

RUMBLING BALI VOLCANO

Over 122,000 flee

More than 122,000 people have fled their homes on the resort island of Bali, fearful that a rumbling volcano could erupt at any time, disaster officials said.

Mount Agung, 75 kilometres (47 miles) from the resort hub of Kuta, has been shaking since August and threatening to erupt for the first time since 1963 — a potential blow to the country's lucrative tourism industry.

Officials at an evacuation centre in Klungkung district said 122,490 people had left their homes, taking refuge at nearly 500 makeshift shelters or moving in with relatives.

Around 62,000 people lived in the danger zone before the evacuations, according to Indonesia's disaster mitigation agency, but residents just outside the area have also left their homes out of fear.

Despite the significant increase in estimated evacuees, the government said it was prepared.

"In general the evacuation is going well, the logistics supply is sufficient for the evacuees' needs," Sutopo Purwo Nugroho, the agency spokesman, said yesterday.

This week Indonesia's national disaster agency has sent food, mattresses, blankets, and tents for evacuees, who have also been provided with food.

Five mobile sirens have been installed in the danger zone to warn residents in the event of an eruption.

Around 10,000 animals have also been evacuated from the flanks of the volcano.

Officials estimate there are at least 30,000 cows within a 12-kilometre radius of the mountain's summit, and efforts to relocate them are ongoing.

"We've set a target to evacuate 20,000 more cows from the affected areas," Nugroho said.



Mount Agung volcano spews smoke to the air as seen from Karangasem, on paradise island of Bali yesterday. Inset, villagers, who live on the slopes of the volcano, evacuate their live stocks in Karangasem.

NEWS IN brief

Two Kashmir activists win Rafto Prize

AFP, Oslo

Two Indian activists from the heavily militarised region of Kashmir yesterday won Norway's Rafto Prize for human rights for their long-term struggle against violence in the disputed territory. The winners are Ahangar and Imroz Parvez have long been at the forefront of the struggle. Rafto Foundation said.

Three killed in Boko Haram raid in Nigeria

AFP, Kano

Boko Haram killed three people and set fire to scores of homes in a raid targeting vulnerable rural communities in northeast Nigeria, a local official said yesterday. Modu Ganamani, information officer for the Guzamala local government, said the attack happened at about 3:00 pm in Yewa.

Former India editor charged with rape

AFP, Mumbai

An Indian court yesterday charged the former editor of a renowned news magazine with raping a female colleague four years ago, the prosecutor said. Tarun Tejpal pleaded not guilty to charges of rape, sexual harassment, the public prosecutor Francisco Taviera reported outside the court in Goa.

Ionic Playboy founder Hugh Hefner dies at 91

AFP, Los Angeles

Hugh Hefner, the silk pajama-wearing founder of Playboy who helped escort nudity into the American mainstream, died Wednesday, the company announced. He was 91 years old. Hefner, father of the trailblazing brand that encouraged a loosening of sexual strictures, died of natural causes in his Los Angeles home.

Japan's Abe kicks off 'difficult' election battle

Lower house dissolved; polls on October 22

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe dissolved parliament yesterday, effectively kicking off a national election campaign where he faces an unexpected and formidable challenge from the popular governor of Tokyo.

Members of the lower house raised their arms and shouted "Ban'zai" three times — the Japanese equivalent of "three cheers" — after the speaker read out a letter officially dissolving the chamber.

Voters in the world's third-biggest economy will go to the polls on October 22. As Abe seeks a highly popular mandate for his hardline stance on North Korea and a new tax plan.

"A difficult battle starts today," Abe told reporters, shaking his fist.

"This is an election about how to protect the lives of our people," he said. "We have to cooperate with the international community as we face the threat from North Korea."

Abe asked for public support for his "strong diplomacy" on Kim Jong-Un's regime, which has threatened to "sink" Japan into the sea and

fired missiles over its northern Hokkaido island twice in the space of a month.

"We need to fight for our children's future."

Abe stunned Japan on Monday with a surprise call for a snap election, seeking to capitalise on a weak opposition and a boost in the polls, as voters welcome his hawkish policy toward Pyongyang.

But Tokyo Governor Yuriko Koike has upended Japanese politics in recent days, stealing Abe's limelight with her newly launched "Party of Hope" that seeks to shake up the country's lethargic political landscape.

Koike's new party, formally unveiled Wednesday, has attracted an influx of lawmakers from a wide range of ideological backgrounds and has succeeded in uniting opposition to Abe, presenting Japanese voters with a credible alternative to the premier.

Japan's main opposition Democratic Party later yesterday decided not to run candidates in the election, effectively joining forces with Koike's juggernaut.



Suicide attack kills 12 Afghan security forces

At least a dozen Afghan security forces were killed when a suicide attacker driving an explosives-packed Humvee blew himself up in the southern province of Kandahar.

The Taliban claimed the deadly assault on the government and police headquarters in Maroof district that also wounded several others.

"Twelve security forces were killed and four others were wounded," Kandahar police spokesman Zia Durram told AFP.

Durram said the Taliban attackers had been "defeated."

A border police commander in Maroof, which borders Pakistan, gave a slightly higher toll, telling AFP that 14 security personnel had been killed and eight wounded in the attack that happened late Wednesday.

Fugitive ex-PM in Dubai

Says Thai junta chief as govt to pursue Yingluck via diplomatic channels, Interpol

Sept. 11, without giving further details.

The Supreme Court yesterday giving its judgment last month after Yingluck failed to show in court and police discovered she had slipped out of the country.

The Thai authorities had not disclosed Yingluck's whereabouts but, though senior party members had told Reuters she had gone to Dubai where her brother, former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who lives in self-imposed exile to avoid a 2008 jail sentence for graft, has a home.

