



BRUSSELS (AP) — The U.S. and Western powers have clashed with Russia and others at the global chemical weapons watchdog over a new investigative team being set up to apportion blame for poison gas and nerve agent attacks. Russia said the new team would wield unlawful powers within the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons and on Monday called for an “expert group” to assess the viability of such a team, something the U.S. insisted would hamstring the development of the team. The UK ambassador to the OPCW said that the Russian move would “undermine” plans to set up the team. Britain has accused Russia of using a nerve agent in the attempted assassination in March in the English city of Salisbury of former spy Sergei Skripal. Moscow denies any involvement.

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GUATEMALA CITY (AP) — Disaster coordination authorities have asked eight communities in Guatemala to evacuate and go to safe areas after an increased eruption of the Volcano of Fire. The volcano is located between the departments of Escuintla, Chimaltenango and Sacatepéquez; in the south-central part of the country. David de Len, spokesman for the National Coordinator for Disaster Reduction, told The Associated Press that at least eight communities should leave. De Len said monitoring of the volcano’s activity during the day showed the intensity of the eruption was being maintained, so the evacuation was called for to protect people. An eruption of the volcano in June killed 194 people and left at least 234 missing, although organizations supporting the communities have insisted there are thousands of missing persons.

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JAKARTA (AFP) — Dozens of Indonesian mosques that cater to government workers are spreading radicalism and calling for violence against non-Muslims, the country’s intelligence agency said Monday. Its findings come six months after Indonesia’s second-biggest city Surabaya was rocked by a wave of suicide bombings at several churches during Sunday services, killing a dozen people. They were the deadliest terror attacks in about a decade and once again put religious tolerance in the world’s biggest Muslim majority in the spotlight. The Indonesian State Intelligence Agency said Monday it has probed about one thousand mosques across the Southeast Asian archipelago since July and found that imams at some 41 places of worship in one Jakarta neighborhood alone were preaching extremism to worshippers — mostly civil servants who work at nearby government ministries. The Agency found about 17 clerics expressed support or sympathy for Daesh and encouraged parishioners to fight for the takfiri group in Syria and Marawi, the Philippine city overrun by foreign IS fighters last year.

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MOSCOW (Reuters) — Russian President Vladimir Putin told U.S. Vice President Mike Pence Russia had nothing to do with meddling in the 2016 U.S. election. Interfax reported on Monday, during discussions about an upcoming meeting between Putin and President Donald Trump. Putin and Pence spoke in Singapore last week about key issues that could be discussed at the meeting between the two leaders, expected to take place at the G-20 summit in Argentina in late November, a Kremlin spokesman said. Pence raised the issue of external meddling in the U.S. election but Putin told him that “the Russian state had nothing to do ... and cannot have anything to do with meddling” in any electoral processes, Interfax quoted Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov as saying.

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FRANKFURT, Germany (Dispatches) — French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel consulted on migration, fixing the euro, Europe’s defense, taxing digital companies and other issues as the two leaders looked to preserve their influence abroad while their authority flags at home. Macron, who came to Berlin to take part in Germany’s national remembrance day for the victims of war and dictatorship, urged European government to seize more responsibility for their own fate, especially regarding defense. The first French president to address the Bundestag in 18 years, Macron called for greater European unity in order for the bloc to meet future challenges in an uncertain world. He said the French-German alliance “is invested with this obligation not to allow the world to slide into chaos, and to accompany it on the road of peace.” He said Europe must not “become a plaything of great powers, must assume greater responsibility for its security and its defense, and must not accept a subordinate role in world politics.” Merkel said she agreed with Macron’s assessment that Europe stands “at a crossroads.”

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JOHANNESBURG (AP) — The World Health Organization says progress in reducing the number of people contracting malaria has stalled after several years of global declines. The WHO said Monday that there were about 219 million cases of malaria in 2017, up 2 million from the previous year. In contrast, the number of malaria cases had dropped from 239 million in 2010 to 214 million in 2015, according to the United Nations agency. The WHO’s annual report on malaria says 70 percent of cases (151 million) and deaths (274,000) in 2017 happened in India and 10 African countries. It says there were 3.5 million more malaria cases in the 10 African nations than in 2016, while India made progress in reducing cases of the deadly disease.

# Protesters Stop Traffic on Major Roads in France



Protesters in high-visibility vests block roads in France.

PARIS (AFP) — Protesters angry over high fuel prices blocked access to fuel depots and stopped traffic on major roads on Monday after the government refused to back down on fuel taxes after a weekend of demonstrations across France.

More than 400 people were injured during the “yellow vest” protests which began Saturday with nearly 300,000 participants country-wide.

