

# NEWS IN brief

## Sudan army ordered to end fighting

South Sudanese President Salva Kiir has ordered all government troops to cease fighting rebel forces as part of a peace agreement, his spokesman said, ahead of a full ceasefire today. Kiir signed a peace deal on Wednesday aimed at ending the 20-month long civil war in which tens of thousands of people have been slaughtered.

## Myanmar House suspended

Myanmar lawmakers yesterday held their last meetings at parliament as the body was suspended ahead of crucial general elections set to redraw the former junta-ruled nation's political landscape. The combined houses of parliament will reconvene only after the November 8 vote.

## 'Pedophile' priest dies ahead of trial

Josef Wesolowski, a former Polish archbishop who had been due to be first cleric tried in the Vatican for child sex abuse, was found dead yesterday. The first indications were that he died of natural causes. He was charged with possessing child pornography in Rome in 2013-14, and the sexual abuse of minors during his 2008-13 stint as the Vatican nuncio, or ambassador, in the Dominican Republic.

## Landslides kill 5 in Nepal quake zone

Landslides triggered by heavy rainfall killed at least five people in central Nepal, four of them in a shelter for survivors of a devastating earthquake, police said yesterday. Rescuers in Nepal's Nuwakot district are still searching for a nine-year-old boy missing since an overnight landslide crushed two bamboo and tin shelters built for families displaced by the April 25 quake.

## US, South Korea stage massive live-fire drill

South Korean and US troops staged their biggest-ever joint live-fire drill yesterday, including a simulated mechanised assault deep into North Korean territory, just days after the two Koreas ended a tense military standoff. The drill was held near the border town of Pocheon, about 20 kilometres (12 miles) south of the demilitarised zone (DMZ), which splits the Korean peninsula between North and South.



Migrants wait for Macedonian police to allow them to cross in Macedonia at the border line between Greece and Macedonia near the town of Gevgelija yesterday. More than 300,000 refugees and migrants have risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean to Europe so far this year, and some 2,500 more have died while making the perilous journey, the UN said yesterday.

PHOTO: AFP

# Nine hours battling death at sea off the Libyan coast

AFP, Zuwara

Pakistani teenager Shefaz Hamza spent nine hours at sea clinging to the wreckage of a migrant boat that sank off Libya. By the time the coast guard arrived his mother and young sister were dead.

They were among at least 76 people to die when their boat went down Thursday off the western Libyan port of Zuwara, Red Crescent spokesman Mohamad al-Misrati told AFP. Un said death toll may reach 200.

Up to 198 other people were saved, including many of Arab and African origin, but dozens of others are still missing at sea, he said.

At a police station near Zuwara, Hamza sat on the ground next to his brother among those rescued.

"We set off at about 1:30 am," said the 17-year-old.

"It was a wooden boat with about 350 people on board, including my father, my mother, my little sister (aged 11), my older sister (27) and my brother (16).

"After an hour and a half, the boat started shaking, then water started to leak in, and very fast we found ourselves in the sea," he said, a hand on his forehead and gaze cast to the ground.

"The boat shattered into pieces of wood. My mother and I grabbed on to one and I saw my brother and little sister by my side.

"Someone tried to grab the life jacket that my brother was wearing because he didn't have one, but by brother hit him and he left him alone," said Hamza.

"My little sister, someone climbed on her back and pushed her down. When I saw her for the last time, she was underwater with him on top of her."

"My mother and I spent nine hours in the water, holding on to a bit of wood. I kept telling her everything would be okay. But a quarter of an hour before the rescue team arrived, she passed away," he said.

"She died in my arms. I asked the man to let me take her body with me, but he refused. My mother is dead. My little sister is dead."

Later on, Hamza found out his father and other sister survived and had been taken to hospital.

One of those rescued said he and his two friends had each paid 2,200 dinars (about \$1,600, 1,400 euros) to get on the ill-fated boat.

People smugglers have taken advantage of the chaos gripping Libya since the 2011 uprising to step up their lucrative business.

But the crossing to Europe is treacherous, and more than 2,500 people have died this year alone, according to the UN refugee agency.

This figure excludes those who died when Hamza and his family's boat sank.



Members of the Libyan Red Crescent collect body of a migrant after the boat tragedy.

PHOTO: AFP

At the police station near Zuwara, not far from Hamza, Sami Magrud from Syria, next to a friend from Gaza, repeated the same question to the deaf ears of the security officer in charge of the station.

"What will happen to us?" he asked, again and again.

The 25-year-old from the Syrian city of Latakia had travelled to Libya four months ago from

Algeria after working there for three years.

"I saw three of my friends die," he said, his eyes welling up. "I saw them die one after the other of exhaustion."

"I have not seen my family, who have found refuge in the Netherlands, for three years.

