

World News Roundup



Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (center), and his wife Akie Abe pay their respects to Mahatma Gandhi along with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi (right), during their visit to Sabarmati Ashram in Ahmedabad on Sept 13. India's premier Narendra Modi and Japanese counterpart Shinzo Abe were preparing to break ground on India's first bullet train project on Sept 14, during an official visit to India by the Japanese prime minister. (AFP)

Africa

25 dead in C. Africa

McKinsey caught up in SA scandal

JOHANNESBURG, Sept 13, (Agencies): Global consultancy McKinsey, facing parliamentary hearings in South Africa over payments to a firm controlled by a billionaire family, ignored suspicions raised over several years by local senior staff that companies it worked with were set up to steer state contracts, two former employees said.



Zuma

Since July, when new information emerged about McKinsey's flagship South African contract, the consultancy has been under increasing scrutiny in a widening corruption scandal over the influence of the Gupta family, businessman friends of President Jacob Zuma.

South Africa's parliamentary committee on public enterprises is investigating whether McKinsey knowingly let funds from state utility Eskom be diverted to a Gupta company as a way of securing a \$78 million contract to advise Eskom. McKinsey denies wrongdoing and says it intends to cooperate with the authorities if evidence of any impropriety emerges.

"We hold ourselves to the highest professional standards wherever we work and stand firmly against corruption. We are committed to ascertaining the facts and swiftly taking any and all appropriate action," spokesman Steve John told Reuters.

McKinsey has hired law firm Norton Rose Fullbright to assist in an internal investigation. Norton Rose said it would not comment while its probe is under way.

The accounts by the two former employees, who spoke to Reuters separately on condition of anonymity because their present jobs do not permit them to speak to the media, could provide fodder for lawmakers who say they have questions about the timeline McKinsey has given of when it learned of potential problems.

McKinsey says it carried out a due diligence review on its partner in the Eskom deal beginning in January 2016, and cut all ties with the local firm two months later after it concluded the company was unfit.

"We carry out checks on suppliers and partners when we work with them and address issues and concerns when they arise. When concerns were raised we undertook due diligence," spokesman John said in a written response to questions.

But the ex-employees said they had attended meetings in Johannesburg where problems with that firm and a precursor company employing the same principal staff had been discussed much earlier: as far back as 2013.

**C. Africa clash kills 25:** At least 25 people in the Central African Republic have been killed in recent sectarian clashes between armed groups, while a new wave of thousands have been made homeless by the violence, the UN said Tuesday.

In the central city of Bria, preliminary estimates indicate "at least 10 bodies and about 50 wounded" after fighting between two rival factions of an armed group on Sept 7 and 8, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said in its weekly report, received by AFP.

**CAR defense min sacked:** Central African Republic president Faustin-Archange Touadera sacked his defense minister on Tuesday evening, according to a state radio broadcast, amid growing violence that threatens to spin the country out of control.

The dismissal of Levy Yakete, who was blacklisted by a United Nations Security Council committee in 2014 for his role in a bloody 2013 civil war, was part of a wider Cabinet reshuffle. The statement did not say if his dismissal was related directly to growing violence.

**Kenya opposition in boycott:** Kenya's opposition boycotted the opening session of parliament on Tuesday after the Supreme Court cancelled the result of last month's presidential election and ordered a fresh vote.

President Uhuru Kenyatta — who had his victory in the Aug 8 poll annulled on Sept 1 — led proceedings, while opposition lawmakers made good on a promise to boycott the ceremony.

Supreme Court judges normally attend the opening of parliament but also stayed away.

**Violence erupts in Haiti:** Protesters brought parts of the Haitian capital Port-au-Prince to a standstill Tuesday, setting vehicles alight and damaging local businesses in violent demonstrations against the government's budget plans.

"These little thieves in Parliament voted for this budget to help the government exploit the people," said protester Marco Paul Delva, standing by a barricade of flaming tires near the legislature.

