NEWS_{IN} brief

Powerful typhoon churns towards Japan AFP, Tokyo

Powerful Typhoon Vongfong, packing gusts of up to 234 kilometres per hour, churned towards Japan yesterday, injuring at least 20 people as it pounded the southern Okinawan islands with ferocious winds and driving rain. Vongfong is expected to approach Japan's southern main island of Kyushu by early tomorrow after brushing off Okinawa, and could make landfall, the meteorological agency said.

Thailand arrests 53 Rohingya migrants AFP, Bangkok

Thai authorities yesterday arrested 53 Rohingya migrants and two suspected Thai traffickers en route to neighbouring Malaysia, an official said. The migrants were found on a rubber plantation in Takua Pa dis trict in the southern coastal province of Phang Nga. Thousands of Rohingya -- a Muslim minority group not recognised as citizens in Myanmar -- have fled deadly communal unrest in Rakhine since 2012, mostly heading for Malaysia.

Malala to become Canadian citizen

AFP, Ottawa

Malala Yousafzai will travel to Canada to become an honorary citizen, Prime Minister Stephen Harper said Friday, the same day the 17year-old education rights campaigner was awarded a Nobel Peace Prize. Malala was named an honorary Canadian a year ago and will visit the country on October 22 to receive citizenship, Harper said. Malala is only the sixth person to become an honorary Canadian; others include the Dalai Lama, Nelson Mandela and

Aung San Suu Kyi. Britain holds Ebola outbreak test

AFP, London

Britain yesterday held a nationwide exercise to test its preparedness for an outbreak of the deadly Ebola virus. The eight-hour exercise featured actors pretending to have Ebola plus doctors, nurses and the ambulance service treating them at undisclosed locations around the country. The Ebola epidemic has killed over 4,000 people this year, according to the World Health Organisation.

Bahrain opposition to boycott polls

AFP, Dubai

Bahrain's Shia-led opposition yesterday announced that it would boycott parliamentary elections planned for November in the Sunniruled kingdom. Five opposition groups, including the Shiite movement Al-Wefag, said in a statement that the election "cements absolute rule in Bahrain".



Indians taking precautionary measures as large waves hit the beach ahead of Cyclone Hudhud making expected landfall in Visakhapatnam, yesterday. About 150,000 people were evacuated on India's eastern seaboard yesterday as the cyclone bore down and grew in sheer force, threatening to devastate farmland and fishing villages when it hits the coast today morning.

PHOTO:

Kurds halt ISIS thrust into Kobane

AFP, Mursitpinar

Kurdish fighters halted a thrust by Islamic State group jihadists towards the heart of the battleground Syrian town of Kobane yesterday, after the UN warned thousands of civilians risked massacre.

The pre-dawn attack came after the IS militants overran the Kurdish headquarters in the border town on Friday, sparking fears they would cut off the last escape route to neighbouring Turkey.

But US officials warned that while world attention is focused on Kobane, the jihadists have been piling pressure on government troops in neighbouring Iraq, leaving the army in a "fragile" position in Anbar province between Baghdad and the Syrian border.

The renewed ISIS drive on the centre of Kobane sparked 90 minutes of heavy fighting with the town's Kurdish defenders before the jihadists fell back, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

US-led coalition warplanes also carried out two air strikes on ISIS targets south and east of the town early yesterday, according to the Britain-based monitoring group, which has a wide network of sources inside Syria.

US-led warplanes have intensified air strikes against ISIS, which has been attacking Kobane for three weeks, but the Pentagon has said that there are limits to what can be done without troops on the ground.

Small groups of Kurdish fighters were trying to harry the encircling jihadists with operations across the front line, Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP.

UN envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura warned Friday that 12,000 or so civilians still in or near Kobane, including about 700 mainly elderly people in the town centre, "will most likely be massacred" by ISIS if the town falls.