"I got onto that boat to see them after I wasn't able to get permission to reunite with them. My request was rejected, so I travelled from death in my country to death at sea.

"For nine hours I thought of my family and what would happen to me," he added, crying.

"Why am I dying at sea while people over there sit happily at home?"

## MIGRANT EXODUS TO EUROPE

### Four arrested over Austria truck tragedy

AFP, Vienna

Hungary yesterday said it has arrested four people over the discovery of 71 decomposing bodies in an abandoned truck in Austria, another grim tragedy involving migrants desperately seeking refuge in Europe.

In the horrific incident -- a rare occurrence on land in a prosperous country when so many migrants have died at sea -- Austrian police said the dead were likely Syrians and included a toddler and three young boys.

"Among these 71 people, there were 59 men, eight women and four children including a young girl one or two years old and three boys aged eight, nine or 10," police spokesman Hans Peter Doskozil told a news conference.

He said the time and cause of death still had to be determined but there was a "certain probability" they had suffocated in the truck, found Thursday on a motorway near the Hungarian border.

Hungarian police said they had arrested three Bulgarians and an Afghan and had raided several addresses and confiscated items over the Austria truck discovery.

### Aid-starved refugees have no choice

AFP, Amman

After escaping a devastating war, frustrated Syrian refugees in aid-starved neighbouring states say they must now choose between joining an exodus to Europe or "returning home to die".

Millions of Syrians have found shelter in surrounding countries including Lebanon, Turkey and Jordan that are now struggling to cope with the massive influx.

A lack of jobs and humanitarian assistance means that many are now giving up on their host nations.

"What do they expect us to do, to die in silence?" said Mohammed al-Hariri, who lives in Jordan's vast Zaatari desert refugee camp.

"Syrians now have two choices: either to return and die in their country or to emigrate," he said.

Around 340,000 migrants reached the EU's borders in the seven months to July, in the continent's biggest migration crisis since World War II, with hundreds perishing at sea.

Most are escaping the more than four-year-old conflict in Syria that has claimed over 240,000 lives, and more are expected to follow.

The United Nations refugee agency UNHCR estimates that more than four million Syrians have fled the bloodshed which broke out in March 2011, mostly to neighbouring Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey but also Egypt and Iraq.

The host countries are struggling to cope, especially in the absence of sufficient international aid, said Andrew Harper, the UNHCR representative in Jordan.

"If you do not provide resources to countries like Jordan to meet assistant obligations and protection obligations then people will move to where they can find that and that is why people are moving to Europe," he said.

More than 1.1 million Syrians have flooded across the border into Lebanon and around 600,000 into Jordan, according to the UNHCR. Amman puts the figure at 1.4 million, making up 20 percent of the resources-poor kingdom's population.

Jordan and Lebanon have repeatedly appealed for increased aid to ease the burden. But a UN donation drive for 2015 has so far only raised 41 percent of the target figures, forcing the World Food Programme to trim its assistance to Syrian refugees in both Lebanon and Jordan.

# NSA phone data collection 'not illegal', US court rules

BBC ONLINE

A US appeals court has overturned a ruling that deemed the National Security Agency's (NSA) bulk collection of phone records to be illegal.

District of Columbia judges said the plaintiffs had failed to prove they had been targeted for NSA surveillance.

Judges in a separate case in New York in May ruled the programme illegal.

It is not clear what the latest ruling means, as Congress has since passed legislation phasing out the NSA's bulk collection of Americans' records.

The agency's spying was revealed in 2013 by Edward Snowden, a former NSA contractor who has since fled to Russia. It collected data about numbers called and times, but not the content of conversations.

It also allegedly spied on European firms, as well as high-profile individuals including

German Chancellor Angela Merkel.

The ruling on Friday in the District of Columbia reversed a preliminary ruling in 2013 by a lower court which said the NSA programme was "probably unconstitutional and almost Orwellian".

Congress in June passed legislation aimed at scaling back the programme in the coming months and ending bulk collection of Americans' records.

The new measures are not due to take effect until December.

The new law requires telecoms companies to store data, instead of US intelligence agencies, and to hand over any information in response to a government request approved by a secret counter-terror court.

The Snowden revelations in June 2013 caused an international outcry, despite US administrations insisting the programme had been fully authorised.



PHOTO: AFP

Chinese President Xi Jinping speaks with US National Security Advisor Susan Rice at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, yesterday. Xi is to visit Washington next month. The visit comes as the countries have shown a willingness to cooperate on global matters ranging securing a nuclear deal with Iran to climate change.

# When Islamic State rapists win

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

The Islamic State atrocities have descended like distant nightmares upon the numbed conscious of the world. The first beheadings of Americans had the power to shock, but since then there has been a steady barrage of inhumanity: mass executions of Christians and others, throwing gay men from rooftops, the destruction of ancient archaeological treasures, the routine use of poison gas.

