

# NEWS IN brief

## Xi to visit Russia this week

AFP, Beijing

Chinese President Xi Jinping will visit Russia this week to attend World War II anniversary commemorations, Beijing's foreign ministry announced yesterday as it stressed their joint sacrifices during the global conflict. Xi will visit Moscow from Friday until Sunday at the invitation of Russian President Vladimir

## Qatar inks deal for 24 French Rafale jets

AFP, Doha

Qatar yesterday signed a multi-billion-euro deal with French defence group Dassault to buy 24 Rafale fighter jets, in a ceremony attended by the leaders of both countries in Doha. The contract was signed by Dassault CEO Eric Trappier and Qatari General Ahmed al-Malki, who oversaw negotiations for the 6.3-billion-euro

## US Polls: Carly Fiorina enters fray

BBC ONLINE

Carly Fiorina, the former chief executive of Hewlett-Packard, has announced that she is running for the Republican nomination for US president. Fiorina is likely to be the only prominent female to run for president as a Republican.



## Indian PM joins China's Weibo

BBC ONLINE

India's PM Narendra Modi has joined China's main microblogging service Weibo, gaining thousands of followers by the hour and plenty of comments too. His first post read: "Hello China! Looking forward to interacting with Chinese friends through Weibo." In just five hours he amassed more than 20,000 followers, with

## Maoist attack kills 8 Indian troopers

AFP, Guwahati

Heavily armed separatist rebels have ambushed a paramilitary convoy in India's remote northeast, killing eight soldiers and injuring six, officials said yesterday. The militants opened fire on the troops before exploding a small bomb during the attack on Sunday in underdeveloped Nagaland close to the border with Myanmar, the state's police chief said. Another 4 troops are missing. Police suspect the attack was carried out by the outlawed National Socialist



This handout picture taken on May 3, 2015 released by the MOAS (Migrant Offshore Aid Station) shows migrants aboard a wooden boat on the Mediterranean sea. Inset, Migrants wait aboard a wooden boat during a rescue operation off the coast of Sicily in the Mediterranean sea. Another 5,800 migrants desperate to reach Europe were rescued this weekend as they tried to cross the Mediterranean on rickety boats, more than 2,150 of them on Sunday, the Italian coastguard said.

PHOTO: AFP

## US starts Nepal relief work

Begins reconnaissance flights to assess damage in remote areas

AFP, Kathmandu

US military helicopters yesterday began reconnaissance trips to assess remote areas of Nepal devastated by an earthquake that killed more than 7,300 people, an official said. Nine days after a 7.8-magnitude quake brought death and destruction to the Himalayan nation, the helicopters surveyed mountain villages. Four tilt-rotor Ospreys have also arrived in Nepal.

"Only the 'Hueys' (helicopters) have gone out so far for reconnaissance flights to try to identify areas in need of relief. No Ospreys have been out," a US embassy official told AFP on Monday. The Ospreys and a US Air Force C-17 aircraft touched down in the capital Kathmandu on Sunday. "They'll have multiple aims. They'll be delivering relief supplies, they might do some rescues, they'll also do assessments," US ambassador Peter W. Bodde told reporters.

"They're going to make an immediate difference," said US Brigadier General Paul Kennedy. A Nepalese official said the US aircraft would also airlift victims out of remote areas which suffered some of the worst devastation following the April 25 quake. "They are also assisting any casualties in mostly

the eastern side of Nepal... places worst hit like Sindhupalchowk, Gorkha area," Surya Prasad Silwal, the home ministry secretary, told AFP.

He said later that some foreign rescue teams had been asked to leave "now that there is no chance of any survivors".

While the official death toll for Nepal rose to 7,365 on Monday, with some 14,000 injured, authorities warned the final tally would be much higher. More than 100 people were also killed in neighbouring India and China.