Asked by Reuters whether Yingluck had left Dubai for London, Thai deputy national police chief Srivara Ransibrahmanakul declined to comment.

Photographs posted on a photo-sharing app Instagram by one of Thaksin's daughters show Thaksin in London since Sept 15.

None of the photos feature Yingluck.

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Israel foils 'IS attack' at Jerusalem site

Israel said yesterday it had thwarted a plan by two Israeli Arabs with Islamic State sympathies to mount an attack at a contested Jerusalem holy site where a July gun ambush set off a wave of violence.

The Shin Bet security service described the suspects, aged 26 and 16, as residents of the same Israeli Arab town as three gunmen who shot and killed two police guards at a gate to Al-Aqsa mosque compound and were then shot dead.

Israel responded to that attack by briefly installing metal detectors outside the compound, angering Palestinians who saw that as an escalation of operations to become a more open operation that will still conduct and inspire attacks around the world.

"There is not, in fact, a direct link between ISIS' battlefield position in Iraq and Syria and the group's capacity to inspire external attacks," he said.

"The ISIS ability to reach globally is still largely intact," said Rasmussen, who has been director of the National Counterterrorism Center since 2014.

In recent months US-led coalition forces



Protestors hold up yellow umbrellas during a gathering outside the government headquarters to mark the third anniversary of mass pro-democracy rallies, known as the Umbrella Movement, in Hong Kong yesterday.

Nepal picks 3-yr-old as living goddess

A three-year-old girl was anointed the new "living goddess" of Kathmandu by Hindu priests yesterday and taken to a palace in the historic centre of the Nepali capital where she will remain until she reaches puberty.

Wearing a red dress the new Kumari, or living goddess, Trishna Shakya was taken from her home to the ancient Durbar Square for a short initiation ceremony.

Her father then carried her across the earthquake hit — which still bears the scars of a powerful earthquake that hit in 2015 — to the temple-place where she will live under the care of specially-appointed guardians.

Shakya was flanked by her family and barefoot men in red tunics on the short walk, the last time she will be seen in public without the elaborate makeup of the Kumari, or living goddess, until puberty.

"I have mixed feelings. My daughter has become the Kumari and it is a good thing. But her father is also because she will be separated from us," her father Bijaya Ratna Shakya told AFP.

Shakya leaves behind a twin brother, Krishna, who cried as his sister was taken from the family home.

As the Kumari, Shakya is considered the embodiment of the Hindu goddess Taleju and will only be allowed to leave the temple 13 times a year on special feast days.

IS global threat 'intact'

US global threat chief tells Senate committee after the groups' battlefield defeats in Iraq, Syria

The global threat posed by the Islamic State group has not been diminished by its battlefield defeats in Iraq and Syria, US counterterrorism chief Nick Rasmussen warned Wednesday.

Rasmussen told the Senate Homeland Security Committee that he expects the Islamic State group, after losing its physical territory, to become a more covert operation that will still conduct and inspire attacks around the world.

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In recent months US-led coalition forces

have expelled Islamic State fighters from its key Iraq strongholds of Mosul and Tal Afar and they are close to eliminating it in Raqqa, Syria.

This has forced the remnants of the jihadist army down into the middle Euphrates River valley where a last-stand siege is expected.

But Rasmussen said the group is and will continue to be able to recruit followers around the world, ready to undertake attacks.

"When its defeat on the battlefield is final, he said, US threat experts expect it to revert to the form it took in an earlier incarnation as the Al-Qaeda in Iraq insurgency of 2004 to 2008.

"Winning on the battlefield in places like Mosul and Raqqa is a necessary but insufficient step in the process of eliminating the ISIS threat to our interests," he said.

"It's simply going to take longer than we would like to translate victory on the battlefield into a genuine threat reduction," he added.



IS post 'new audio of Baghdad'

The Islamic State group yesterday released an audio recording of what it said was its leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi calling on members under pressure in Syria and Iraq to "resist" their enemies.

"The leaders of the Islamic State and its soldiers have realised that the path to... victory is to be patient and resist the infidels whatever their alliances," said the person heard in the recording.

"It was not clear when the message, released by the IS-affiliated Al-Furqaan media group, was recorded.

In July, Moscow said it was struggling to confirm if Baghdad was dead or alive, a month after reporting its possible demise in an air strike in Syria.

EU gives FB, Twitter final warning on hate speech

Facebook, Twitter and other social media companies have been given an ultimatum by the European Union: rid your platforms of hate speech or face legal consequences.

European regulators have been pushing social media firms to remove racist and violent posts from their platforms in a timely manner for years. Their patience is running out.

Facebook, Twitter, Microsoft and Google have all pledged to do more. In May 2016, they promised to remove a majority of hate speech flagged by users within 24 hours and to remove any illegal content.

But the European Commission, EU's top regulator, yesterday said they are still failing to act fast enough. It said it would pass laws allowing the EU to impose punishments on companies that fail to act.

"The situation is not sustainable: in more

than 28% of cases, it takes more than one week for online platforms to take down illegal content," said Mariya Gabriel, the EU's top official in charge of the digital economy and society.

The Commission said it will consider implementing new laws to tackle the problem if the online platforms fail to "take swift action over the coming months."

It said it wants the companies to invest more in detecting of hate speech. It also wants companies to do a better job of preventing illegal content from reappearing.

The punishments could be severe. The EU has a reputation for hitting companies that don't play by its rules hard.

Earlier this year, it ordered Google to pay \$2.8 billion in an antitrust fine. On Wednesday, it announced a \$1 billion penalty for truck manufacturer Scania for participating in a cartel.