Even the recent reports in The Times about the Islamic State's highly structured rape program

housed and bid upon.

The rapes are theocratized. The rapists pray devoutly before and after the act. The religious leader's handbook governing the rape program has a handy Frequently Asked Questions section for the young rapists:

"Question 13: Is it permissible to have intercourse with a female slave who hasn't reached puberty?"

"It is permissible to have intercourse with the female slave who hasn't reached puberty if she is fit

"The clearest evidence that we do not understand this phenomenon is our consistent inability to predict - still less control - these developments," the author writes. Every time we think the Islamic State has appalled the world and sabotaged itself, it holds its own or gains strength.

Writing in The National Interest, Ross Harrison shows how the Islamic State wormhole into a different moral epoch is accompanied by a political wormhole designed to take the Middle East into a different geostrategic epoch. For the past many decades the Middle East has been defined by nation-states and the Arab mind has been influenced by nationalism. But these nation-states have been weakened (Egypt) or destroyed (Iraq and Syria). Nationalism no longer mobilizes popular passion or provides a convincing historical narrative.

The ISIS has arisen, Harrison argues, to bury nationalism and to destroy the Arab nation-state.

The Islamic State consistently tries to destroy the borders between nation-states. It undermines, confuses or smashes national identities. It eliminates national and pre-caliphate memories.

US President Barack Obama has said that the Islamic State stands for nothing but savagery. That's clearly incorrect.

It's time to stop underestimating this force as some group of self-discrediting madmen. The Islamic State is a moral and political threat to the fragile and ugly stability that exists in what's left in the Middle East. The Islamic State will thrive and spread its ideas for as long as it has its land. Its time to act now.



have produced shock but barely a ripple of action.

And yet something bigger is going on. It's as if some secret wormhole into a different historical epoch has been discovered and the knowledge of centuries is being unlearned.

This is happening in the moral sphere. State-sponsored slavery seemed like a thing of the past, but now the Islamic State is an unapologetic slave state. Yazidi women are carefully cataloged, ware-

for intercourse; however, if she is not fit for intercourse it is enough to enjoy her without intercourse."

This wasn't supposed to happen in the 21st century. Western experts have stared the thing in the face, trying to figure out the cause and significance of the moral disaster we are witnessing. There was a very fine essay in The New York Review of Books by a veteran Middle East expert who chose to remain anonymous.

## Pakistan adding '20 nuke warheads' a year

TNN, New Delhi

In less than 10 years, Pakistan will have the third largest nuclear stockpile in the world, behind only the US and Russia, two US think tanks said in a report.

According to the report by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace and the Stimson Center published in the Washington Post, Pakistan is adding 20 warheads to its nuclear arsenal annually because of its fear of India which is also a nuclear power.

It says Pakistan could have 350 warheads in the next 5-10 years, leaving UK and France behind.

Pakistan is estimated to already have 120 warheads as against India's 100.

Pakistan is developing non-strategic or tactical nuclear weapons to check the asymmetry with India in conventional capabilities, noted nuclear expert Hans M Kristensen had said in a report in 2012.

# Why Indo-Pak talks collapsed?

Report says Kashmir issue wasn't the only reason

TNN, New Delhi

Could the India-Pakistan NSA-level dialogue have been saved by facilitating simultaneously a short and separate meeting between the foreign secretaries?

While both sides publicly sparred over Hurriyat and accused each other of tampering with the Ufa agenda, it turns out that it was the failure to ensure a meeting between Pakistan's foreign secretary Aizaz Chaudhry and his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar which finally put paid to any hope of holding the NSA dialogue.

On August 21, 3 days before the scheduled meeting between NSA Ajit Doval and his counterpart Sartaj Aziz, India officially conveyed to Pakistan that a meeting between the foreign secretaries was not going to be possible.

Pakistan had proposed the meeting to discuss modalities for further discussions on what it describes as the core issue of Kashmir. This was important for Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif himself as he was keen to convey at home that the issue remained as significant as ever for

Pakistan, after he allowed India to not mention J&K in the Ufa statement.

According to Indian officials, a meeting between the foreign secretaries wasn't possible because that was not a part of the understanding the two sides arrived at in the Ufa meeting between Sharif and Narendra Modi on July 10.

In her press briefing on August 22, foreign minister Sushma Swaraj declared that NSA talks could only take

place if Pakistan agreed to a terror-only agenda and Aziz refrained from meeting the Kashmir separatists, both described as preconditions by Islamabad.

While India has sought to qualify its position by not blaming Pakistan's civilian government for the spurt in ceasefire violations, or even the collapse of talks, Pakistan describes it as a self-serving contention. "Coming after the Ufa concession by Sharif, agreeing to Sushma Swaraj's preconditions would have been suicidal for the Pakistan government, pressure or no pressure from authorities which India is talking about," said a Pakistan source.