Pakistan

Khan considers run for PM

Sharif heir-apparent takes the 'limelight'

LAHORE, Sept 13, (RTS): In campaigning for a Pakistan by-election seen as a test of support for ousted Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the most visible figure is not on the ballot: Sharif's daughter, Maryam, widely touted as his political heir-apparent.

This past weekend, crowds mobbed Maryam's car and threw rose petals as she crisscrossed the eastern city of Lahore campaigning for her mother, Kulsoom, who is the ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party's candidate to contest the seat Nawaz was forced to vacate by a Supreme Court ruling in July.

With Kulsoom in London for cancer surgery, accompanied by Nawaz, 43-year-old Maryam has led the campaign with fiery speeches denouncing Nawaz's opponents and the Supreme Court.

Her influence within the PML-N has grown in recent years, with senior party figures crediting her with Nawaz's move to embrace relatively more pro-women and liberal causes in a staunchly conservative nation of 208 million people.

In a rare interview with foreign media, Maryam outlined to Reuters what drives her political ambitions as she emerges from her father's shadow to become a prominent figure in the ruling party he still controls.

"I'm proud to be the torch bearer of ideology which PML-N has," Maryam said at the weekend in Punjab's provincial capital Lahore, her father's electoral power base. "I am (Nawaz's) reflection, I am his extension. I have grown up espousing his agenda, his ideology."

Maryam has framed the election as a chance for voters to protest the Supreme Court's verdict against her father and help the PML-N flex its electoral muscle.

"Your vote was disrespected and disregarded, will you answer to this disrespect on Sept. 17?" Maryam asked at a recent rally. The by-election is seen as a litmus test for the PML-N's political fortunes in the wake of Nawaz's ouster, and an early indicator of voter sentiment ahead of a general election next year.

Also:

**ISLAMABAD:** As Pakistan's cricketing hero turned politician Imran Khan considers a run for prime minister, his party's record in his home province — especially the success of a widely touted reforestation initiative — is raising speculation that he might turn green advances into political advantage.

Pakistan is set to choose a new prime minister in elections due next year. Environmental issues remain far from the top of the list of concerns for most voters, despite worsening climate-related heat, drought, floods and other pressures.

But the record of Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, in his home province of Khyber Pukhtunkwa, is gradually bringing him a bigger national political profile — and new possibilities.

After winning enough seats in 2013 to form a government in the province, in the country's north, Khan's party introduced a green growth initiative to tackle deforestation, build more small-scale hydroelectric projects and overhaul national parks.

It has promised a Billion Tree Tsunami of tree planting — and last month became the first government body in the world to meet its pledge under the Bonn Challenge of restoring more than 350,000 hectares (865,000 acres) of degraded forests.

The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to restore 150 million hectares of the world's deforested and degraded land by 2020, and 350 million hectares by 2030.

"I have trekked all over Pakistan's mountainous north and it alarmed me to see all the cutting of forests," Khan told Thomson Reuters Foundation in an interview.

By replanting forests, Khyber Pukhtunkwa province "has taken important steps to save future generations from the dangerous effects of environmental changes," he said.

The aim is to increase the area covered by forests in the province from 22 percent in 2013 to as much as 27 percent by 2018 through the Billion Tree Tsunami and the creation of new national parks in forested areas, he said. More than 40 percent of Pakistan's natural forests are found within the province.



Maryam

Unrest

Suu Kyi skips UN meet

Qaeda warn of punishment

YANGON, Sept 13, (Agencies): Al-Qaeda militants have called for support for Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims, who are facing a security crackdown that has sent about 400,000 of them fleeing to Bangladesh, warning that Myanmar would face "punishment" for its "crimes".

The exodus of Muslim refugees from Buddhist-majority Myanmar was sparked by a fierce security force response to a series of Rohingya militant attacks on police and army posts in the country's west on Aug 25.

