

Syria flare-up kills 35 fighters, 10 civillians

At least 10 civilians and 35 combatants, mostly pro-regime forces, were killed yesterday in clashes and air strikes that erupted at dawn in northwestern Syria, a war monitor said.

The flare-up came as Russian-backed regime forces tried to retake two villages seized by jihadists and allied rebels earlier this month, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

“Since this morning, the Syrian regime and allied fighters have launched five failed attempts to regain control of Jibine and Tal Maleh in northwestern Hama province,” said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman.

Syrian regime air strikes killed nine jihadists and rebel fighters, the war monitor said.

Ensuing clashes in the north of Hama province left 26 pro-regime forces dead, including eight who were killed in a mine explosion, the Observatory said.

In neighbouring Idlib, regime air strikes killed 10 civilians, including three children, the Observatory said.

The strikes hit the towns of Maaret al-Numan and Al-Bara as well as the village of Al-Fira, according to the war monitor.

The Idlib region of some three million people is supposed to be protected from a massive regime offensive by a buffer zone deal that Russia and Turkey signed in September.

But it was never fully implemented, as jihadists refused to withdraw from a planned demilitarised zone.

In January, the Hayat Tahrir al-Sham alliance led by Syria’s former Al-Qaeda affiliate extended its administrative control over the region, which includes most of Idlib province as well as adjacent slivers of Latakia, Hama and Aleppo provinces.

The Syrian government and Russia have upped their bombardment of the region since late April, killing nearly 400 civilians, according to the Observatory.



Palestinians run for cover from tear gas during clashes with Israeli forces near the fence along the border with Israel, yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP



Tanker hit in Gulf of Oman attacks heads to port

A Japanese tanker, one of two vessels attacked in sensitive Gulf waters this week, was heading to port yesterday, its owners said. The United Arab Emirates called on world powers “to secure international navigation and access to energy” after the incident Thursday, which sent crude prices soaring amid a tense standoff between Iran and the US. The Kokuka Courageous was carrying highly flammable methanol through the Gulf of Oman when was rocked by explosions, causing a blaze that was quickly extinguished. The other ship which came under attack, the Norwegian-operated Front Altair, was being towed away from Iranian waters and would undergo a damage assessment later Saturday, said a spokeswoman for its operator.

US grants energy-hungry Iraq Iran sanctions waiver

The United States has granted Iraq another 90-day waiver to continue with vital energy imports from neighbouring Iran despite re-imposed sanctions, a government source said yesterday. The extension came after “long discussions” with Washington ahead of a looming deadline on a previous extension granted in December, the official, close to the negotiations, told AFP on condition of anonymity. Iranian energy imports are vital to Iraq, one of the world’s hottest countries, which faces chronic blackouts that often leave homes without power for up to 20 hours a day. Summer temperatures in Baghdad are already topping seasonal averages, boosting electricity consumption and raising fears of a repeat of last summer’s mass protests over power outages.



Indonesia returns five containers of waste to US

Indonesia has returned five containers of rubbish to the United States and will not become a “dumping ground”, officials said yesterday. The latest Southeast Asian country to return imported waste. The containers were supposed to contain only paper scrap, according to the customs documents. Instead they were loaded with other waste including bottles, plastic waste, and diapers, said senior environment ministry official Sayid Muhadhar. It is the latest country to return imported rubbish after neighbouring Malaysia vowed to ship back hundreds of tonnes of plastic waste last month. The Philippines has ordered tonnes of garbage dumped in the country to be shipped back to Canada, sparking a diplomatic row between the two countries.

Saudi-led coalition hits Houthi positions in Sanaa

A Saudi-led coalition launched air strikes on Iran-allied Houthi forces in Yemen’s capital Sanaa, Saudi state television reported early yesterday, part of an escalation of tit-for-tat strikes that has stoked regional tensions. The strikes hit air-defence systems and other military positions in the Houthi-controlled city, days after the Houthis launched a missile recognised government that was forced out of Sanaa by the Houthis. The Houthis have stepped up drone and missile attacks on cities in neighbouring Saudi Arabia in recent months as tensions have risen between Iran and Gulf Arab states allied with the United States further afield across the Middle East. The Yemen conflict is widely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and Iran.

SOURCE: AFP

Maldives seek foreign help to deal with IS

The Maldives yesterday called for international help to rehabilitate up to 160 of its nationals languishing in Syrian detention camps after the defeat of the Islamic State group.

Speaker Mohamed Nasheed said the Maldives kept a close tab on citizens who had joined the militant group, but that the island nation was not ready to accept them back without an internationally supervised reintegration programme.

As many as 160 Maldivians are thought to be held in detention camps after the fall of IS in March.

“I think the international community should join together and decide what we should do to the returnees,” said Nasheed.

He said the Maldives was concerned about the 30 to 40 children said to be of Maldivian parents now living in detention camps in Syria, but insisted that there should be international involvement to screen the parents.

Iran renews ultimatum

Warns it will continue to scale back compliance with nuclear deal if signatories don't show positive signals amid row over tanker attacks

AFP, Dushanbe

Iran will continue scaling back compliance with a nuclear deal unless other signatories to the pact show “positive signals”, the Iranian president said yesterday as tensions with the United States escalated over tanker attacks in the Gulf region.