Finance Minister Ram Sharan Mahat said the death toll was likely to jump once relief teams reached mountain villages flattened in the worst quake to hit the nation in more than 80 years. Everest climbs 'almost impossible'

Meanwhile, officials in Nepal yesterday said climbing Mount Everest this season is "almost impossible" because the routes have been damaged by avalanches triggered by last month's earthquake. They warn that it will take time for the routes to be remade. The government has not announced an official decision. The window for reaching the summit of Everest closes at the end of May because of the start of the monsoon, and some climbers are already waiting at Base Camp in the hope of the route re-opening soon.

## Saudi mulls partial truces in Yemen for aid delivery

AFP, Riyadh

Saudi Arabia is considering temporary halts in coalition air strikes against rebels in Yemen to allow for aid deliveries, Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir said yesterday. The kingdom will consult members of the coalition on "finding specific areas inside Yemen... where all air operations will be paused at specific times to allow for the delivery of aid," Jubeir said in a statement.

The Saudi-led coalition of Sunni Arab countries launched air strikes in Yemen in late March against Iran-backed Shiite Huthi rebels and their allies after they seized control of large parts of the country including the capital Sanaa. President Mansour Hadi fled Yemen as the rebels advanced on his southern refuge of Aden, and anti-government forces have refused to concede territory or down arms despite international pressure. The United Nations has repeatedly warned that impoverished Yemen faces a major humanitarian crisis and calls have been growing for efforts to increase aid deliveries.

Jubeir said Saudi Arabia "plans to establish a centre on its territory to be in charge of coordinating all humanitarian aid efforts" with the UN, donors and other relevant agencies. He warned the rebels against "taking advantage" of any pause in the bombing. The United Nations has called for a humanitarian pause in the conflict, as relief agencies say they desperately need supplies, including fuel to run infrastructure such as hospitals. It warned that key infrastructure in the war-torn country, including water supplies, health services and telecommunications, are on the verge of breaking down due to a major fuel shortage. According to UN, at least 1,200 people have been killed in fighting in Yemen since March 19 and at least 300,000 people have been displaced.

edly warned that impoverished Yemen faces a major humanitarian crisis and calls have been growing for efforts to increase aid deliveries. Jubeir said Saudi Arabia "plans to establish a centre on its territory to be in charge of coordinating all humanitarian aid efforts" with the UN, donors and other relevant agencies. He warned the rebels against "taking advantage" of any pause in the bombing. The United Nations has called for a humanitarian pause in the conflict, as relief agencies say they desperately need supplies, including fuel to run infrastructure such as hospitals. It warned that key infrastructure in the war-torn country, including water supplies, health services and telecommunications, are on the verge of breaking down due to a major fuel shortage. According to UN, at least 1,200 people have been killed in fighting in Yemen since March 19 and at least 300,000 people have been displaced.

## Taliban, Afghan talk truce but fail to agree

REUTERS, Doha

Taliban representatives met with Afghan political figures for a second day in Qatar yesterday, and one participant said the two sides discussed a possible ceasefire but ultimately disagreed over the continued presence of US troops in the country. The United States and Pakistan, long-regarded by critics as sympathetic to the Afghan Taliban, both welcomed the closed-door talks aimed at ending an insurgency that has raged in Afghanistan since US-backed forces drove the Taliban from power in 2001. The informal talks, hosted by Qatar's foreign ministry, came as fighting escalated after the withdrawal of most US and allied troops.

## Its Charlotte Elizabeth Diana

Newborn UK princess named after two days

AFP, London

Prince William and his wife Kate have named their two-day-old baby Charlotte Elizabeth Diana and she will be known as Princess Charlotte of Cambridge, their Kensington Palace residence announced yesterday.

The names will be seen as a triple homage to her grandfather Prince Charles, great-grandmother Queen Elizabeth II and William's late mother Diana, whose death in 1997 prompted a global outpouring of grief. "The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge are delighted to announce that they have named their daughter Charlotte Elizabeth Diana," the palace said in a statement.

