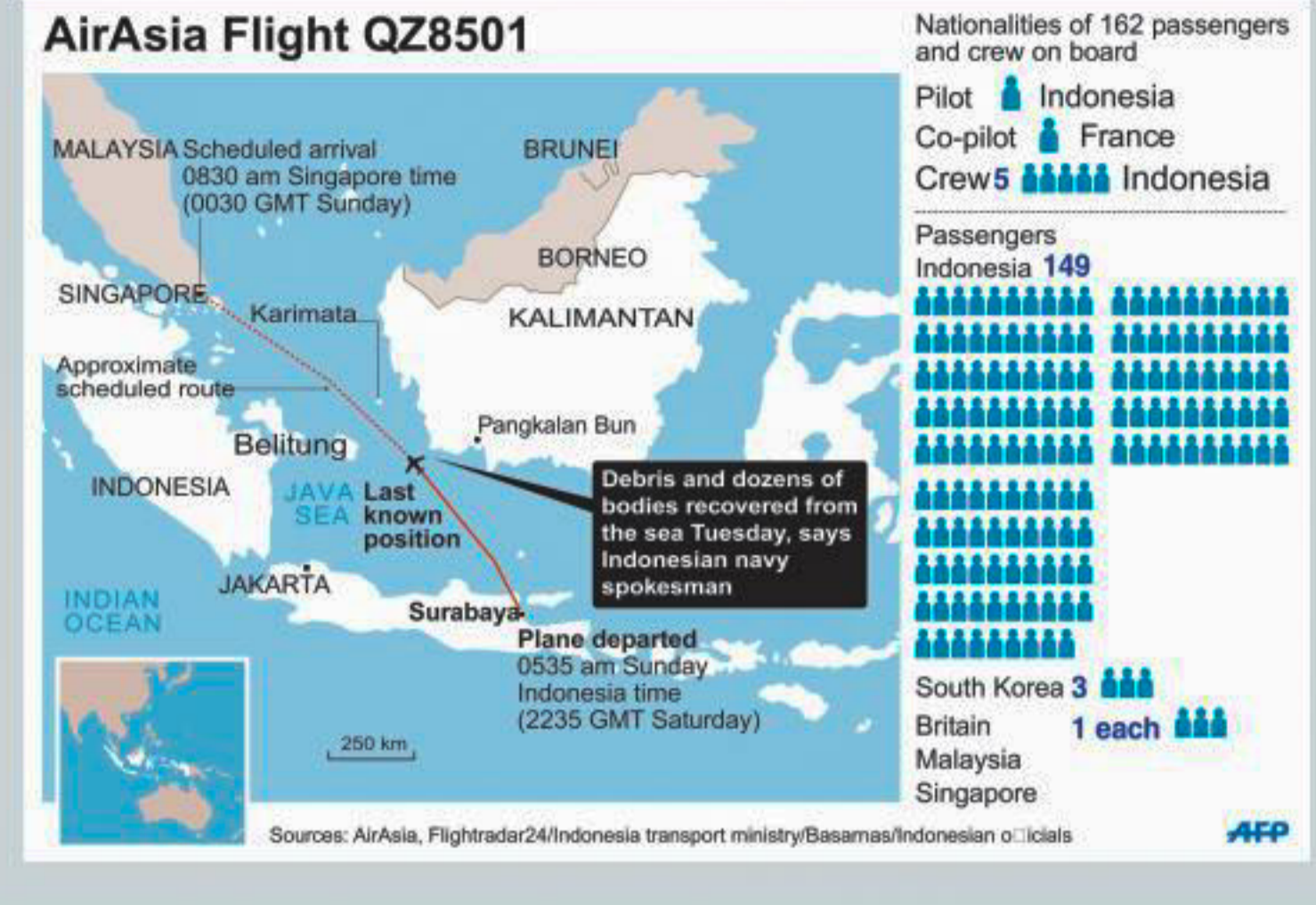


# AIRASIA FLIGHT TRAGEDY Bodies found 'holding hands'

AGENCIES  
The pilot who discovered the debris from AirAsia Flight QZ8501 has said he saw that three of the bodies recovered were holding hands.  
Lieutenant Airman Tri Wobowo, who co-piloted the C130 Hercules aircraft that first saw the items of the aircraft off the coast of Borneo earlier today, described the scene that greeted rescuers in the water.  
"There are seven to eight people. Three [of them] again hold hands," he told Indonesian national newspaper Kompas.  
As well as the bodies, the pilot reported seeing luggage, buoys and pieces of the aircraft itself - painted the distinctive red, black and white of AirAsia.  
Flight QZ8501 disappeared on Sunday en route to Singapore from Surabaya, Indonesia. The passenger plane was carrying 162 people at the time of its disappearance, including one Briton.  
AirAsia CEO Tony Fernandes said in a statement: "I am absolutely devastated. This is a very difficult moment for all of us at AirAsia as we await further developments of the search and rescue operations but our first priority now is the wellbeing of the family members of those onboard QZ8501."



Family members of passengers onboard the missing Malaysian air carrier AirAsia flight QZ8501 react after watching news reports showing an unidentified body floating in the Java sea, inside the crisis-centre set up at Juanda International Airport in Surabaya, yesterday. PHOTO: AFP



# Putin 'not so smart': Obama

BBC ONLINE  
President Barack Obama has said Vladimir Putin made a "strategic mistake" when he annexed Crimea, in a move that was "not so smart".  
Those thinking his Russian counterpart was a "genius" had been proven wrong by Russia's economic crisis, he said.  
International sanctions had made Russia's economy particularly vulnerable to changes in oil price, Obama said. He also refused to rule out opening a US embassy in Iran soon.  
"I never say never but I think these things have to go in steps" he told NPR's Steve Inskeep in the Oval Office.  
Obama was giving a wide-ranging interview with NPR shortly before leaving for Hawaii for his annual holiday. He criticised his political opponents who claimed he had been outdone by Russia's president.  
"You'll recall that three or four months ago, everybody in Washington was convinced that President Putin was a genius and he had outma-



noeuvered all of us and he had bullied and strategised his way into expanding Russian power," he said.  
