

Power down on Greek island after chopper crash



Representative picture (Courtesy of NDTV)

Athens, Greece

The Greek island of Poros was without electricity yesterday after a private helicopter crashed through power cables and into the sea, a local official said.

“There was a great flash and the helicopter’s fuel exploded,” deputy Poros mayor Yiorgos Koutouzis told state TV ERT.

“It hit power cables around a hundred metres from the sea, the island is now without electricity,” he said.

Coastguard spokesman Nikos Lagadianos said there

were believed to be three people on board -- a Greek pilot and two foreign passengers.

The helicopter fell shortly after takeoff from Galata, the nearest coastal village on the mainland facing Poros, 170 kilometres (105 miles) south-west of Athens.

The coastguard said search crews, including six of its vessels, divers and a rescue helicopter, had found the wreckage and were searching for survivors.

Poros is a small picturesque island off the eastern coast of the Peloponnese that is popular with holidaymakers.

US Navy ‘ready’ for Venezuela mission: top commander

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The US Navy is ready to “do what needs to be done” on Venezuela, a top commander said Monday, as America ramps up pressure on the crisis-wracked country.

US Southern Command chief Admiral Craig Fallor made the remarks in Rio de Janeiro as the United States kicked off its annual UNITAS maritime exercise involving nine Latin American countries as well as the UK, Portugal and Japan.

“I won’t speak to details of

what we’re planning and what we’re doing, but we remain ready to implement policy decisions and we remain on the balls of our feet,” Fallor told reporters.

“The United States Navy is the most powerful navy in the world. If a policy decision is made to deploy the navy, I’m convinced that we’ll be able to do what needs to be done.”

His remarks came just weeks after President Donald Trump said he was considering a “blockade or quarantine” of the Latin American country.

13 Chinese tourists killed as bus plunges into ravine in Laos

Bangkok, Thailand

At least 13 Chinese tourists were killed and dozens injured when their bus skidded off the road and plunged 30 metres into a ravine in Laos, a police officer said yesterday.

The bus was carrying more than 40 Chinese nationals heading towards the tourist town of Luang Prabang when the accident occurred late on Monday.

“At this moment, 13 bodies have been recovered... while two are still missing,” police officer Xaiyaphon Chitavong said, blaming brake failure for the accident.

He added that 31 people were receiving medical treatment.

Chinese state media showed photos of rescuers wading through ankle-deep floodwaters.

Traffic accidents in Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar are common, with safety regulations often flouted and law enforcement low.

The monsoon season from June to October also drenches rural roads with heavy rains creating slippery conditions.

Tourism to communist-run Laos has grown in recent



Rescuers work near the accident site where a tour bus carrying Chinese tourists crashed near the northern town of Luang Prabang, Laos

years, and visitors from China increased by 13 percent in the first half of 2019 compared to the year before, according to the state-backed Vientiane Times.

Turkey warns Syria ‘not to play with fire’

Ankara, Turkey

Turkey warned Damascus yesterday “not to play with fire” a day after a Turkish military convoy was cut off by an air strike in north-west Syria.

“The regime should not play with fire... As we have previously said, we will do whatever is necessary to ensure the security of our soldiers and observation posts,” Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters in Ankara.

But, he added, “we hope it does not reach that point”.

The Turkish military convoy of around 50 armoured vehicles had entered the Idlib province on Monday heading towards the key town of Khan Sheikhun, where Russian-supported regime forces are fighting to retake the area from jihadists and rebels.

The Turkish defence ministry said that an air strike hit, killing three civilians and wounding 12.

But the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a UK-based monitor, said a Russian air strike hit a rebel vehicle leading the convoy just outside the town of Maaret al-Noman, 15 kilometres (nine miles) north of Khan Sheikhun.

The strike killed a Turkish-backed fighter from the Faylaq al-Sham group and two



Smoke billows during pro-regime bombardments in the area of Maar Hitat in Syria's northern Idlib province



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FOREIGN MINISTER MEVLUT CAVUSOGLU PRIME MINISTER

other opposition fighters, the Observatory said.

The convoy angered Damascus, who accused Ankara of

providing support to “terrorists”.

Cavusoglu said the convoy’s “duty was to ensure the safety of a Turkish observation post”, adding that Ankara had “no intention to move our ninth observation post”.