"The baby will be known as Her Royal Highness Princess Charlotte of Cambridge," it added. The name Charlotte was one of the

favourites for bookmakers and it has historic royal standing. King George III's wife Queen Charlotte (1761-1818) was an amateur botanist who used her middle name instead of her first name Sophie.

George IV also named his only child Charlotte but she died in childbirth at the age of 21 in 1817. The Liberal Democrats, led by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, have spent the past five years as the junior partners to the Conservatives in the governing coalition, but now claiming a greater share of the cake. The Conservatives are the odds-on favourites to win the most seats. However, bookmakers say Cameron is no more likely than Miliband to be prime minister, because smaller, left-wing parties would nominally prefer Labour in government. Miliband has ruled out striking a formal coalition or deal with the left-wing secessionist SNP, who opinion polls predict will form the third-biggest bloc, winning many Scottish seats at Labour's expense.



## RIOTS IN US Baltimore lifts curfew, forces begin pullout

AFP, Baltimore

Baltimore lifted a curfew Sunday that was imposed across the US East Coast city following widespread riots, as thousands of National Guard troops began to pull out. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake had faced growing calls for the curfew to be scrapped, particularly from store and restaurant owners who said the 10:00pm to 5:00am nightly restriction was wrecking business. "My goal has always been to not have the curfew in place a single day longer than was necessary," Rawlings-Blake wrote on Twitter. "I believe we have reached that point today." Hundreds of people meanwhile rallied again at City Hall plaza, summoned by local religious leaders. Across the city, people cheered the return to relative calm with impromptu celebrations, a far cry from the riots that saw angry protesters torch cars, pelt police with stones and ransack stores on April 27. The riots stemmed from protests over the death of Freddie Gray, 25, who suffered a serious spinal injury while in the back of a police van on April 12. He died a week later. A total of 113 officers were wounded and 486 protesters were arrested. About 200 businesses, most minority-owned, were lost in the rioting on April 27, according to Hogan. Six Baltimore police officers, three white and three black, were charged Friday with multiple counts, including second-degree murder and manslaughter in connection with the death.



US Secretary of State John Kerry takes a selfie with a baby elephant while touring the Sheldrick Center Elephant Orphanage at the Nairobi National Park in Nairobi. Kerry held talks with Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta yesterday on security cooperation, after calling for unity in the face of terror attacks. PHOTO: AFP

