

# NEWSIN brief

## 'Scottish independence vote inevitable'

AFP, London

Former Scottish nationalist leader Alex Salmond yesterday said that another referendum on independence from the United Kingdom was "inevitable" because of policies pursued by Prime Minister David Cameron's government in London. Salmond resigned as leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) and first minister of the devolved government in Edinburgh after Scots voted "no" to independence by 55 to 45 percent in September.

## 'Indian border fire killed 1 Pak civilian'

AFP, Muzaffarabad

Pakistani officials yesterday accused Indian troops of killing a civilian in "unprovoked firing" in the disputed Kashmir region. The latest incident took place overnight in Chirikot sector on the Line of Control (LoC), the region's de facto border, Pakistan's military said in a statement on Sunday. India and Pakistan often accuse each other of violating a 2003 ceasefire agreement.

## At least 10 dead in Myanmar floods

AFP, Yangon

Floods triggered by torrential monsoon rains have killed at least 10 people in Myanmar in the last 48 hours, state media and officials reported yesterday. Western and northern parts of Myanmar have been hit by heavy rainfall in recent days with some areas of Shan State, a mountainous and particularly impoverished region seeing as much as 170mm of rain in the last 24 hours.

## Colombia suspends air raids on Farc

AFP, Bogota

Colombian President Juan Manuel Santos yesterday ordered a halt to air strikes against the Marxist-inspired FARC rebels, giving a major boost to stop-start peace talks. It comes just two days after the Colombian government and the Farc resumed talks following months of stagnation in the negotiating table and fighting on the battlefield.

## Britain lifts Iran travel warning

AFP, London

Britain lifted an official warning against all but essential travel to Iran on Saturday, citing "decreased hostility" in the wake of a landmark nuclear deal. Almost all of Iran is now marked "green" in the government's foreign travel advice, though border areas with Iraq, Pakistan and Afghanistan remain "red", a warning against all travel. The British government has said it hopes to reopen its embassy in Tehran by the end of this year. It was closed in 2011 after being stormed by protesters.



Firefighters inspect a house damaged by fire caused after a light plane crashed into a residential area in Tokyo yesterday. The light single-engine plane crashed into a residential area in Tokyo, setting fire to several houses and reportedly killing three people.

PHOTO: AFP

# Saudis declares Yemen humanitarian truce

Rebels reject offer as pro-govt forces advance in south

AFP, Aden

Pro-government forces battled retreating rebels on the northern outskirts of Yemen's second city of Aden yesterday ahead of a humanitarian truce declared by the Saudi-led coalition bombing the Iran-backed insurgents.

Troops loyal to exiled President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi sought to tighten their control of the southern port city and surrounding areas ahead of the ceasefire, scheduled to take effect at midnight (2100 GMT).

But Huthi rebel leader Abdulmalik al-Huthi rejected the unilaterally declared truce, according to a statement on a Twitter account believed to be managed by his group, saying it was aimed at allowing pro-government fighters to regroup.

The Saudi-led coalition said the five-day truce to allow aid deliveries but said it reserved the right to respond to "military activity or movement".

The truce was announced at Hadi's request, it said.

The impoverished nation has been rocked by months of fighting between Huthi Shia rebels and Hadi loyalists, supported by the Saudi-led Arab coalition, leaving thousands dead and many more in need of urgent aid.

Pro-Hadi Popular Resistance militiamen attacked the Huthis overnight Saturday on the northern outskirts of Aden, forcing the rebels out of the areas of Basateen and Jawala.

The loyalist forces have been bolstered by new weaponry and armoured vehicles delivered by the coalition. They also benefited from air support by coalition warplanes, military sources said, adding that dozens of rebels were killed in the latest fighting.

Further north, troops loyal to Hadi forced rebels out of the town of Sabr in Lahj province, General Fadhel Hassan told AFP.

Hassan said pro-Hadi troops had taken the town that links Aden to Huta, the provincial capital of Lahj, adding that Huta is the next target before reaching Al-Anad, the country's largest airbase.

## Obama ends Kenya visit with tough message

AFP, Nairobi

US President Barack Obama yesterday ended a landmark visit to Kenya, urging the east African nation and birthplace of his father to renounce corruption, tribalism and inequality.

Speaking to a raucous crowd in an indoor arena in the capital Nairobi, Obama said Kenya needed to ditch "bad traditions" including endemic bribe-taking, domestic violence, female genital mutilation and communal violence.