Iran stopped complying in May with some commitments in the 2015 nuclear deal that was agreed with global powers, after the United States unilaterally withdrew from the accord in 2018 and ratcheted up sanctions on Tehran.

“Obviously, Iran cannot stick to this deal unilaterally,” President Rouhani told Russian, Chinese and other Asian leaders at a conference in Tajikistan.

His comments follow rising tensions with Washington, which has accused Tehran of carrying out Thursday’s attacks on two oil tankers in a vital oil shipping route at the mouth of the Gulf. Tehran has denied having any role.

Rouhani did not refer to this week’s tanker incident in his speech to the Conference on Interaction and Confidence Building Measures in Asia, behind held in the Tajik capital Dushanbe.

“It is necessary that all the sides of this agreement contribute to restoring it,” he said, adding that Iran needed to see “positive signals” from other signatories

to the pact, which include Russia, China, Britain, France and Germany.

He did not give details on what actions Iran would take or say what positive signals Tehran wanted to see.

Russian President Vladimir Putin said Moscow would adhere to the agreement and urged other signatories to follow suit.

Tehran said in May that Iran would start enriching uranium at a higher level, unless world powers protected its economy from U.S. sanctions within 60 days.

Washington has ratcheted up pressure on Iran, saying it wants to prevent Tehran developing a nuclear bomb, rein in its ballistic missile programme and end what the it calls Iranian meddling in the Middle East.

Tehran has said its nuclear programme is peaceful and will not be stopped, says its missile work is for defence and accuses the United States of destabilising the region.

France and other European signatories to the nuclear deal that aimed to curb Iran’s nuclear work, have said they wanted to save the accord, but many of their companies have cancelled deals with Tehran, under pressure from the United States. (Reporting by Nazarali Pirnazarov Writing by Olzhas Auyezov and Andrey Kuzmin Editing by Edmund Blair).



India migrant girl died in US desert as mother sought water

REUTERS

A six-year-old girl from India died of heat stroke in an Arizona desert after her mother left her with other migrants to go in search of water, a medical examiner and U.S. Border Patrol said on Friday.

The girl, Gurupreet Kaur, soon to celebrate her seventh birthday, was found by US Border Patrol west of Lukeville, Arizona on Wednesday, when temperatures reached a high of 108 degrees Fahrenheit (42 Celsius).

The girl’s death, the second recorded fatality of a migrant child this year in Arizona’s southern deserts.

An increasing number of Indian nationals are entering the United States from Mexico, according to immigration officials. They are among thousands of Africans and Asian migrants making the arduous journey, led by smuggling cartels.

The girl and her mother were among a group of five Indian nationals

dropped off by smugglers in a remote border area at 10 am on Tuesday, 27 km west of Lukeville, a US border town 80 km southwest of Tucson.

After walking some way, the girl’s mother and another woman went in search of water, leaving her daughter with another woman and her child.

The mother and the other woman wandered in the rugged Sonoran desert wilderness for 22 hours before being found by a US Border Patrol agent who tracked their footprints. Four hours later, Border Patrol agents found the body of the deceased girl a 1.6 km from the border.

Agents tracked the remaining woman and her 8-year-old daughter into Mexico, before the mother and child re-entered the United States and surrendered to Border Patrol.

The deceased girl died of hyperthermia and her death was ruled an accident, said Greg Hess, PCOME chief medical officer.



EBOLA IN DRC

Outbreak not a ‘global’ emergency

AFP, Geneva

The World Health Organization said Friday that the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo does not qualify as an international threat, despite the spread of the virus to neighbouring Uganda carried by an infected family.

The closely-watched decision followed advice from WHO’s emergency committee, which only meets to review the world’s most severe outbreaks.

The head of the UN health agency Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who is in DRC reviewing the Ebola response, said he accepted the committee’s advice.

“Although the outbreak does not at this time pose a global health threat, I want to emphasise that for the affected families and communities, this outbreak is very much an emergency,” Tedros told reporters.

He also appealed for more funds to combat the ongoing Ebola flare-up, which has recorded more than 2,000 cases, including over 1,400 deaths, since it emerged in eastern DRC in August.



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TENDER NOTICE

Sealed Tenders are hereby invited from the reputed vendors to supply Next Generation Antivirus (NGAV) for ASA.

The tender schedules for supply of Next Generation Antivirus (NGAV) can be collected from the HR Division (8th floor), ASA Central Office (23/3, Bir Uttam A.N.M. Nuruzzaman Sarak, Shyamoli, Dhaka-1207) from 10.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m. on all working days from 16th June 2019 to 22nd June 2019 (but on Thursday 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.). The bids can be dropped into tender box at HR Division (8th floor), ASA Central Office (23/3, Bir Uttam A.N.M. Nuruzzaman Sarak, Shyamoli, Dhaka-1207) up to 3.00 p.m. on 24th June 2019. The tenders will be opened at 3.15 p.m. on the same day in presence of the bidders, if any.

The ASA authority reserves the right to accept, reject and cancel any or all tenders in part or full without assigning any reason whatsoever.

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