FIGHT AGAINST ISIS

Turkey to train moderate Syria rebels: US

Coalition military chiefs to meet

in US next week

US warns of possible reprisal attacks

Jihadists execute journalist, 12 other

people in Iraq

porous Syrian border after the escalating fighting in Kobane sparked the exodus of 200,000 refugees over the frontier. Turkey has been deeply reluctant to allow

weapons or Kurdish fighters to cross the border despite repeated nights of protests among its own large Kurdish minority that have left 31 people dead. However, US on Friday reported "progress"

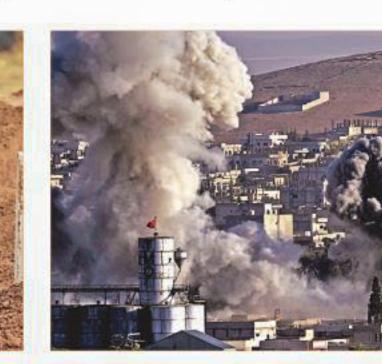
in pressing Turkey to participate in the fight

side the US capital. And Washington on Friday warned of

possible attacks against Western targets in reprisal for its military campaign against the jihadists.

The US State Department regularly updates its notice on worldwide risks, but the last update had been in April.

"Authorities believe there is an increased likelihood of reprisal attacks against US,



A mother of a Syrian Kurdish fighter laments besides his grave, left, and smoke rises from the besieged Kurdish town of Kobane.

Twenty-one jihadists, including two suicide bombers, were killed along with eight Kurdish fighters in clashes in the town

on Friday, the Observatory said. Another 16 ISIS militants died in coalition air raids across the provinces of Aleppo

-- which includes Kobane -- and Raga, where ISIS has its main Syrian stronghold, it said. Turkey has tightened security of its

against the ISIS, noting a pledge from Ankara to train and equip moderate Syrian rebels. Meanwhile, Pentagon officials on Friday

said military chiefs from the 21 countries already committed to the US-led coalition are to meet in Washington next week to discuss strategy.

The extraordinary meeting will be held on Tuesday at Andrews Air Force base out-

Western and coalition partner interests throughout the world, especially in the Middle East, North Africa, Europe and Asia," the notice said.

Meanwhile, in Iraq, ISIS militants executed an Iraqi news cameraman and 12 other people on Friday in several towns and villages north of Baghdad, officials, relatives and witnesses said.

UKRAINE CRISIS

Poroshenko to meet Putin next week

AFP, Kharkiv

Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko yesterday said that he will meet Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin next week to discuss the six-month conflict between Kiev and pro-Russian rebels in eastern Ukraine.

"I will have a meeting with the President of Russia Vladimir Putin in Milan," where a Europe-Asia Meeting summit will be held October 16-17, Poroshenko said while on a visit to eastern city Kharkiv.

The talks will also include German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Italian Premier Matteo Renzi, and British Prime Minister David Cameron along with the "leaders of the European Union,"

Putin and Poroshenko last met in late August for talks that led to a truce accord between Kiev and the pro-Russian rebels in eastern regions of Lugansk and Donetsk, where Ukraine says Moscow is stirring a bloody rebellion.

Under the truce, both sides must pull back heavy artillery by 15 kilometres, creating a 30-kilometre wide demilitarised zone. However, that has yet to happen, especially around Donetsk international airport, where Ukrainian units have held out against rebel attacks since May.

The conflict has already killed more than 3,300 people. The United Nations

in several areas along the frontline where the two

Ukraine's rebel-held eastern regions killed five people over the past 24 hours, local authorities said yesterday, in the latest deadly violations of a ceasefire.



A pro-democracy protester sleeps following a rally in the Admiralty district of Hong Kong. Thousands of prodemocracy supporters took to Hong Kong's streets late October 10 after protest leaders implored them to dig in for the long haul following the collapse of talks with the government. PHOTO: AFP

No plan to close Gitmo with executive action

White House denies report that Obama to bypass Congress

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The White House on Thursday denied a report that President Barack Obama is putting together options for executive action to close the controversial US military prison at Guantánamo Bay in defiance of congressional wishes.

The Wall Street Journal, citing administration officials, reported that the White House was "drafting options" to close the facility by overriding a ban put in place by Congress that prohibits prisoners from being brought to the United States. "Since the president came into office in

2009 the administration has been examining all possible ways we could get to closure of the facility, but we are not drafting options to override the law," White House spokeswoman Caitlin Hayden said. "We are continuing to work on transfers

[of prisoners] and calling on Congress to lift restrictions.'

Obama has vowed since his 2008 presi-

dential campaign to close the prison camp, which critics say violates US principles by keeping detainees locked up without trial.

