

## Nato will not take part in Syria strike

The suspected use of chemical weapons in Syria demands an international response but Nato will not take part, alliance head Anders Fogh Rasmussen told Danish media yesterday.

"I see no Nato role in an international reaction to the (Syrian) regime," Rasmussen told reporters in the Danish town of Vejle, daily Politiken reported.

He said the alleged use of chemical weapons was "a terrifying and horrible act. Chemical attacks are a clear violation of international standards -- a crime that can't be ignored."

"It demands an international response, so it doesn't happen again," Rasmussen said.

The Nato secretary general has in the past insisted on the need for a political solution to the Syrian conflict.

UN inspectors have visited the scene of the August 21 suspected gas attack near the Syrian capital.

The opposition says more than 1,300 people died when toxic gases were unleashed on Eastern Ghouta and Moadamiyet al-Sham. Doctors Without Borders said 355 people died of "neurotoxic" symptoms in the affected areas.

## NEWSIN brief

### Israel to deport African migrants

Israel has struck a deal to deport tens of thousands of illegal African migrants to Uganda, Haaretz newspaper reported yesterday.

Israeli immigration authorities say there are about 55,000 illegal African migrants in the country.

### Drone kills al-Qaeda leader in Yemen

A drone strike yesterday killed an al-Qaeda leader in Yemen, sources said, the latest in a string of attacks targeting what the US considers the extremist group's most dangerous branch.

Witnesses confirmed the death of Qaed al-Dhahab, a military chief of al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula, who had previously fought with the group in Iraq.

### Vietnam declares prisoner amnesty

Vietnam will free more than 15,000 convicts to mark its independence day celebrations, the president's office said Thursday, in a major amnesty that excludes prominent political prisoners.

The 15,446 detainees, including 1,842 women, will be released for the 68th National Day anniversary which falls on Monday, said an official. The mass pardon is one of the country's largest in recent years.

### Five rebels killed in Indian Kashmir

Indian police and troops killed five suspected rebels in an overnight gun battle in a forested area of northern Kashmir, triggering anti-India protests by local residents, police said yesterday.

**Blast kills Afghan district governor**

A suicide bomber detonated himself at a mosque in northern Afghanistan yesterday, killing the local district governor, a policeman and at least six other worshippers, officials said.

The blast erupted in the middle of a crowd gathered outside the mosque building after a funeral prayer session for a tribal elder.



# Strike would distort world order: Russia

China urges no action before UN report

AFP, Moscow

Russia yesterday said that military strikes on Syria without UN Security Council approval would damage the existing world order which is based around the Council where Russia has permanent membership.

"Such actions bypassing the UN Security Council -- if they take place of course -- will inflict huge damage to the system based on the central role of the UN," President Vladimir Putin's chief foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov said.

"They will deal a serious blow to the entire system of world order. And it is unlikely the situation in Syria itself and the Middle East will become more stable and calmer," he added. He also welcomed the British parliament's rejection of military action against the Syrian regime.

Ushakov also complained Washington has not shared its intelligence that according to the United States implicates Assad's regime in an alleged chemical attack outside Damascus which activists say killed hundreds.

China said there should be no rush to force UN Security Council action against Syria until a probe by UN experts into suspected chemical weapons use is complete.

In remarks reported by the official Xinhua news agency yesterday, Foreign Minister Wang Yi told UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in a telephone call that China fully supported an independent and objective inspection free from outside pressure.

THE INDEPENDENT ONLINE

A playground full of children in northern Syria has been bombed by a fighter jet with a napalm-like substance, according to disturbing new footage captured by the BBC Panorama programme.

Eye witnesses described how a jet had passed the school in Aleppo numerous times, as if it searching for a target, before it dropped the bomb.

At least 10 children were killed and many more were injured, according to the report from Ian Pannell and cameraman Darren Conway.

A large number of those who survived had burns to more than 50 per cent of their bodies, meaning that they were more likely than not to die as well.

Both adults and children were filmed arriving at a basic hospital, with their clothes burned from their bodies and their skin coated in a white substance which the BBC said suggested the bomb contained something like napalm or thermite.

Though he refused to be identified in the report, the school's headmaster spoke out

# Syria vote strains Britain-US ties

AFP, London

British Prime Minister David Cameron counted the cost yesterday after a humiliating rejection by parliament of his call for military action on Syria, a defeat which dealt a severe blow to the "special relationship" with the United States.

Cameron suffered the worst setback of his three years in office when lawmakers he had recalled from their summer holidays voted 285 to 272 to defy the government's motion late Thursday.

It was a doubly damaging defeat for Cameron, who had already watered down the original motion in response to demands from the Labour opposition.

The party said it needed "compelling evidence" that the Syrian regime had been responsible for a chemical attack that killed hundreds near Damascus, then said it was opposing the government's "opaque" motion.

It is believed to be the first time since 1782 that a British government has lost a vote about military action.

Cameron is likely to bear most responsibility for the result.

He reportedly had pushed Barack Obama to take action over Syria, but now the US president is left to pursue a military option without his closest ally and the country that gave US forces the strongest backing in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Cameron said he did not feel he should apologise to Obama, and said he hoped the US leader would understand that he had had to seek parliament's approval before action.

"I don't think it's a question of having to apologise," he said.

Cameron said he still wanted to see "a robust response" to chemical weapons use and suggested Britain would increase diplomatic pressure on the Syrian regime, but conceded it could not now take part in military strikes.

Veteran politician Paddy Ashdown, a former special forces soldier, said Britain's standing in the world had been hugely diminished by the result.