The post is one of 12 in Idlib, the last bastion of jihadist forces, established as part of a Russia-Turkey buffer zone deal to prevent a large-scale offensive in the region.

Despite this agreement, the Syrian regime and Russia have increased their attacks in Idlib since late April.

Turkish officials were in talks over the incident with their Russian counterparts, Cavusoglu said.

Epstein put assets in trust two days before suicide: report

● Epstein, a wealthy hedge fund manager who befriended many politicians and celebrities over the years, hung himself in prison on August 10

● On August 8, he signed a last will

● Epstein was accused of trafficking girls as young as 14

New York, United States

Disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein wrote a will two days before he died, putting his \$578 million in assets into a trust with unnamed beneficiaries, the *New York Post* reported Monday.

Epstein, a wealthy hedge fund manager who befriended many politicians and celebrities over the years, hung himself in prison on August 10 as he awaited trial on sex trafficking charges.

On August 8, he signed a last will and testament filed in the Virgin Islands, where he owned a private island, transferring his wealth into “The 1953 Trust,” the *Post* reported.

It posted a copy of the will online showing that Epstein claimed he had more than \$56.5 million in cash, equities of over



Jeffrey Epstein



Epstein was convicted in 2008 in a Florida state court of paying young girls for sexual massages at his Palm Beach mansion. He served just 13 months in jail over the Florida charges under a plea deal struck by the then-federal prosecutor in the state, Alex Acosta, who was forced to resign as US labor secretary over the issue

\$300 million as well as a fixed income of more than \$14 million.

Epstein also listed six luxury properties, including in New York, Florida and Paris and more than \$18 million in “aviation assets, automobiles and boats,” the *Post* added.

The document did not name any listed beneficiaries. Bloomberg News reported that the move could make it more difficult for Epstein’s alleged victims to sue his estate.

Several women have filed lawsuits seeking damages for sexual abuse.

Epstein was accused of trafficking girls as young as 14 for sex. He denied the charges but faced up to 45 years in jail if found guilty.

The *Post*’s report came as The *New York Times* released new details about Epstein’s final days in Manhattan’s high-security Metropolitan Correctional Center.

Citing sources, the newspaper said he hated his vermin-infested cell so much that he paid for lawyers to meet him for up to 12 hours a day in a different room.

He rarely washed and slept on the floor instead of his bed, they said.

The US Justice Department and the FBI are investigating how one of America’s most high-profile prisoners was able to kill himself just weeks after an apparent earlier suicide attempt.

Duterte to visit Beijing

Manila, Philippines

President Rodrigo Duterte will visit Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping next week to raise their conflicting claims to the South China Sea, as the Filipino leader faces pressure at home to confront Beijing.

While Duterte has embraced China and had largely set aside a once-tense standoff over the resource-rich waterway, a series of confrontations have stoked domestic discontent.

Duterte heads to China on August 28 and is due to return to the Philippines on September 2, his spokesman, Salvador Panelo, told journalists yesterday.

US missile test will trigger a new ‘arms race’: Beijing

Beijing, China

China warned yesterday that the testing of a medium-range cruise missile by the US would start a new “arms race”, after a launch off the coast of California.

“This measure from the US will trigger a new round of an arms race, leading to an escalation of military confrontation, which will have a serious negative impact on the international and regional security situation,” said Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang.

Geng said that the US should “let go of its Cold War mentality” and “do more things that are conducive to... international and regional peace and tranquility.”

The missile was launched from the US Navy-controlled San Nicolas Island off the coast of California.

Five held in France for urging attacks on G7 police

Paris, France

French authorities arrested five people accused of encouraging attacks on a hotel slated to accommodate police during this weekend’s G7 summit in Biarritz, a source close to the inquiry said yesterday.

The arrests occurred on Monday morning, just days ahead of the summit chaired by French President Emmanuel Macron who will from Saturday host the likes of Donald Trump, Angela Merkel and Boris Johnson in the glitzy resort in southwestern France.

Several of the suspects are young members of radical anti-capitalist groups known as “black blocs” which played a major role in violent street protests that rocked Paris and other French cities over the last months.

The investigation was triggered after a woman living in the area posted a message online pinpointing a hotel where gendarmes policing the summit will stay.