



# Cuba off from US terror list

The United States removed Cuba from its blacklist as a state sponsor of terrorism yesterday, in a landmark move aimed at paving the way towards normalizing ties frozen for half a century.

The decision means Cuba will now have better access to US banking facilities and American aid, and a ban on arms exports and sales is also lifted. It also wipes out an international stigma which Havana -- on the blacklist since 1982 -- has long contended was groundless and unfair.

# Suu Kyi sidesteps eyeing political gains

Aung San Suu Kyi was once an unsalable champion of Myanmar's powerless. But the opposition leader's refusal to speak up for a persecuted Muslim minority at the heart of a migrant crisis has cast doubt over her moral force -- and even earned a gentle rebuke from fellow Nobel laureate the Dalai Lama.

to throw her weight behind the Rohingya. The Buddhist spiritual leader said he recognised the difficulty of her position in a nation where expressing sympathy for the Muslim group brings ready condemnation.

actor preparing to lead her opposition party into elections later this year. The Nobel laureate "has been a huge disappointment in her continuous failure to stand up for human rights" in Myanmar, said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director for

majority Myanmar hardens against a Muslim minority widely viewed as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Championing the Rohingya "would probably be the only situation where (Suu Kyi's party) would run the risk of not winning the elections ... speaking up is not an option for her at the moment," said Myanmar analyst Mael Raynaud.

## MIGRANT CRISIS IN SOUTH EAST ASIA



"But in spite of that I feel she can do something," he added. Suu Kyi spent more than 15 years locked up by the former junta for her tireless campaign for democracy in Myanmar. Her personal sacrifices have won her a place among the world's most lauded peacemakers.



# Germany open to reforms to keep UK in EU

Chancellor Angela Merkel yesterday vowed Germany would play a "constructive" role to help keep Britain in the EU and work with Prime Minister David Cameron to reform the 28-nation bloc.

# ISIS seizes key airport in Libya

Syria rebels tighten grip on Idlib; blasts at Baghdad hotels kill 9

The Islamic State jihadist group has seized control of the airport in the city of Sirte after forces of a Tripoli-based Libyan government withdrew, a spokesman said yesterday. Mohamed al-Shami, whose government is not recognised by the international community, said its forces pulled out late Thursday from the airport which had "fallen into the hands of the ISIS organisation".

Gardabiya is located 20 kilometres south of Sirte, hometown of late dictator Muammar Gaddafi who was ousted and killed in Libya's 2011 uprising. In Syria, troops retreated as regime warplanes bombarded al-Qaeda-led rebel fighters yesterday, a day after the insurgents overran the last government-held city in the key northwestern province of Idlib.

the Islamic State (ISIS) extremist group last week. Abdel Rahman said 13 regime loyalists had been executed by rebels inside Ariha, and another 18 were killed in fighting on its outskirts. In neighbouring Iraq, government and allied paramilitary forces sought to sever the supply lines of the Islamic State group in the western province of Anbar.

# China has artillery in South China Sea: US

The United States yesterday said that China had placed mobile artillery weapons systems on a reclaimed island in the disputed South China Sea, a development that Republican Sen John McCain called "disturbing and escalatory". Brent Colburn, a Pentagon spokesman traveling with Defense Secretary Ash Carter, said US was aware of the weapons.

# NEWS IN brief

**Buhari sworn in as Nigeria president** Muhammadu Buhari was sworn in as Nigeria's new president yesterday, vowing to tackle the country's many problems "head on", including Boko Haram, at a ceremony rich with military pomp and cultural tradition.



# Incredible brutality

A prisoner in an orange jumpsuit is forced to dig his own grave before he is beheaded in the latest shocking video from ISIS. The video released by the terror group shows the man suspected of being a Syrian spy using a pick axe and shovel to dig a hole in the desert.

# India seizes pigeon over spying fears

Indian police said Friday they have detained a pigeon that flew into a village near the heavily militarised border with Pakistan on suspicion it was being used for espionage. Police said they had X-rayed the bird to see whether it was carrying anything suspicious after a villager spotted a stamp under its feathers that bore Urdu script and the name of a Pakistani district.



# The balancing fishermen of Burma

These Burmese fishermen have mastered an unusual technique when it comes to paddling their boats. Carefully balancing on one leg, wrapping their second leg around the oar to guide the vessel through the freshwater lake. The skilled technique means the fishermen can stand and look out for reeds in the water and keep both hands free to handle the cumbersome nets.

**S Korea confirms 12 MERS cases** South Korea confirmed five MERS cases yesterday, bringing the total number of patients infected with the potentially deadly virus to 12, including a man who defied a quarantine protocol and travelled to China, health officials said.

**Child sacrifice in India!** A suspected occultist beheaded a five-year-old boy in a ritual sacrifice in north-eastern India before being lynched by angry villagers, police and relatives said yesterday. The father of the decapitated youngster said his son, Sanatan Bag, had been enticed into the home of Nanu Mirdha who then butchered him as an offering to the Hindu goddess of power, Kali, in front of a makeshift temple.