

# NEWS IN brief

## Tension high as PKK kills 14 Turkey cops

Fourteen Turkish police were killed yesterday in a new attack by Kurdish militants as violence in the east threatened to spiral out of control and Ankara launched a massive wave of air strikes against rebel strongholds in northern Iraq. The 14 police were killed in the eastern region of Iğdir in a bomb attack by Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) militants.

## Rival Koreas to hold family reunion

North and South Korea yesterday agreed to hold a reunion for families separated by the Korean War -- the fruit of a deal struck last month after cross-border tensions came close to boiling over into outright conflict. The reunion, scheduled to be held from October 20 to the 26th, would be only the second to be held in five years in North Korea's Mount Kumgang resort, with 100 participants from each side.

## Coalition raids kill 10 in Yemen capital

Saudi-led warplanes pounded rebel positions in the rebel-controlled Yemeni capital yesterday leaving at least 10 people dead, an AFP correspondent and medics said, as powerful explosions shook Sanaa. Witnesses said targets included the police academy and the headquarters of the security services, both in the heart of the city.

## Egypt army raids kill 29 militants in Sinai

At least 29 militants were killed in raids carried out in Egypt's North Sinai governorate, the army said yesterday. In a statement, the army said the raids are part of a wide campaign started on Monday in the restive cities of Rafah, Sheikh Zayed and Al-Arish.

## 'Ukraine fighting at lowest level'

Fighting in eastern Ukraine has fallen to its lowest level since the conflict started, Ukrainian Defence Minister Stepan Poltorak said. Poltorak said Ukrainian forces were coming under attack just two to four times a day - the lowest rate in the past year and a half. The reduction in violence comes a week after the latest ceasefire agreement came into force on 1 September.



Refugees of different countries accompanied by police officers walk on the railway tracks near Szeged town as they broke out from the migrant collection point near Roszke village of the Hungarian-Serbian border; A young refugee attends his mother, as the elderly woman passed out after a cold night at a migrant collection point near Roszke; and a migrant carrying a baby is stopped by a Hungarian policeman as he tries to escape a collection point.



PHOTO: REUTERS, AFP

# Nightmare ends at last

Father pictured crying with children reaches Germany

The refugee who was photographed weeping as he landed on a Greek island cradling his children has reached safety in Germany. The image of Laith Majid was shared by thousands of people on social media, provoking global discussion of the refugee crisis last month as calls grew for Europe to give families risking their lives crossing the Mediterranean a safe home. He and his family arrived in Kos at dawn on 16 August after being crammed in a dinghy meant for just

three people with eight other refugees. The vessel lost buoyancy and started taking on water during the voyage from Turkey, risking yet another sinking in the Aegean Sea. The route from Bodrum to Kos was the same journey that killed three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, whose body was photographed washed up on a beach. Photographer Daniel Etter caught Laith's tears of relief as he reached dry land with his son and daughter in his arms, before the family stayed in a makeshift tent and attempted to journey on to the Greek mainland.



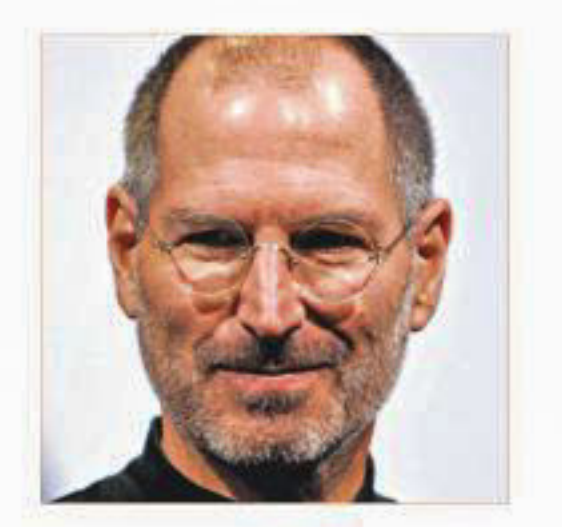
Laith Majid almost drowned with his wife and children on the way to Greece but now safely reached Germany.

# Europe 'rediscovers its humanity' through crisis

Says UNHCR; LatAm nations offer to take in Syria refugees

Europe has "rediscovered its humanity" as it grapples with the Syrian refugee crisis, according to the UN's refugee agency. The continent is facing its largest humanitarian crisis since the end of World War II, as bloody conflicts in Syria, Iraq and beyond send hundreds of thousands of desperate people on dangerous voyages through the Balkans and across the Mediterranean to the 28-nation European Union. Speaking to the ABC in Geneva, UNHCR spokesman William Spindler said it was "not unrealistic" to expect a breakthrough that would forge a coordinated and compassionate continent-wide response to the crisis. "We are seeing a shift in public opinion in recent days," he said. "We have seen this extraordinary outpouring of sympathy for refugees. Citizens all over Europe or coming forward helping the refugees, literally opening their homes to them. This was unthinkable

able a few weeks ago. "Europe has rediscovered its humanity and we are hoping that there will be a breakthrough. We don't think that this is unrealistic." Public sympathy towards refugees was galvanised last week when photos of a drowned Syrian toddler on a beach in Turkey went viral. Migrants arriving by train in the German city of Munich have been welcomed by locals who have cheered them and handed out food and bottles of water. Mr Spindler conceded the idea of mandatory quotas was dividing Europe, but said each country needed to bear its fair share of the burden. Meanwhile, Brazil President Dilma Rousseff on Monday said her country will welcome Syrian refugees with "open arms," as various Latin American nations sought to help with the human tidal wave fleeing the war-torn country. Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro ordered his foreign ministry to take steps to receive 20,000 Syrians in the country.