Early Monday, dozens of barricades were still being manned on motorways and roundabouts, but far fewer than the more than 2,000 sites on Saturday and 150 on Sunday.

Other protesters continued to camp

out in supermarket parking lots.

“The movement is not exceptional... and obviously isn’t as big as on Saturday,” Laurent Nunez, junior interior minister, told CNews, adding that police would continue to intervene to ensure major roads are not blocked.

A handful of skirmishes were reported overnight, including in the northern port city of Calais where an Australian truck driver was detained after trying to force his way through a barricade.

A British motorist was also detained trying to break through a barricade in Calais.

The grassroots movement emerged

on social media last month over a surge in fuel prices this year, in particular for diesel, which many blame on taxes implemented in recent years as part of France’s anti-pollution fight.

It quickly snowballed into a broader protest over stagnant spending power under President Emmanuel Macron.

“I earn 500 euros (\$570) a month -- how do you expect me to live on that? With what I earn I can only allow myself one meal a day,” said Jean-Luc, a 57-year-old protesting in Calais.

Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said Sunday night that the government had heard the anger, but that it would maintain the fuel taxes, which are set to increase again in January.

Last week the government unveiled a 500 million euro package of measures to help low-income households, including energy subsidies and higher scrappage bonuses for the purchase of cleaner vehicles.

But even some lawmakers in Macron’s Republic on the Move (LREM) party are urging the government to do more to help ease fuel and energy costs as winter approaches.

“We need to maintain environmental taxes, (Philippe) is right to reiterate this, but we also need more measures to assist the French, especially the middle classes and the less well off,” LREM lawmaker Matthieu Orphelin told RFI radio on Monday.

# U.S. Judge Weighs: Temporary Halt to Trump’s Order to Bar Asylum



A migrant caravan walks into the interior of Mexico after crossing the Guatemalan border near Ciudad Hidalgo, Mexico.

WASHINGTON (Reuters) — Civil rights groups urged a U.S. judge on Monday to temporarily halt an order by President Donald Trump that bars asylum for migrants who illegally cross the border with Mexico.

The groups argued in court papers that Trump’s Nov. 9 order violated administrative and immigration law.

The hearing before U.S. District Judge Jon Tigar in San Francisco comes as thousands of Central Americans, including a large number of children, are traveling in caravans toward the U.S. border to escape violence and poverty at home. Some have already arrived at Tijuana, a Mexican city on the border with California.

Trump cited an overwhelmed immigration system for his proclamation that officials will only process asylum claims for migrants who present themselves at an official entry point.

Immigration advocates said the order clearly conflicted with the Immigration and Nationality Act, which allows any person present in the United States to seek asylum, regardless of how they entered the country.

The groups also argued that the administration violated a requirement to provide a period of time for public

comments before the order took effect.

Any ruling on Monday would likely be procedural and would restore the prior asylum rules while the rights groups made their case for a preliminary injunction at a future hearing.

The lawsuit was brought by the American Civil Liberties Union, the Southern Poverty Law Center and the Center for Constitutional Rights.

Rights groups have said immigrants are being forced to wait days or weeks at the border before they can present themselves for asylum, and the administration has been sued for deliberately slowing processing times at official ports.

Caravan participants began to arrive last week in Tijuana on the Mexican side of the U.S. border, which has put a strain on humanitarian shelters where many will wait to seek asylum. Their presence has also strained Tijuana’s reputation as a welcoming city, with some residents screaming at the migrants, “Get out!”

Trump sent more than 5,000 soldiers to the 2,000-mile (3,100 kilometers) frontier with Mexico to harden the border, although critics dismissed the move as a political stunt ahead of Congressional elections on Nov. 6.

# Rain Complicates Search for Victims of California Fire



A volunteer member of an El Dorado County search and rescue team photographs the orange spray paint that marks the ruins of a home to show no human remains were found at the location in Paradise, CA.

PARADISE, Calif. (AP) — The search for remains of victims of the devastating Northern California wildfire has taken on new urgency as rain in the forecast could complicate those efforts while also bringing relief to firefighters on the front lines.

Up to 400 people fanned out Monday to search the ash and rubble where homes once stood before flames roared through the Sierra foothills town of Paradise and surrounding communities, killing at least 77 people in the deadliest U.S. wildfire in a century.

Wearing white coveralls, hard hats and masks, teams of volunteers and search and rescue crews poked through the smoky debris for fragments of bone before rains can wash them away or turn loose, dry ash into a thick paste. The so-called Camp Fire has destroyed more than 10,500 homes.

A team of 10 volunteers, accompanied by a cadaver dog, went from house to house in the charred landscape. They scrutinized the rubble in five-minute sweeps, using sticks to move aside debris and focused on vehicles, bathtubs and what was left of mattresses.