"Today, I'd sense that at least outside of Russia, maybe some people are thinking what Putin did wasn't so smart."  
Obama argued that sanctions had made the Russian economy vulnerable to "inevitable" disruptions in oil price which, when they came, led to "enormous difficulties".  
"The big advantage we have with Russia is we've got a dynamic, vital economy, and they don't," he said. "They rely on oil. We rely on oil and iPads and movies and you name it."  
Meanwhile, Ukraine's Western-backed leader Petro Poroshenko promised Monday to meet Russia's Vladimir Putin and involve US President Barack Obama in his stalled push for peace with pro-Kremlin fighters in the separatist east.  
The surprise announcement came days after the first direct peace talks with the rebels in three months broke down without any evident progress after just one acrimonious round.



# Palestinians present tougher UN resolution

AFP, United Nations  
Palestinian envoys presented Monday a more toughly-worded UN draft resolution on statehood that could come up for a vote at the Security Council this week, despite US opposition.  
The US again rejected the text that would pave the way to a Palestinian state by setting a 12-month deadline to reach a final peace deal and calling for a full Israeli withdrawal by the end of 2017.  
Arab ambassadors endorsed the text, which contains new provisions on declaring East Jerusalem the capital of a Palestinian state, settling the issue of Palestinian prisoner releases and halting Jewish settlements. Palestinian envoy said the vote could "realistically" take place Tuesday.

# Grant rights to Rohingyas UN General Assembly urges Myanmar

AFP, United Nations  
The UN General Assembly on Monday adopted a resolution urging Myanmar to grant citizenship to its Rohingya Muslim minority and grant them equal access to services.  
The non-binding measure was adopted by consensus in the 193-nation assembly, a month after it was approved by the assembly's rights committee.  
The resolution expresses "serious concern" over the plight of the Rohingya in Rakhine state, where 140,000 people live in squalid camps after violence erupted between Buddhists and Muslims in 2012.  
Under a controversial government-backed plan, the Rohingya would be forced to identify themselves as Bengali -- a term seen as disparaging -- in order to apply for citizenship. Those who refuse would be forced to live in camps.  
Many in Myanmar's government and local Buddhists view Rohingya