## Steve Jobs was 'Syrian migrant's child' too

The online tech community has rallied around the story of drowned three-year-old Aylan Kurdi, pointing out that the children of Syrian migrants include the man who invented the iPhone. Steve Jobs, the Apple founder who died in 2011 and is subject of an upcoming biopic by British director Danny Boyle, was the son of a Syrian man who moved to the US to study in the 1950s. Abdul Fattah Jandali was born in 1931 to a well-off family in Homs, Syria -- a city now most famous as the scene of some of the worst fighting in the country's ongoing civil war. He and his partner Joanne Carole Schieble had Jobs out of wedlock and were forced to give him up for adoption. They later married, and had Jobs' biological sister Mona Simpson. Though Jobs' story is a world away from that of Aylan, whose death last week prompted international outrage, a simple post noting their shared Syrian heritage has been shared thousands of times on social media. Posted by Geneva-based tech entrepreneur David Galbraith, it simply included a picture of Jobs and the caption: "A Syrian migrants' child."

# Queen Elizabeth II to become the longest-serving UK monarch

She has lived longer than any of her predecessors, seen a dozen prime ministers come and go and presided over six decades of British history -- from postwar recovery to the death of Princess Diana and terror attacks on London. Now Queen Elizabeth II is set to become the longest reigning monarch in British history. Today, she beats the record set by her great-great-grandmother Queen Victoria -- 63 years and 7 months -- more than a century ago. Only four other British kings and queens have reigned 50 years or more. The only monarch most living Britons have ever known, Elizabeth has been the constant heart of British life since she came to the throne as a young woman aged 25. Much has changed since then. When she married Prince Philip in 1947, Britain was still in the grips of post-World War II austerity -- the couple's wedding cake had to be made from ingredients sent as wedding presents from abroad. In 1953, when she was crowned in Westminster Abbey, television was a novelty and British colonies were still dotted around the world. By the 1990s, the empire had all but vanished. Elizabeth is the last generation of British royals to be educated at home, and the first monarch from the country to have sent an

email (1976) or a tweet (2014). She has worked with 12 British prime ministers -- from Winston Churchill to David Cameron, who was not even born at the time of her coronation -- and continues to carry out public engagements and travel at age 89. While Elizabeth is instantly recognizable and held in endearing regard by her subjects, her personality and views remain an enigma to most. As constitutional monarch she must keep mum on political affairs, and only rarely does she let her thoughts be known. Palace officials say there will be no fanfare today, when Elizabeth officially becomes Britain's longest reigning monarch. Officials say the queen wanted the occasion to be a low-key affair, and that the day will be "business as usual." Elizabeth is expected to be staying in her Scottish home, Balmoral Castle, and will take a steam train journey from Edinburgh with Prince Philip to open the new Borders Railway. Born April 21, 1926 in London, the queen was christened Elizabeth Alexandra Mary of York and was known as young Lilibet to her family. It seemed at the time unlikely that she would become queen -- that is until Edward VIII, her uncle, unexpectedly abdicated in order to marry American divorcee Wallis Simpson. Elizabeth's father reluctantly became King George VI, and she was the heir when he died in 1952.

Infographic titled 'QUEEN ELIZABETH II' with a timeline of key events: 1926 - APRIL 21 Birth of Elizabeth Alexandra Mary Windsor; WORLD WAR II Princess Elizabeth begins public duties, training as a mechanic and military truck driver; 1947 - NOV 20 Marries Philip Mountbatten. They have 4 children: Charles, Anne, Andrew and Edward; 1952 - FEB 6 Ascends to the throne, aged 25, on the death of her father, King George VI; 1953 - JUNE 2 Coronation; 1977 Silver Jubilee. The Sex Pistols release punk anthem "God Save the Queen" which is fiercely critical of the monarchy; 1992 The Queen's "annus horribilis": the marriages of 3 of her children fail, Windsor Castle is damaged by fire; 1997 - AUG 31 Princess Diana, ex-wife of Prince Charles, dies in a car crash in Paris; 2013 - JULY 22 Birth of the Queen's great-grandson Prince George, the 3rd in line to the throne; 2015 - SEPT 9 The Queen becomes Britain's longest-reigning monarch.



