

NEWS IN
brief

Pakistan arrests 47 Indian fishermen

AFP, Karachi
Pakistani marine forces yesterday arrested 47 Indian fishermen for allegedly violating territorial waters in the Arabian Sea, police said. A Pakistani jail official in Karachi told AFP that they already had 428 Indian inmates in custody

'Mysterious' disease kills 17 in Nigeria

AFP, Lagos
A "mysterious" disease that kills patients within 24 hours has claimed at least 17 lives in a southeastern Nigerian town, the government said yesterday. The disease, whose symptoms include headache, weight loss, blurred vision and loss of consciousness, killed the victims within 24 hours of their falling ill. Laboratory tests have so far ruled out

Lenin statues toppled in east Ukraine

AFP, Kharkiv
Masked men have toppled several statues of the Soviet leader Lenin in eastern Ukraine, authorities said yesterday. Two statues were demolished at universities in the government-controlled city of Kharkiv late Friday, shown in videos posted on YouTube, a week after Kiev's parliament approved a law banning

21 killed in fighting near Libyan capital

AFP, Benghazi
At least 21 people were killed in fighting near Libya's capital Tripoli Friday, military sources said, as the country's rival parliaments met in Morocco for UN-brokered peace talks aimed at forming a unity government to end the unrest. The country has had two governments and parliaments since the alliance of Islamist militia seized Tripoli in

UN drops 'Isis' from hurricane name list

AFP, Geneva
The UN weather agency announced Friday it was dropping "Isis" -- the name of an ancient Egyptian goddess that also happens to be the acronym for the Islamic State jihadist group -- from its stocklist of Pacific

Myanmar water festival kills 11

IANS, Yangon
At least 11 people were killed and 134 injured during Myanmar's annual four-day Thingyan Water Festival which started earlier this week, sources said. The casualties were in connection with 50 accident cases triggered by overload, drug and alcohol consumption and over-speeding. Xinhua news agency reported yesterday.



A man carries an injured boy after a suicide attack in Jalalabad, yesterday. The suicide bomb blast in Afghanistan's eastern city of Jalalabad killed 33 people and injured more than 100 outside a bank where government workers collect salaries, the city's police chief said. (Story on page 16)

PHOTO: AFP

Saudi vows to cover UN's Yemen aid call

Iran presents peace plan to UN

AFP, Sanaa
Saudi Arabia yesterday pledged to cover the entire \$274 million in humanitarian aid sought by the UN for conflict-torn Yemen, which has also been the target of Saudi-led air strikes against Shiite rebels. The United Nations says hundreds of people have died and thousands of families fled their homes in the war, which has also killed six Saudi security personnel in border skirmishes. At least 27 more people died in the southwestern city of Ta'ez during overnight clashes between loyalist forces and the Iran-backed Shia Huthi rebels as well as Saudi-led coalition air raids, medical sources said. Saudi King Salman ordered the humanitarian pledge following a United Nations appeal on Friday for \$274 million in emergency assistance for the millions affected by Yemen's war. The kingdom "stands with its

Yemeni brothers" and hopes for "the restoration of security and stability," the state Saudi Press Agency said, quoting an official statement. The coalition began its campaign after Saudi Arabia feared the Huthis, allied with army units loyal to former president Ali Abdullah Saleh, would shift Yemen into the orbit of Shia Iran, Sunni Saudi Arabia's regional rival. Iran's President Hassan Rouhani yesterday said that his country's military should not be seen as a threat in the Middle East. On Friday, Iran submitted a four-point Yemen peace plan to UN chief Ban Ki-moon. It calls for a ceasefire and immediate end to all foreign military attacks, the urgent delivery of humanitarian and medical aid, a resumption of political talks and the formation of a national unity government. The World Health Organization, in its latest toll, said 767 people have died in Yemen's war since March 19 and more than 2,900 were wounded.

WAR ON ISIS
Iraq retakes most of key refinery

REUTERS, Baghdad
Iraqi forces retook most of the country's largest refinery from Islamic State yesterday, security officials said, reversing gains by the militants who seized parts of the sprawling complex this week. The insurgents attacked Iraq's Baiji refinery a week ago by blasting through the security perimeter around it and taking over several installations, including storage tanks. A spokesman for Iraq's counterterrorism forces told Reuters troops protecting the refinery had now retaken most facilities, although there were still small pockets of insurgents left on the site. Iraqi forces retook Baiji refinery from militants once before last November, but lost control of it again.

Climate change world's biggest threat: Obama

AFP, Washington
US President Barack Obama yesterday said that climate change poses the world's biggest single threat. "Today, there's no greater threat to our planet than climate change," Obama said in his weekly address, which had an environmental theme to mark Earth Day on April 22. "Climate change can no longer be denied, or ignored," he added, noting that 2014 was the hottest year on record. The United States is the second largest greenhouse gas emitter after China, and Obama has pledged to reduce US climate pollution by 26-28 percent from 2005 levels by 2025. "This is an issue that's bigger and longer-lasting than my presidency," Obama said.

"This is the only planet we've got. And years from now, I want to be able to look our children and grandchildren in the eye and tell them that we did everything we could to protect it." Obama said he would travel to the Florida Everglades, a region known for its tropical wetlands, on Wednesday to talk about the ways in which climate change affects the economy. "Rising sea levels are putting a national treasure -- and an economic engine for the South Florida tourism industry -- at risk," Obama said of the famous wetlands. Obama, who has made the fight against climate change one of his priorities, hopes to help seal a global deal at an international climate conference in Paris in December.