"Kenya is at a crossroads, a moment filled with enormous peril but also enormous promise," he said.

Obama promised to be back when his presidency ends for climbing and leisure time. Obama later left Kenya for Ethiopia.

# Turkey-PKK truce risks collapsing

New attack on army kills 2 after air raids on Kurd rebels

AFP, Istanbul

The Turkish army yesterday blamed PKK militants for a deadly car bomb attack that killed two of its soldiers in the Kurdish-dominated southeast, as a fragile truce risked collapsing after Ankara's air strikes on rebel positions in Iraq.

Turkey has launched a two-pronged "anti-terror" cross-border offensive against Islamic State (ISIS) jihadists and Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) militants after a wave of violence in the country, pounding their positions with airstrikes and artillery.

The PKK on Saturday said that the conditions were no longer in place to observe the ceasefire, following the heaviest Turkish air strikes on its positions in northern Iraq since August 2011.

The car bomb went off as the soldiers were travelling on a road in the Lice district of Diyarbakir province late Saturday, the statement from the local governor's office said. The PKK's military wing, the People's Defence Forces (HPG), claimed the attack in a statement on its website but gave much higher toll of eight soldiers killed.

The PKK has for decades waged a deadly insurgency in the southeast of Turkey for self-rule, a conflict that has claimed tens of thousands of lives. A peace process that

## Catman of West Bengal

STAR REPORT

Inspired by the show on Discovery channel 'Man vs Wild', Rajkumar Biswas of West Bengal changed his eating habits to things that are raw and bizarre. The youth from Basirhat area of North 24 Parganas district in West Bengal relishes on insects, lizards and other animals that are far from being included in a 'normal diet', reports our Kolkata correspondent. Rajkumar, the son of a local barber, quit school in order to help his father with the shop. Despite working hard, he was an avid television freak and managed to have a peek during his breaks, particularly watching the Discovery Channel, his favourite. That is where he stumbled upon the show 'Man vs Wild' and was so impressed that he decided to adopt that lifestyle. Rajkumar eats wild things that he typically finds in forests and jungles. His diet currently includes worms, frogs, snails, fly, ants, cockroach, raw fish, goat fat, and crabs. "There is no scientific explanation behind this eating habit. It is a sort of mental illness," said Debobroto Mukherjee, a local official, expressing concern.



## The miraculous 'Tree of 40'

TIMES OF INDIA ONLINE

In an unusual feat that has the horticultural world rubbing its eyes in disbelief, Van Aken, a visual arts associate professor at Syracuse University and self-declared farmer, has created a tree that yields 40 different kinds of fruit. Plums, peaches, apricots, cherries, and nectarines are among the fruits that grow on the single tree, christened the "Tree of 40" because, according to Prof Van Aken, the number occurs often in the Bible and "represents bounty. Prof Van Aken said he regards his work more as an art project than a scientific endeavor, considering that the idea of grafting has been around and known for a long time. Before you rush out to order one of the trees, here are a couple of things to consider: Each tree sells for around \$30,000. And takes up to a decade to come to full fruition.



## Nepalis held for 'human sacrifice'

REUTERS, Kathmandu

Five people have been arrested and face charges of murdering a 10-year-old boy in southwest Nepal, police said yesterday, in an incident media reports said was a suspected case of human sacrifice. Police official Nal Prasad Upadhyaya said the decomposed body of Jivan Kohar, who had been missing for three days, was recovered from a bush on Friday in Kudiya village in Nawalparasi district, which borders India. The boy's throat had been slit. The Kathmandu Post said the father of a sick man had confessed to the killing "to chase away the evil spirits" from his ailing son after seeking advice from a village shaman. He lured the boy with the help of neighbours to an isolated place by offering biscuits and promising to pay him 50 US cents. He then performed a religious rite, killed the boy and dumped his body in a bush, media reports said. All five will be charged with murder, Upadhyaya said.