## BANGKOK BLAST Suspect tells police he is 'guilty'

A key suspect in last month's deadly Bangkok bombing was transferred Monday to police custody after a week of military interrogation, and was asked to acknowledge the charge against him before police and the media. As cameras recorded in the packed room, police introduced an unusual twist to the routine by asking the suspect whether or not he was guilty of the charge of co-possession of illegal explosives, as stated in his arrest warrant. The suspect, identified by police as Yusufu Mierili, responded through a translator: "Guilty." Authorities have previously released a variety of spellings of his name, including Mieraili Yusufu and Yusufu Meerailie. It was not clear whether the apparent confession would carry legal weight in a court. Mierili, who was arrested last Tuesday near the Thai-Cambodia border, has not yet been formally charged. Police say they found his DNA or fingerprints in two apartments that were raided a week ago by police on the outskirts of Bangkok, including a container of gunpowder. Police say both apartments contained bomb-making materials, and one had more than 200 fake Turkish passports.

## Myanmar polls campaign begins

Myanmar opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi called on the international community yesterday to help ensure November polls bring "genuine political and governmental change" as campaigning officially kicked-off in the former junta-run country. Some 30 million people will have the chance to vote -- many for the first time in their lives -- in the elections, the only nationwide polls contested by Suu Kyi's party in a quarter of a century as the nation emerges from decades of stifling military rule. Some 90 political parties are contesting the polls, whose opening has seen investment pour in. Suu Kyi hailed the November 8 vote as a "turning point" for Myanmar, which has been ruled by a quasi-civilian government since the junta loosened its grip on outright power in 2011. "For the first time in decades, our people will have a real chance of bringing about real change.

# ALLEGED MILITARY BUILD-UP IN SYRIA Isolated Putin jockeying for a deal with US?

Signs of an ongoing Russian military buildup in Syria have drawn US concerns and raised questions of whether Moscow plans to enter the conflict. President Vladimir Putin has been coy on the subject, saying Russia is weighing various options, a statement that has fueled suspicions about the Kremlin's intentions. Observers in Moscow say the Russian maneuvering could be part of a plan to send troops to Syria to fight the Islamic State group in the hope of fixing fractured ties with the West. They warn, however, that Putin would likely find it hard to sell his idea to a skeptical US and risks potentially catastrophic repercussions if he opts for unilateral military action in Syria. By playing with the possibility of joining the anti-ISIS coalition, Putin may hope to win a few key concessions. His main goal: the lifting of Western sanctions and the normalization of relations with the United States and the European Union, which have sunk to their lowest point since the Cold War amid the Ukrainian crisis. In addition, the Russian leader may be angling to make the West more receptive to Moscow's involvement in Ukraine, while retaining influence in Syria.

Early this summer, the Kremlin put forward a peace plan for Syria that envisions enlisting Syrian government forces and Iran in the anti-ISIS coalition. A few rounds of negotiations with the Americans and Saudis have brought no visible results, and now Moscow appears to be testing the water for a next move: beefing up its military presence in Syria. While Putin said Friday there is no talk "just yet" about Russian troops joining the fight against the Islamic State, he seemed to keep the door open for the possibility, saying "we are looking at various options." The Russian leader is set to attend the United Nations General Assembly later this month, and some analysts say a proposal to deploy troops to Syria could be the focal point of his visit. Since the Soviet times, Russia has had close political and military ties with Syria, which hosts a Russian navy facility in the Mediterranean port of Tartus intended to service and supply visiting ships. Moscow has staunchly backed Syrian President Bashar Assad throughout the nation's 4 1/2-year civil war, providing his regime with weapons and keeping military advisers in Syria. Putin said again Friday that Russia is providing the Syrian military with weapons and training.



# Modi govt has failed abysmally

India's Congress Party President Sonia Gandhi yesterday said the central government had failed abysmally to match its words with deeds and that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's electoral promises were nothing more than hawa baazi (hot air). "The Modi government has failed abysmally to match words with deeds, match media events with actual accomplishments and match headlines with substance," Gandhi said while addressing the party's working committee meeting. "The economy is on a downslide while prices continue to rise," she added. Gandhi also took a dig at the government's U-turn on the land bill. "The U-turn on the land bill is evidence that the Narendra Modi government is out of touch with the ground realities. It has become painfully clear that most of the pledges made by the prime minister during his election campaigns are nothing more than hawa baazi," the Congress president said. Terming the NDA government's land bill "draconian", Gandhi accused the Centre of disregarding the will of parliament. "The Modi government first promulgated a draconian land ordinance. For reasons best known to it, the government chose to disregard the will of parliament and displayed an inexplicable hurry to snatch land from our farmers," she said. Gandhi also thanked party workers and farmers for putting up a strong opposition to the land bill. "Thanks to our party's sustained campaign, the government has been compelled to withdraw its anti-farmer amendments. The credit for this goes to every Congress worker who, under (party vice president) Rahul Gandhi's active guidance, carried out a sustained agitation," she said.