Many Republicans consider the prison, which still holds about 150 prisoners, essential in the fight against international terrorism because it allows prisoners to be

held outside the United States. John Boehner, the Republican speaker of the House of Representatives, said on Thursday an "overwhelming majority" of the American people opposed allowing prisoners from

Guantánamo to enter the United States. "Not only is this scheme dangerous, it is yet another example of what will be this

administration's legacy of lawlessness," he said in a statement. The White House said it would continue

to make efforts to repatriate or resettle detainees or prosecute them through federal courts or military commission proceedings. The administration would also proceed in talks with foreign governments to negotiate possible prisoner transfers.

Modi launches new unique scheme for development

PTI, New Delhi

Asks MPs to adopt three villages by 2019

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday launched the 'Saansad Adarsh Gram Yojana' promising to bring a demand driven model for village development and expressed confidence that the scheme with its

Referring repeatedly to Mahatma Gandhi and JP, he said the scheme under which each MP will take responsibility of develop-

"constructive politics" will have a

"viral effect" across the nation.

tinue in the academic world."

ing physical and institutional infrastructure in one village by 2016 and three villages by 2019, is "not a scheme about money".

Elaborating his views on development, he said, "A debate is going on for long. Whether it should be from top to bottom or from bottom to the top. Discussions do help. But those who are working have to begin work somewhere ... the talk about bottom to top and top to bottom will con-

"We want to work. We want to see whether we can bring change through public participation ... I am not claiming that I

will change the situation all of a sudden...This schemes is not the ultimate. Changes and improvement will come in this with the passage of time," he said.

> schemes were working across the country, in each state there were a few villages that the state could be proud of.

village is developed in a block, it is also likely to have a "viral" effect and development would permeate in other villages

"We are nearly 800 MPs. If before 2019 we develop three villages each, we reach nearly 2,500 villages. If in the light of this scheme, the states also create a similar scheme for MLAs, then 6-7000 more villages can be added," Modi said hoping that this will have a cascading effect elsewhere.

North Korea says talks with South 'all but scrapped'

AFP, Seoul

North Korea's state media yesterday said high-level talks with Seoul were now all but scrapped over the launch of anti-Pyongyang propaganda leaflets from the South, which triggered an exchange of fire across the tense border.

The two Koreas had agreed a week earlier to work on resuming a formal high-level dialogue that has effectively He said though government | been suspended for seven months, raising hopes of a thaw in strained relations.

But the two Koreas traded heavy machine-gun fire across their border Friday, prompted by the North Korean military trying to shoot down balloons carrying the leaflets that The premier added that if one | activists launched from the South.

> Some rounds fell on the Southern side, which then responded with high-calibre machine gun fire. No casualties were reported on both sides. However it did not shut the door completely.

"It is totally up to the South Korean puppets' attitude what would happen to the North-South Korean relations in the future," it added.

Pyongyang had repeatedly warned of a "catastrophic" end in cross-border ties unless South Korea halted the launch of the leaflets as the North marked the anniversary of the founding of its ruling Workers' Party.

Second leaker in US intel!

Reveals documentary, solves mystery over Snowden's girlfriend

THE GUARDIAN ONLINE

The investigative journalist Glenn Greenwald has found a second leaker inside the US intelligence agencies, according to a new documentary about Edward Snowden that premiered in New York on Friday night.

Towards the end of filmmaker Laura Poitras's portrait of Snowden - titled Citizenfour, the label he used when he first contacted her -Greenwald is seen telling Snowden about

a second source. Snowden, at a meeting with Greenwald in Moscow, expresses surprise at the level of information apparently coming from this new source. Greenwald, fearing he will be

overheard, writes the details on scraps of paper. number of the people on the US government's watchlist of people under surveillance as a potential threat or as a suspect.

The figure is an astonishingt 1.2 million.

August by government officials, reported by CNN, that there was a second leaker. The assessment was made on the basis that Snowden was not identified as usual as the source and because at least one piece of information only became available after he ceased to be an NSA

The scene comes after speculation in

contractor and went on the run.

The two-hour documentary was the highlight of the New York Film Festival.

The documentary also revealed that Snowden's long-time girlfriend is living with him in Moscow

since July. The surprise revelation in the documentary upends the widespread assumption that Snowden had deserted Lindsay Mills

and that she, in a fit of pique, fled Hawaii The specific information relates to the where they had been living to stay with her parents in mainland US.

The two-hour long documentary, Citizenfour, shows Mills living in Russia with Snowden.

Poroshenko said.

says that more than 300 have died since the ceasefire. Fighting has continued

sides have failed to pull back heavy artillery, as required under the ceasefire. Shelling in eastern