as illegal immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh, but the community maintains its has ancestral roots in the country.  
The resolution urges the government to protect the rights of all inhabitants of Rakhine state and allow "equal access to full citizenship for the Rohingya minority," to "allow self-identification" and ensure equal access to services.  
The measure drafted by the European Union was adopted by consensus after Myanmar did not request a vote on the measure. A vote is held if the country targeted by the resolution requests it.  
Despite criticism of the Rohingya's treatment, the resolution welcomes "continued positive developments in Myanmar" toward reform and notes that the government is making efforts to address the "complex situation in Rakhine state."  
It calls for an office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights to open "without delay" in Myanmar.

# NEWSIN brief

**Pak court remands Lakhvi after bail**  
AFP, Islamabad  
A Pakistani court yesterday remanded the alleged mastermind of the 2008 Mumbai attacks in police custody for two days in a kidnapping case, a day after another court approved his release. It is the latest round in a two-week tussle over the detention of Zaki-ur-Rehman Lakhvi, accused over the terror siege in India's commercial capital. The affair has worsened already tense ties with India.

**Philippine storm toll jumps to 30**  
AFP, Manila  
At least 30 people were killed in landslides and flash floods as tropical storm Jangmi slowly crossed the southern and central Philippines, dumping heavy rain for a second day yesterday, officials said. Rivers burst their banks and submerged villages in floods up to "neck-deep" while hillsides crashed onto homes and highways, officials said.

**Top Putin foe Navalny arrested**  
AFP, Moscow  
Top Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was detained by police yesterday after he violated his house arrest to join a protest in Moscow over a guilty verdict against him and his brother in a controversial fraud case. The brothers were convicted of stealing \$518,100 from the firms, one of which is an affiliate of French cosmetics giant Yves Rocher.

**Tamil party endorses Lanka opposition**  
AFP, Colombo  
Sri Lanka's largest Tamil party yesterday endorsed the main opposition candidate in next week's election, accusing President Mahinda Rajapakse of failing to deliver reconciliation after the country's ethnic war. The Tamil National Alliance said it would work to defeat Rajapakse, who crushed separatist Tamil rebels in a 2009 offensive, in the January 8 presidential election.

**Militants torch Paks schools**  
AFP, Peshawar  
Militants set fire to two primary schools in Pakistan's troubled northwest yesterday as authorities extended winter holidays amid threats of attacks, officials said. The incident comes two weeks after the massacre of 150 people at an army-run school in Peshawar, where 134 children were among the victims gunned down by heavily-armed Taliban militants.



A photo grab taken from a video made available by the Marina Militare Italiana, shows the ongoing rescuing operation of passengers by helicopter from the burned ferry "Norman Atlantic" adrift in the Adriatic Sea off Albania. The death toll from a ferry disaster in the Adriatic Sea rose to 13 yesterday as fears mounted that the final count could be much higher. Officially, 437 people who were on board have been accounted for, 38 short of a revised total of passengers and crew released by the ship's operator ANEK Ferries. PHOTO: AFP

# Suicide blast targets Libya parliament Three lawmakers injured

AFP, Benghazi  
A suicide bomber blew up a car outside the headquarters of Libya's internationally recognised parliament yesterday, wounding three lawmakers, a legislator said.  
The attack, which a medical source said wounded a total of 18 people, came as a Libyan jet shot down a militia helicopter after Islamist-led fighters launched strikes on the eastern Al-Sidra oil terminal.  
The car bomb struck near the back gate of the Dar al-Salam Hotel in the eastern city of Tobruk, where the parliament elected in June took refuge after Islamist-led militias seized control of Tripoli in August.  
Farj Buhashem, a spokesman for the legislature, said parliament was meeting on the ground floor when the blast went off.  
"There was broken glass and some pedestrians were injured," he said.  
Three lawmakers who were outside the building at the time were slightly wounded by shattered glass, he said. A source at a Tobruk hospital said 18 people were treated for minor wounds and later released.  
The attack comes as the UN mission to Libya, UNSMIL, plans a new round of peace talks between warring factions aimed at ending months of violence and political deadlock in the North African nation.  
More than three years after dictator Muammar Gaddafi was toppled and killed in a Nato-backed revolt, the country remains awash with weapons and powerful militias, and has rival governments and parliaments.

**Top Putin foe Navalny arrested**  
AFP, Moscow  
Top Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny was detained by police yesterday after he violated his house arrest to join a protest in Moscow over a guilty verdict against him and his brother in a controversial fraud case. The brothers were convicted of stealing \$518,100 from the firms, one of which is an affiliate of French cosmetics giant Yves Rocher.

# Guinea's hollow tree Ebola's Ground Zero

AFP, Paris  
Insect-eating bats that inhabited a hollow tree in a remote village in Guinea may have been the source of the world's biggest Ebola epidemic, scientists said yesterday.  
More than 20,000 cases of Ebola, with at least 7,800 deaths, have been recorded by the World Health Organization (WHO) since a two-year-old boy died in the village of Meliandou in December 2013.  
Reporting in the journal EMBO Molecular Medicine, scientists led by Fabian Leendertz at Berlin's Robert Koch Institute delved into the circumstances surrounding this first fatality.  
The finger of suspicion points at insectivorous free-tailed bats -- Mops condylurus in Latin -- that lived in a hollow tree 50 metres (yards) from the boy's home, they said.  
"The close proximity of a large colony of free-tailed bats... provided opportunity for infection. Children regularly caught and played with bats in this tree," the team said after an exhaustive four-

# TRIPLE MURDER CHARGES BJP chief gets clean chit

REUTERS, New Delhi  
The head of India's ruling party was acquitted of three murder charges yesterday in a trial that had undermined the government's promise to usher in a new era of clean politics.  
Amit Shah, the closest aide of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, was cleared of ordering police to carry out the extrajudicial killings of a gangster - Sohrabuddin Sheikh, his wife and his friend - when he served as home minister under Modi in the state of Gujarat almost a decade ago, Shah's lawyer, Mitesh Amin, said.  
Amin said Shah was acquitted due to lack of evidence and the judge would give a more detailed explanation after a recess.  
Rubabuddin Sheikh, the brother of one of the victims, said his family would challenge the ruling.  
India's top law enforcement agency, the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), had accused Shah of running an extortion racket with police officers and Sheikh while holding the top law-and-order position in Gujarat.

# The family were left behind Says Hawking's wife on their marriage breakdown

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK  
The former wife of Stephen Hawking has described how she and their three children were "left behind" after the cosmologist was surrounded by "sycophantic" admirers following publication of his landmark work A Brief History of Time.  
In an interview to coincide with the release this week of the Hawking biopic "The Theory of Everything", the physicist's ex-wife Jane said their life became "very complicated" after her husband achieved fame.  
"I rather felt that the family had been left behind," she told Radio Times. "To me, Stephen was my husband and the father of my children; one does not say to one's husband, 'Oh, you're so clever! I must worship the ground under your feet, or in this case, wheels.' I found this kind of sycophantic attitude -- the attitude adopted by so many people around Stephen -- exceptionally frustrating and, of course, it grew a lot worse when we finally had to engage carers."  
She described the "exhaustion" she felt



looking after someone with motor neurone disease and the "very traumatic" end to the relationship in 1990.  
Five years after their divorce, Stephen married one of his carers, Elaine Mason. Before the break-up, Jane had begun a relationship with a musician, Jonathan, who became her husband.  
She met Hawking on a railway platform when she was a teenager and he was yet to be diagnosed with his debilitating disease. They married young -- "because we didn't know how long Stephen was going to live" -- and she became used to him being lost in thought.  
"The goddess Physics was Stephen's idol. Sometimes Stephen would spend a whole weekend in his wheelchair, elbow resting on his knee like Rodin's Thinker. He wouldn't take any notice of the children, or of me, and I would become very worried. Was he uncomfortable or ill, or had I upset him in some way? Then, on the Monday morning, he would look up and smile and say, 'I've solved that equation!'"