## TERROR ATTACKS

### Hotel blast kills six in Mogadishu

AFP, Mogadishu

At least six people were killed yesterday when a suspected car bomb exploded at heavily guarded Jazeera Palace Hotel in the Somali capital Mogadishu housing diplomatic missions and frequented by government officials and international workers. Photographs shared on social media showed one side of the multi-storey hotel shredded by the explosion. There was no immediate claim of responsibility, but the al-Qaeda-affiliated Shebab have attacked the hotel before as part of their regular bombing campaign. In a separate incident, Shebab insurgents assassinated a lawmaker and his guards. Gunmen sprayed the car of MP Abdulahi Hussein Mohamud with gunfire as he travelled through a southern district of the capital Mogadishu earlier Saturday, killing him, his two guards and the driver.

### 'Child suicide bomber' kills 20 in Cameroon

AFP, Yaounde

A suspected 12-year-old girl suicide bomber killed 20 people in an attack on a bar in Maroua in the far north of Cameroon, state television said yesterday, just days after 13 died in twin bombings in the city blamed on Boko Haram. The bomber blew herself up among Saturday night revellers in the popular bar, injuring at least 79 others, state TV reported. An earlier toll put the number of dead at 14. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but the north of the country has been repeatedly targeted by Nigeria-based Boko Haram extremists.

### Suicide blast kills 14 in Nigeria

AFP, Kano

A "mentally handicapped" female suicide bomber killed at least 14 people and injured 47 more at a crowded market in the northeastern Nigerian town of Damaturu yesterday, witnesses and a hospital source said. Damaturu was the scene of a triple suicide bombing on July 18 when three girls blew themselves up killing at least 13 people as residents prepared for the Eid festival marking the end of Ramadan. violence caused by Boko haram left 15,000 people dead and 1.5 million homeless since 2009.

## 'I didn't send classified emails on pvt account'

REUTERS, Iowa

US presidential candidate Hillary Clinton said on Saturday that she did not use a private email account to send or receive classified information while she was secretary of state, in response to a government inspector's letter this week. "I did not send nor receive anything that was classified at the time," Clinton said at a campaign stop in Iowa.

The email controversy has dogged Clinton's bid for the presidency, fuelling worries that the frontrunner for the Democratic nomination has tried to sidestep transparency and record-keeping laws.



At least four emails from the private email account that Clinton used while secretary of state contained classified information, Inspector General Charles McCullough, who oversees US intelligence agencies, told members of Congress in a letter on Thursday. Clinton said on Saturday she had "no idea" what were the emails mentioned in the letter. The information was classified at the time that the emails were sent, McCullough said.

The use of her private email account, linked to a server in her New York home for work, has drawn fire from political opponents since coming to light in March.



A members of the Israeli security forces scuffles with a Palestinian woman during clashes between Palestinian protesters and Israeli police after authorities limited access for Muslim worshipers to the flashpoint al-Aqsa mosque compound in the old city of Jerusalem yesterday. Israeli police entered the compound, one of Islam's holiest places, to tackle suspected Palestinian rioters, police said.

PHOTO: AFP

## Syrian army 'fatigued' but will prevail Admits Assad

AFP, Damascus

Syria's President Bashar al-Assad acknowledged the shrinking ranks of his government's army in a rare public speech yesterday, but insisted the force was still capable of beating rebel fighters.

Speaking in Damascus, Assad also said any bid to end the conflict that was not based on fighting "terrorism" would be "meaningless". Syria's army once had around 300,000 members, but has been roughly halved in size by deaths, defections.

Assad's speech comes after several months of setbacks for his government, which faces opponents including ISIS, al-Qaeda-affiliated fighters and other rebel groups.

## 'Mumbai attack plotter innocent'

Bollywood star's tweets spark fury

AFP, New Delhi

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan yesterday urged India's top court to spare the life of a convicted bomb plotter due to be hanged this week, declaring him innocent and sparking a political furore.

The Supreme Court is expected on Monday to hear a last-ditch appeal from Yakub Memon, convicted of being a key plotter of a series of bomb blasts that killed hundreds in Mumbai two decades ago -- the deadliest such attacks in India's history that killed 257 people.

The court had last week rejected what was believed at the time to be a final appeal from Memon, paving the way for his execution on Thursday after more than two decades in jail.

Khan described Memon, an accountant by profession, as innocent, sparking protests outside his house.

"One innocent man killed is killing the humanity," Khan said on Twitter where he has 13.1 million followers.

"Get Tiger, hang him. Parade him not his brother," Khan said referring to Memon's brother Tiger, whom police say masterminded the attacks and who is still on the run.

The actor later retracted the comments after uproar from the ruling Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the opposition and a prosecutor involved in the case.