Kashmir cops shoot protester, 16, dead

AFP, Srinagar
Indian police shot dead a 16-year-old boy yesterday during an anti-India demonstration in Kashmir as a separatist strike shut down the Himalayan region on a second day of violent clashes, officials said. The uncle of the boy said police first detained his nephew before shooting him at point-blank range in front of dozens of other protesters. Police said they would investigate the uncle's allegations while admitting that officers had breached normal protocol and saying they regretted the incident. The shooting happened during a protest on the outskirts of Srinagar, the main city of Indian-administered Kashmir, against a government crackdown on separatist leaders -- the second day of violent clashes in the disputed Muslim-majority state. Three others were also wounded, witnesses said. Kashmir has been rocked by violent protests this week after the brother of a top rebel leader was killed by the army near the town of Tral in the south of the Kashmir valley. Shops, businesses and schools remained shut yesterday across several towns in the state in response to a strike led by top separatist leader Syed Ali Geelani against what he called "state terrorism" and "poisonous propaganda" by Indian media.



Clockwise from Left, A child runs pass burning tires during a xenophobic violence in Jeppestown area of central Johannesburg; a protester holds a placard condemning the violence; and police action to stop clashes. South African President Zacob Zuma yesterday called for peace as xenophobic violence simmered around the economic hub Johannesburg, officials said yesterday.



PHOTO: AFP

LABOUR PARTY ON IMMIGRANTS
Miliband vows crackdown on 'endemic' exploitation

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
Labour leader Ed Miliband yesterday announced a new taskforce to crack down on immigrant exploitation, as he admitted his party "got it wrong" on immigration in the past. In a swipe against Conservative leader David Cameron, Miliband claimed only Labour could enforce strong border controls and tackle the exploitation of migrant workers. Under a Labour administration, Miliband said a new 100-strong Home Office Enforcement Unit would "root out" the "exploitative practices that drive down wages and drive up low skill migration". In a speech in Heswall, Merseyside, the Labour leader condemned the Tories' record on immigration -- labelling it "in tatters" -- and told voters that his party will not make promises it cannot meet. "Britain need a prime minister who will



only make promises on immigration that he can keep," Miliband said. Under the Conservatives immigration, which Cameron promised to reduce to tens of thousands, has risen to 298,000 thousand last year. Miliband added that abusive practices, such as forcing scores of workers to live in cramped houses for illegally low wages, is pushing unskilled migration and lower wages for other workers in the area. Miliband admitted that Labour were wrong in their approach. "But Labour got this wrong in the past. We have listened. We have learned. And we have changed," he will tell his audience. He also stressed the importance of greater integration, with everyone who settles in the UK able to speak English -- adding that "nowhere is that more true than in our NHS".

Israel agrees to free frozen PA taxes

AFP, Ramallah
Israel has agreed to transfer in full hundreds of millions of dollars in taxes collected for the Palestinian Authority but frozen in a row over the International Criminal Court, the Palestinian premier said. Rami Hamdallah, in a statement from his office late Friday, said Israel pledged at a meeting with Palestinian officials to hand over the taxes collected between December and March, amounting to almost half a billion dollars. Israeli officials yesterday confirmed an agreement was sealed on the taxes, while the media said the transfer of 1.8 billion shekels would take place on Monday. The UN special coordinator for Middle East peace efforts, Nickolay Mladenov, welcomed the deal as an important step "in the right direction". The Palestinians had threatened to turn to the International Criminal Court over Israel's decision in early January to retain the taxes in retaliation for the Palestinians joining the ICC. The monthly funds account for two-thirds of the Palestinians' annual budget, excluding foreign aid. Israel agreed at the start of April to release the funds after deducting debts due for electricity, water and medical services, a proposal rejected by the Palestinians who insisted on full payment.

Xenophobic violence simmer in S Africa

UN raises alarm as countries mull eviction; 30 arrested
AFP, Johannesburg
South African police detained more than 30 people overnight as xenophobic violence simmered around the economic hub Johannesburg, officials said yesterday. The riots are believed to be fuelled by widely-held beliefs that the country's economic woes are being caused by foreign nationals. Anti-foreigner violence that erupted in the country's eastern port city of Durban several weeks ago has so far left at least six people dead, spreading to Johannesburg, displacing thousands and sparking alarm at the United Nations and in neighbouring countries. "In South Africa, xenophobic attacks over the last three weeks have... displaced over 5,000 foreign nationals," the UN refugee agency said, adding it was "extremely concerned". Several thousand foreigners have fled their homes to shelter in makeshift camps amid the violence, and neighbouring Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique announced plans to evacuate their citizens. Overnight, small groups attacked shops in several areas around Johannesburg, police said. Police had to use rubber bullets to disperse the looters in Alexandra, an impoverished township north of the city, he said. This is not the first wave of anti-foreigner violence in South Africa. In January, foreign shopkeepers in and around the vast township of Soweto, south of Johannesburg, were forced to flee and six were killed as looters rampaged through the area. And in 2008, 62 people were killed in xenophobic violence across the city's townships. Meanwhile, South African President Jacob Zuma yesterday said he has cancelled a state visit to Indonesia in order to deal with a wave of xenophobic violence against immigrants and other foreigners. "We reiterate our message that there can be no justification for the attacks on foreign nationals. These attacks go against everything we believe in," Zuma said in the statement on his cancelled visit.