence referendum on Sept 25, despite a US request to postpone it, a high-ranking Kurdish official told Reuters yesterday.

The United States and other Western nations are worried that the vote could ignite a fresh conflict with Baghdad and turn into another regional flashpoint. Turkey, Iran and Syria, which together with Iraq have sizeable Kurdish populations, all oppose an independent Kurdistan.

"The date is standing, Sept. 25, no change," said Hoshiyar Zebari, a close adviser to Kurdistan Regional Government President Massoud Barzani, after US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson asked Barzani to postpone the referendum.

Tillerson made the request in a phone call with Barzani on Thursday, Zebari said.

"On the issue of the postponement of the referendum, the President (Barzani) stated that the people of the Kurdistan Region would expect guarantees and alternatives for their future," said a statement issued on Friday by the Kurdistan Regional Government (KRG) presidency, after Tillerson's call.

The US State Department said in June it was concerned that the referendum will distract from "more urgent priorities" such as the defeat of Islamic State militants.

The Kurds have been seeking an independent state since at least the end of World War One, when colonial powers divided up the Middle East, but their territory ended up split between modern-day Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria.