

# NEWSIN brief

## Iran, US resume crunch nuke talks in Oman

AFP, Muscat  
The United States and Iran started a second day of talks aimed at breaking the deadlock on a nuclear deal yesterday, with the clock ticking down to a November 24 deadline. US Secretary of State John Kerry and Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif are meeting in Muscat, capital of the Gulf sultanate of Oman. At stake is a long-term nuclear agreement between Iran and the P5+1 powers -- Britain, China, France, Russia and the United States plus Germany.

## Kuwait's stateless Bidun 'offered Comoros citizenship'

BBC ONLINE  
Tens of thousands of stateless people in Kuwait - known as Bidun - could be offered citizenship of the Comoros islands off Africa, an official says.

The senior interior ministry official told a local newspaper that the Bidun would be given special applications for economic citizenship in the Comoros. He said those who accepted would receive residence permits in Kuwait.

## US blacklists Yemen ex-president Saleh

AFP, Washington  
The United States hit Yemen's former president Ali Abdullah Saleh and two allied Huthi rebel commanders with sanctions yesterday, two days after Saleh walked out on the new government. The US Treasury said it was blacklisting Saleh, Abdullah Yahya al-Hakim and Abd al-Khaliq al-Huthi for engaging in acts that directly or indirectly threaten the peace, security, or stability of Yemen.

## Modi names yoga minister in major reshuffle

AFP, New Delhi  
Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has appointed Shripad Yesso Naika as yoga minister as part of a major revamp of his government after storming to power in May. Hindu nationalist Modi, a vegetarian who practises yoga daily, strengthened his right-wing government on Sunday by appointing 21 new ministers as he tries to speed up reform of the faltering economy. Among the portfolios designated late Sunday was that of AAYUSH, whose minister will be charged with promoting the traditional medicines and practices of Ayurveda, yoga, naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and homeopathy.

## Fresh fighting in South Sudan despite ceasefire deal

AFP, Juba  
Fresh fighting has erupted in civil war-torn South Sudan, the government and rebels said yesterday, with both sides blaming each other for violating a new ceasefire deal. Reports of clashes in the oil-rich north and on several other fronts came just 48 hours after the country's arch-foes, President Salva Kiir and rebel leader Riek Machar, wrapped up peace talks in Ethiopia and promised regional mediators they would immediately stop the war. Rebel military spokesman Lul Ruai Koang, however, accused government troops of having "launched coordinated attacks" in Unity and Upper Nile States, and said a rebel base in Jonglei State was also "under heavy shelling".

# Obama urges Xi to be partner in ensuring world order

REUTERS, Beijing  
US President Barack Obama said yesterday a successful China was in the interests of the United States and the world but Beijing had to be a partner in underwriting international order, and not undermine it.

Speaking to growing concerns among US and other companies about the Chinese business environment after arriving in Beijing, Obama also urged China to reject the use of cyber theft for commercial gain and create a more level playing field where policy is not used for the benefit of some firms over others.

Obama's trip to China for an Asia-Pacific summit comes at a time of growing China-US friction with Washington trying to expand American interests in Asia while Chinese President Xi Jinping demonstrates more willingness than his predecessors to demonstrate Beijing's clout on regional issues.

"Our message is that we want to see China successful," Obama told a news conference. "But, as they grow, we want them to be a partner in underwriting the international order, not undermining it."

Obama and Xi will meet over dinner tonight and then for bilateral talks as

part of an official state visit tomorrow. In a deal that he said would improve trade and business ties between the world's two largest economies, Obama announced that China and the United States agreed to significantly extend the length of short-term visas. But he also urged Beijing's leaders to create a fair market place for foreign firms.

"We look to China to create a more level playing field on which foreign



companies are treated fairly, so that they can compete fairly with Chinese companies," he said in a speech to business leaders at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum.

"We look to China to become an innovative economy that values the protection of intellectual property rights, and rejects cyber theft of trade secrets for commercial gain."

Earlier, Obama said momentum

was building on the ambitious 12-country Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), although US officials had ruled out a major announcement on the pact in Beijing.

He urged China to move "definitively" to a more market-based exchange rate and to stand up for human rights and freedom of the press.

Under the visa deal, which will take effect on Nov 12, both countries would extend the terms of multiple entry short-term tourist and business visas to 10 years from one year, the White House said in a statement accompanying Obama's announcement. Student visas would be extended to five years from one year.

A senior US official said the visa agreement would allow the United States to tap into the fast-growing market of Chinese tourists traveling abroad. The United States now attracts only 2 percent of Chinese tourism.

"We see this as a really big win," the official said, estimating that the United States could gain 440,000 jobs by 2021 and receive an \$85 billion annual infusion into the American economy as a result of the new policy.

It will also make it easier for Chinese businesses and investors to get involved in US projects.

# Egypt jihadists vow loyalty to ISIS

AFP, Baghdad  
The leader of the Islamic State organisation won the allegiance of Egypt's deadliest militant group yesterday as Iraqi authorities investigated reports he had been killed or wounded in a US air strike.

Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, which has carried out a string of deadly attacks from its stronghold in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, said it was pledging its loyalty to the self-declared IS "caliph", Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi.

Speculation has swirled that Baghdadi, whose group has seized large parts of Iraq and Syria, was killed or wounded in a US strike on jihadist leaders in northern Iraq on Friday, but officials said there was no confirmation.

"There is no accurate information and we are investigating," a senior intelligence official told AFP yesterday when asked about Baghdadi's fate.

In a recording posted on its Twitter account, Ansar Beit al-Maqdis promised its loyalty to IS and urged other Muslims to do the same.

"We announce our pledge of allegiance to the caliph Ibrahim Ibn Awad... to listen and obey," the audio recording said, using another name for Baghdadi.

"We call on all Muslims everywhere to pledge allegiance to the caliph and support him," the recording said.

It was the most significant vow of support for IS in the region outside Iraq and Syria, suggesting its influence over militant groups is overshadowing its once dominant Al-Qaeda rivals.

Ansar Beit al-Maqdis, which means "Partisans of Jerusalem", has killed scores of police and soldiers since the Egyptian army ousted Islamist president Mohamed Morsi in July last year.

It was not immediately clear whether its pledge of allegiance would mean a shift in tactics to attack Western targets in Egypt, as demanded by the IS leadership.



# Khamenei outlines plan to 'eliminate' Israel

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has outlined a nine-step plan to "eliminate" Israel.

The Supreme Leader of Iran's official Twitter account has posted a set of answers to what are described as the "key questions", saying that Israel is guilty of a host of "crimes".

The first question asked is: "Why should the Zionist regime be eliminated?" To this, the response is given: "During its 66 years of life so far, the fake Zionist regime has tried to realise its goals by means of infanticide, homicide, violence and iron fist while boasts [sic] about it blatantly".

However the statement adds that "the elimination of Israel does not mean the massacre of the Jewish people in this region".

The statement proposes a referendum in which "all the original people of Palestine including Muslims, Christians and Jews" could vote, but from which "Jewish immigrants" would be excluded.

It says the theoretical resultant government would then decide upon whether the latter group could remain in the country.

But it goes on to say that if such a referendum cannot be achieved then "powerful confrontation and resolute and armed resistance" is the only solution, as compromise is not possible.

The comments come just days after it was reported that Barack Obama wrote to Khamenei to point out Iran and the United States shared interest in fighting Isis militants.

# Catalonia to push ahead with independence

BBC ONLINE

An informal vote on independence for Catalonia has shown more than 80% in favour, officials said yesterday.

The non-binding vote went ahead after Spain's constitutional court ruled out holding a formal referendum in the autonomous north-eastern region.

More than two million people out of an estimated 5.4 million eligible voters took part in the ballot on Sunday.

Catalan leader Artur Mas hailed the poll "a great success" that should pave the way for a formal referendum.

"We have earned the right to a referendum," he told cheering



supporters.

"Once again Catalonia has shown that it wants to rule itself."

The BBC's Patrick Jackson reports from a polling station in Catalonia

He added: "I ask the people in the world, I ask the media and I also ask the democratic governments in the world to help the Catalan people decide its political future."

The ballot was held in the face of fierce opposition from the Spanish government.

Spanish Justice Minister Rafael Catala dismissed the exercise as "a sterile and useless sham" that only served to exacerbate the divisions between Catalans and heighten political tensions.

He accused Artur Mas of pushing ahead with the 9 November vote to "hide his failure" in holding a proper referendum.

"The government considers this to be a day of political propaganda organised by pro-independence forces and devoid of any kind of democratic validity," he said in a statement.

# FIGHTING IN ALEPPO Syria's Assad ready to study UN plan

AFP, Damascus

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad said yesterday he was ready to study a UN plan to "freeze" fighting in the northern city of Aleppo, a statement from his office said.

"President Assad has been informed by (UN envoy Staffan) de Mistura of the main points of his initiative," said the statement issued after the two men held talks in Damascus.

"(Assad) said it was worthy of study and that work on it is needed... in order to re-establish security in Aleppo," it added.

It is De Mistura's second visit to Syria since he was appointed peace envoy in July.

On October 30, De Mistura put forward an "action plan" for Syria that proposed to "freeze" fighting in local areas to allow for aid deliveries and to lay the groundwork for peace talks.

According to the Syrian presidency Facebook page, Assad emphasised "the importance of Aleppo", which rebels and the army have been fighting over since July 2012.

State news agency SANA, meanwhile, quoted De Mistura as saying he was determined to ensure that his mission succeeds.

De Mistura had previously said Aleppo would be a "good candidate" to become a "freeze" zone.

The city has been split into rebel- and army-held areas since a major insurgent offensive began there.

# Ukraine 'build-up' raises tension

BBC ONLINE

The US and the European Union have expressed concern at reports of a build-up of separatist reinforcements in eastern Ukraine.

Shelling around the city of Donetsk on Sunday followed an intense overnight artillery bombardment, shaking an already fragile ceasefire.

Monitors and journalists reported unmarked convoys of heavy weapons, tanks and fighters close to the city.

Russia denies claims that it is supplying the separatist rebels. The EU's head of foreign policy, Federica Mogherini, said the latest reports were "worrying".

"The most recent reports by the OSCE [Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe] Special Monitoring Mission in Ukraine about convoys in separatist held areas with substantial amounts of heavy weapons, tanks and troops without insignia moving westwards represent a very worrying development," she said.

The White House warned that any efforts by pro-Russian rebels to seize more territory would be a "blatant violation" of the ceasefire agreement signed in Minsk.



Danish Foreign Minister Martin Lidegaard (C) walks yesterday with young Ukrainian journalists, distributing their publication, "Your choice-Freedom Ukraine", in the center of Kiev.

# Thailand to push back 200 boat people

REUTERS, Bangkok

More than 200 boat people held in southern Thailand will be pushed back out to sea, police said yesterday, despite calls by rights group to stop a policy that puts would-be asylum seekers at risk.

Around 259 people were found at sea on Saturday and were arrested for illegal entry.

Their discovery around 3 km (1.86 miles) from the coast follows what one NGO said was a "major maritime exodus" from neighbouring Myanmar of Rohingya, a mostly stateless Muslim minority group from the country's west.

"On average around 900 people left by boat from the middle of last month. We saw a major maritime exodus of nearly 10,000 people," said Chris Lewa of the Arakan Project, a Rohingya advocacy group, adding that increasing desperation was one reason for the departures.

Authorities in Thailand's Kapoe district said it was unclear whether any of the group were Rohingya but interviews with some of the group showed they were heading for Malaysia to find work or, in the women's cases, join their husbands.

The 259 will be put back on boats and sent back to Myanmar, said Police Colonel Sanya Prakobphol, head of Kapoe district police.

"They are Muslims from Myanmar... They are illegal migrants," Sanya told Reuters by telephone.

"If they come in then we must push them back... once they have crossed the sea border into Myanmar then that's considered pushing them back. What they do next is their problem."

Tens of thousands of Rohingya Muslims have fled Myanmar's Rakhine state since 2012, when violent clashes with ethnic Rakhine Buddhists killed hundreds and made about 140,000 homeless.

# Make your own computer

THE TELEGRAPH ONLINE

The world's first 3D-printed laptop has gone on sale, allowing anyone to print their own device in their living room for half the price of some of its conventionally manufactured rivals.

The laptop, called Pi-Top, will not be launched officially until next May but has already notched up £76,000 worth of pre-orders in a fortnight, largely by word of mouth.

Customers must already own a 3D printer, which can cost as little as £215 and are the size of a large coffee machine. The Pi-Top pack, which costs £180, includes a template that "prints" the shell of the laptop by melting rolls of thin plastic about the thickness of a piece of paper and laying them on top of each other.

The pack also contains a screen and a "Raspberry Pi" - a desktop tower the size of a credit

card - that are slotted into the shell to form the final laptop.

The Pi-Top has all the functions of a normal laptop, but its inventors hope it will be used to teach children to become more computer literate by learning how to dismantle and reassemble it.

It can be customised in any colour or even have the owner's name embossed on the shell.

"Instead of just using the laptop as a device that you type into, with this one you can understand how the screen actually works, how the battery gets charged and how it switches between the battery and mains power supplies," said Dunwoody.

"If something breaks, you can instantly fix it. A lot of parents are buying it for their kids because they see it as a really good way for them to start understanding the technology behind the devices they are using every day."



# Taliban bombs kill 10 Afghan police

AFP, Kabul

Two Taliban bombs killed at least 10 policemen in Afghanistan yesterday, officials said, the latest attacks against the security forces who are suffering huge casualties as US-led Nato troops pull out.

Seven police, including their commander, died when a suicide bomber detonated his explosives next to a group of officers in Logar province, south of Kabul.

"A suicide attacker on foot this morning targeted an Afghan local police commander in Puli Alam, killing him and six others," Abdul Hakim Eshaqzai, Logar's provincial police chief, told AFP.

The attacker, who was wearing a military uniform, struck as the commander was arriving at his office for a meeting.

# Police probe Zuma over home spending

AFP, Johannesburg

South African police are investigating President Jacob Zuma over a \$23 million taxpayer-funded refurbishment at his rural homestead, according to parliamentary papers.

In a written response to lawmakers published yesterday, police confirmed that an investigation into spending at the property "has been initiated".

Zuma, who was re-elected in May, has insisted that he had no knowledge of the work, including the construction of a swimming pool, private clinic and amphitheatre.

His government insists all the refurbishments at the homestead in Nkandla in the southeastern province of KwaZulu Natal were security related.

The issue has become a lightning rod for criticism of Zuma's administration, which is seen by many South Africans as tolerant of corruption and incompetence.

Opposition leader Mmusi Maimane of the Democratic Alliance laid the corruption charges against Zuma in March.

The move came after public ombudsman Thuli Madonsela ruled that Zuma had "benefited unduly" from the construction, ordering him to pay part of the cost.

At the time, Maimane said: "There can be no doubt that this Nkandla palace was built on corruption by the president for the president with our money."

He and other opposition politicians have repeatedly called for Zuma to resign.

Yesterday's confirmation of the investigation came with few details.

"The investigation in this regard has been initiated and no further information can be disclosed at this juncture as the matter is still sub judice," Police Minister Nathi Nhleko said in a written statement to parliament.

The president's spokesman refused to comment.