## Final push in UK's knife-edge polls

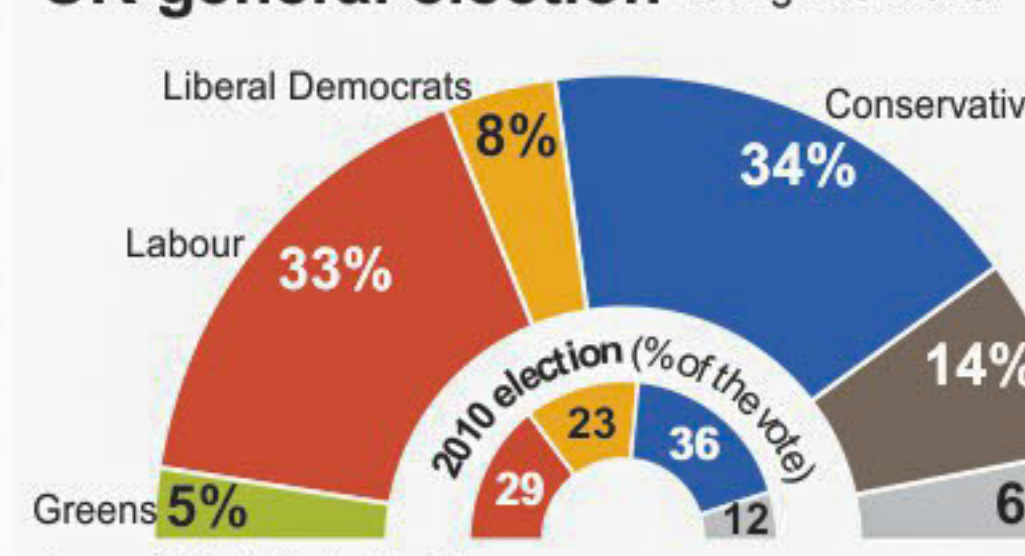
AFP, London

The Conservatives and Labour launched their final push yesterday to woo voters ahead of this week's British general election, as potential kingmaker parties marked out their territory. Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron and Labour opposition leader Ed Miliband kicked off the final three days of campaigning with stark messages to voters about the choice they face.

With polls showing the two main parties neck-and-neck and unlikely to win a majority, the race to take Downing Street will likely hinge on smaller parties such as the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Liberal Democrats. "It's the start of a week when Britain will decide its future. By Friday you'll either have Ed Miliband or me as your prime minister," Cameron said. "It's that simple -- an inescapable choice: me leading a strong and stable government, or with him: the chaos of being held to ransom by the SNP. Your vote can and will make a difference. It's that close." Miliband said the election was a

"clash of two visions" about wages, health and young people. He tried to hang the election battle on contrasting plans for the state-funded National Health Service. He took the unprecedented step of having his six election pledges carved on a 2.6-metre (8.5-foot) high tablet of stone, sparking much mockery in

### UK general election Voting intentions



yesterday's newspapers. On social media, the stunt was ridiculed as Miliband's "Moses moment" and spawned imitations such as a shopping list for the leader's household. If Thursday's vote results in a hung parliament, it could trigger days, if not weeks, of tricky negotiations as political parties try to come up with an arrange-

ment for forming a stable government. That could mean deals with smaller parties in exchange for agreeing to their manifesto pledges, or even coalition agreements. Current projection would leave both major parties well short of winning the 326 seats needed for an absolute majority in parliament's lower House of Commons. The Liberal Democrats, led by Deputy Prime Minister Nick Clegg, have spent the past five years as the junior partners to the Conservatives in the governing coalition, but now claiming a greater share of the cake. The Conservatives are the odds-on favourites to win the most seats. However, bookmakers say Cameron is no more likely than Miliband to be prime minister, because smaller, left-wing parties would nominally prefer Labour in government. Miliband has ruled out striking a formal coalition or deal with the left-wing secessionist SNP, who opinion polls predict will form the third-biggest bloc, winning many Scottish seats at Labour's expense.

## Freed Nigeria women tell of Boko Haram horror

BBC ONLINE

Former hostages held by Boko Haram militants in northern Nigeria say some fellow captives were stoned to death as the army approached to rescue them. The women said Boko Haram fighters started pelting them when they refused to run away as the army came nearer. A group of nearly 300 women and children was brought out of the vast Sambisa forest to a government camp. The military says it has rescued more than 700 people in the past week in an offensive against the Islamist group. The women said several were killed in the stoning, but they did not know how many. Others were killed inadvertently by the military during the rescue operation, they added. Soldiers did not realise "in time that we were not the enemies" and some women and children were "run over by their trucks", said survivor Asama Umoru. The survivors said that when they were initially captured, the militants had killed men

and older boys in front of their families before taking women and children into the forest. Some were forced into marriage. Other survivors said the militant Islamists never let them out of their sight - not even when they went to the toilet. One woman described how they were fed just one meal a day. "We were fed only ground dry maize in the afternoons. It was not good for human consumption," Cecilia Abel told Reuters. "Every day, we witnessed the death of one of us and waited for our turn," said Umaru, a 24-year-old mother of two. Some of the children were "just little skeletal bodies with flaps of skin that make them look like old people", Associated Press reporter Michelle Faul told the BBC after visiting the camp. A doctorsaid many severely malnourished babies and children had been put on intravenous drips at a clinic. The women and children travelled for three days on pick-up trucks from the vast Sambisa forest where they were rescued, to the camp, where they arrived on Saturday night.