When no remains were found, they spray-

painted a large, orange “0” near the house and moved on.

Robert Panak, a volunteer on a team from Napa County, said he tried to picture the house before it burned and think where people might have hidden. His morning search was fruitless, but he wasn’t deterred.

“I just think about the positives, bringing relief to the families, closure,” Panak said.

Sheriff Kory Honea said it was within the “realm of possibility” that officials would never know the exact death toll from the blaze. He also questioned whether the search for remains could be completed by midweek when rain is forecast.

“As much as I wish that we could get through all of this before the rains come, I don’t know if that’s possible,” Honea said.

About 1,200 names remain on a list of people unaccounted for more than a week after the fire began in Butte County about 140 miles (225 kilometers) north of San Francisco, authorities said.

Authorities don’t believe all those on the list are missing and the roster dropped by 300 on Sunday as more people were located or got in touch to say they weren’t missing.

# May Vows to Push Brexit Deal Despite Rebellion



Britain’s Prime Minister Theresa May speaks during a press conference inside 10 Downing Street in central London on November 15, 2018.

LONDON (Guardian) — Prime Minister Theresa May has told business leaders they must “play their part” in creating a successful post-Brexit Britain as she promised that her deal with the EU would set the UK on a path to a more prosperous future.

The prime minister said she was “unashamedly” putting economic success and the livelihoods of “real people” first as she attempted to seize the initiative back from febrile Tory Brexiters and win over business leaders with her future plans.

In a defiant speech to business leaders at the CBI’s annual conference, she said: “We’re not

talking about political theory, but the reality of people’s lives and livelihoods; jobs depend on us getting this right.”

As she prepared to travel to Brussels this week to negotiate details of the UK’s future relationship with the EU, May stressed that business would have an essential role to play once that was agreed in showing that it “can and should” be a force for good.

She said that the best way to do that was invest in and provide skills for the next generation of British workers, as well as spending on research and development. “We will only succeed if business plays its part too,” she added.

As she enters perhaps the most perilous week of her premiership, May promised that her Brexit deal delivered on the central demand of voters in the 2016 referendum, by allowing the UK to control immigration.

“Getting back full control of our borders is an issue of great importance to the British people,” she said, adding that EU citizens would no longer be able to “jump the queue ahead of engineers from Sydney or software developers from Delhi”.

Downing Street hopes that by stressing what it regards as the positive aspects of the deal reached with Brussels last week, May can win over doubters in her party and undercut Tory rightwingers calling for her to be ousted.

Ministers also hope that after this week’s talks with the European commission, the whole Brexit package, which also includes the withdrawal agreement containing the controversial backstop, can be approved at a special EU summit next Sunday.

May received the backing of Carolyn Fairbairn, the head of the CBI, who warned that UK firms were cancelling investments in Britain.

May insisted she would press ahead with her Brexit plans despite attempts from within her own party to force the government to take a different course.

# Sanitation Crisis Persists as World Marks Toilet Day

KAMPALA, Uganda (AP) — Poor countries around the world are facing a dangerous shortage of toilets that puts millions of lives at risk, according to campaigners marking World Toilet Day by urging governments and businesses to invest more in sanitation.

The toilet crisis is most severe in parts of Africa and Asia facing extreme poverty and seeing a population boom.

One in five primary schools and one in eight secondary schools globally do not have any toilets, the group WaterAid said in a new report to mark the UN-designated toilet day, observed on Monday, as part of efforts to end the global sanitation crisis.

An estimated 4.5 billion people across the world lack access to proper

sanitation, said the report. Some 2.5 billion among them do not have adequate toilets, according to UN figures. The lack of toilets forces many to defecate in the open — in the streets, in the bushes and by rivers and other water sources.

Among the development goals set by the UN in 2015 is a target to ensure everyone has access to a safe toilet by 2030. But campaigners warn this goal will be hard to meet if governments and businesses do not put more money into the sanitation economy.

Sanitation is “the business of the decade,” said Cheryl Hicks, chief executive of the Geneva-based business group Toilet Board Coalition. She told The Associated Press that the group is urging commercial investment to help reduce toilet shortages in countries

where governments cannot afford such infrastructure.

“Half the world needs toilets. They don’t have them because the infrastructure is too expensive for governments,” she said.

African countries are among the neediest.

The new report by WaterAid cites an estimated 344 million children in sub-Saharan Africa who lack a toilet at home, leaving them vulnerable to diarrhea and other water-borne infections.

In the West African nation of Guinea-Bissau, one of 101 countries surveyed by WaterAid, eight in 10 schools there lack adequate toilet facilities. The same study reported that 93 percent of households in the East African nation of Ethiopia lack a decent toilet.