"We now have a bunch of people -- the same ones who voted against this last night -- who want to get out of Europe and have smashed our relationship with the United States," he said, in a swipe at rebel Conservative backbenchers.

Earlier he wrote on Twitter: "In 50 years trying to serve my country I have never felt so depressed/ashamed."

Professor Michael Clarke, of the Royal United Services Institute think-tank, said parliament's decision would prove an embarrassment for Britain internationally, but it remained to be seen whether it would be merely a "blip" in relations with Washington.

He said that while Britain had a strong intelligence-sharing relationship with the US, the "symbolism" of the absence of UK forces in any military action over Syria would be strong.

"As it stands, we will not be there firing off our cruise missiles -- if that happens -- and there is big political symbolism in that. We lack the symbolism of joining in."



Palestinian children pose on a makeshift bed in the cave that hosts their family since the demolition of their house by Israeli forces recently in the east Jerusalem neighborhood of Silwan. Israeli forces have destroyed the homes of 716 Palestinians in 2013, according to HRW, which has recorded a three-fold increase in the number of demolitions in east Jerusalem since last year.

PHOTO: AFP

## Irish poet of soil, strife dies

THE NEW YORK TIMES ONLINE

Seamus Heaney, a widely celebrated Irish poet who won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995, died at a hospital in Dublin yesterday after a short illness, according to a statement issued on behalf of his family. He was 74.

Heaney, who was born in Northern Ireland but moved to Dublin in his later years, is recognized as one of the major poets of the 20th century. His fellow poet Robert Lowell described Heaney as the "most important Irish poet since Yeats."

In a statement, Faber & Faber, which published his work for nearly 50 years, called him "one of the world's greatest writers. His impact on literary culture is immeasurable."

Born April 13, 1939, on a farm in County Derry, Heaney gained prominence in the 1960s after his debut with the "Death of a Naturalist." His volumes of poetry include "The Spirit Level,"

"District and Circle" and "Bog Poems."

Under constant pressure to write favorably about the goals of his fellow Catholics, many of whom wanted a Northern Ireland free of British control, his work often dwelt on the sectarian violence in the British province of Ulster.

But he saw both sides of the conflict and never wrote polemics to support the violent campaign of the Irish Republican Army. He resented and attacked British oppression, but admired much in British culture and English literature. He was rare among modern poets in that not only the vast majority of critics and academics praised him, but millions of readers also bought him. By some estimates he was the best-read living poet in the world at in recent decades.

He is survived by his wife, Marie, and his children, Christopher, Michael and Catherine Ann.



Seamus Heaney

## India PM tries to quell rupee fears amid crisis

AFP, New Delhi

India's premier, seeking to steady investor nerves over the rupee's plunge, said there was no danger of a repeat of the nation's 1991 balance of payments crisis, and forecast a pickup in economic growth.

Manmohan Singh, addressing parliament for the first time since the rupee went into a tailspin this month, called the currency's worst slide against the dollar in nearly two decades "certainly a shock".

But there is "no reason for anybody to believe we are going down the hill and 1991 is on the horizon," Singh told lawmakers.

In 1991, a foreign-exchange strapped government pawned its gold reserves in exchange for loans from the International Monetary Fund.

Singh called India's record current account deficit -- the widest measure of trade that has undermined the currency -- "unsustainably large".

But actions by policymakers' including restricting currency outflows and reducing gold imports to narrow the trade gap would bear fruit, he said.

India is faced "with important challenges but we have the capacity to address them -- it is at times like these a nation shows what is truly capable of," he said.



Manmohan Singh

about the terrible scenes.

He said: "This was the most horrific thing. We have seen images on TV, we have heard many stories, but we have never seen anything like this before."

"There were dead people, people burning and people running away, but where to? Where would they go? It is not safe anywhere. That is the fate of the Syrian people."

## Tel Aviv gets missile defence amid fears

AFP, Jerusalem

Israel deployed its Iron Dome missile defence system in Tel Aviv yesterday, as the United States weighed military strikes on neighbouring Syria, local media said.

Army radio said that a battery of the mobile system was set up during the morning in the greater Tel Aviv area.

News website Ynet said that unlike last November when the interceptor missiles brought down rockets fired from Gaza, to the south, this time they were pointing north, toward Syria.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Thursday said Israel had deployed its Iron Dome system to meet its current security needs.

He did not specify where, but media reported earlier in the week that the military was moving two of its short-range Iron Dome batteries and one battery of the mid-range Patriot missile to northern Israel.

"We have decided to deploy Iron Dome and other interceptors," Netanyahu said Thursday night in a statement as he went into security talks at the defence ministry in Tel Aviv.

"We are not involved in the war in Syria. But I repeat: if anyone tries to harm Israeli citizens, the Israeli army will respond with force," Netanyahu said in other remarks broadcast by Israeli television.

## ODDLY enough

### 'Walking' shark!

AFP, Jakarta

A new species of shark that "walks" along the seabed using its fins as tiny legs has been discovered in eastern Indonesia, an environmental group said yesterday.

The brown and white bamboo shark pushes itself along the ocean floor as it forages for small fish and crustaceans at night, said Conservation International, whose scientists were involved in its discovery.

The shark, which grows to a maximum length of just 80 centimetres and is harmless to humans, was discovered off Halmahera, one of the Maluku Islands that lie west of New Guinea.

Bamboo sharks, also known as longtail carpet sharks, are relatively small compared to their larger cousins, with the largest adult reaching only about 120 centimetres in length.

Conservation International, whose scientists discovered the shark along with colleagues from the Western Australian Museum, added it came at a time when Indonesia was increasing its efforts to protect shark and ray species.