The Islamist group behind the Sept 11, 2001, attacks on the United States issued a statement urging Muslims around the world to support their fellow Muslims in Myanmar with aid, weapons and "military support".

"The savage treatment meted out to our Muslim brothers ... shall not pass without punishment," al-Qaeda said in a statement, according to the SITE monitoring group.

"The government of Myanmar shall be made to taste what our Muslim brothers have tasted."

Myanmar says its security forces are engaged in a legitimate campaign against "terrorists", whom it blames for attacks on the police and army, and on civilians.

The government has warned of bomb attacks in cities, and al Qaeda's call to arms is likely to compound those concerns.

"We call upon all mujahid brothers in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines to set out for Burma to help their Muslim brothers, and to make the necessary preparations - training and the like - to resist this oppression," the group said.

Condemnation

Meanwhile, with Myanmar drawing condemnation for violence that has driven at least 370,000 Rohingya to flee the country, the government said Wednesday its leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, will skip this month's UN General Assembly.

Suu Kyi will miss the assembly, which opened Tuesday and runs through Sept. 25, in order to address domestic security issues, according to presidential office spokesman Zaw Htay.

Suu Kyi is not Myanmar's president — her official titles are state counselor and foreign minister — but

relations between the Cold War allies.

"We don't think the Pakistani-US relationship will be defined by Afghanistan," the prime minister told reporters in Islamabad.

"This relationship (is) 70 years old (and) cannot be redefined by one issue or it should not be redefined by one issue." (AFP)



De Maizieri



Abbasi

Subcontinent

**Germany departs 8 Afghans:** Eight Afghans expelled from Germany arrived in Kabul on Wednesday as Berlin resumed deportations of rejected asylum seekers from the war-torn country months after suspending the process when a huge truck bomb hit the Afghan capital.

Germany put the controversial expulsions on hold after a sewage tanker packed with explosives detonated near the German embassy in Kabul's diplomatic quarter on May 31, killing around 150 people and wounding hundreds more.

The latest group represented the sixth wave of repatriations of Afghans from Germany since December under a disputed Afghan-European Union deal aimed at curbing the influx of migrants.

In Berlin, Interior Minister Thomas de Maizieri defended the latest deportation, saying that "all eight persons have been convicted of serious crimes", without specifying the offences.

De Maizieri said that Germany would stick with its policy of returning to Afghanistan convicted criminals, people feared by police to be planning an attack, and those who refuse to cooperate with authorities or give their names.

After arriving at Kabul airport on a charter flight, the eight deportees were escorted by police to a car park where an official registered their names.

Some of the men carried small backpacks while others had no luggage at all. (AFP)

**Bomber kills 3 in Afghanistan:** Authorities say a suicide bomber has attacked a cricket stadium in the Afghan capital of Kabul, killing at least three people and wounding at least seven.

Basir Mujahid, spokesman for Kabul police, said the attack just outside the gates of the stadium happened Wednesday as hundreds of people were inside enjoying a cricket match.

On Aug 29, a suicide bombing in a busy commercial area in Kabul near a string of banks and not far from the US Embassy killed at least five people.

The Taliban claimed responsibility for that attack. (AP)

**'US has not issued demands':** Pakistan has not received specific requests from the US to target alleged militant sanctuaries, Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi said Tuesday, as he vowed to tighten security along the border with Afghanistan.

The premier's remarks come weeks after President Donald Trump lambasted Pakistan during a speech outlining US policy on Afghanistan, accusing Islamabad of hosting safe havens for insurgents who cross the border to attack Afghan and NATO forces.

During a press conference Abbasi denied the accusations that Pakistan supported militant groups as he batted away suggestions that Trump's comments would upend



In this Sept 10, 2017 photo, a Rohingya girl peeps out from her temporary shelter at a camp in Kathmandu, Nepal. Recent violence in Myanmar has driven hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims to seek refuge across the border in Bangladesh. (AP)