

NEWS IN brief

Turkey lifts curfew on Kurdish city of Cizre

Turkey yesterday lifted a week-long curfew imposed on the predominantly Kurdish south-eastern city of Cizre, media reports said. Cizre was sealed off since last Friday after the Turkish army launched an operation against Kurdish militants there. Twenty civilians have died, eyewitnesses said, although the government has said only one civilian died and that the rest were militants.

Shimla 'toy train' derails; 2 Britons killed

Two Britons were killed and seven other passengers injured yesterday when a train carrying tourists to the hill town of Shimla in northern India derailed, police said. The train was a special chartered service carrying a group of 37 British tourists and a few Indian crew members. The tiny Kalka-Shimla railway, which opened in 1903, is a tourist highlight of India's Himachal Pradesh state.

Rebel shelling on Damascus kills 11

Eleven people were killed in rebel rocket fire on the Syrian capital Damascus, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said yesterday. The Britain-based monitor said the deaths were in the Duwaylaa neighbourhood on the southeastern outskirts of Damascus, adding that most of those killed appeared to be civilians.

Saudi bans hajj camel slaughter over MERS

Saudi Arabia on Friday banned the slaughter of camels during this year's hajj pilgrimage, after a surge in deaths from the MERS virus linked to the animals. Camels will not be allowed to enter the holy sites of Makkah and Medina, the Permanent Committee for Fatwa said in a statement carried by the official Saudi Press Agency. Hajj is expected to begin on September 21.

5.4-magnitude quake rocks Tokyo

A moderate earthquake hit Tokyo early yesterday, causing minor damage to buildings, temporarily bringing the capital's subway system to a halt and leaving 15 people injured in the region. The 5.4-magnitude quake struck at 5:49am.

Rick Perry drops out of presidential race

Republican Rick Perry, struggling to raise money and languishing near the bottom in presidential opinion polls, on Friday became the first member of the crowded Republican field to drop out of the 2016 White House race. Perry, the former Texas governor, was making his second bid for the White House after a failed campaign in 2012.



LONDON



SYDNEY



THE HAGUE



STOCKHOLM



PHOTO: AFP, REUTERS

Protesters around major cities of Europe yesterday staged rallies welcoming the refugees. Tens of thousands of Europeans rallied yesterday urging solidarity with the huge numbers of refugees entering the continent. But highlighting how the arrival of migrants is dividing the EU, several counter-demonstrations were also scheduled in eastern members of the bloc. Story on page 16.

UK LABOUR LEADERSHIP RACE Socialist Jeremy Corbyn wins

AFP, London

Anti-austerity leftwinger Jeremy Corbyn was elected leader of Britain's opposition Labour Party yesterday in a landslide victory that could divide the party and cause headaches for the government on foreign policy.

The 66-year-old socialist, whose policies have been compared to those of Greece's Syriza and Spain's Podemos, was named leader after clinching 59.5 percent of the votes cast by Labour supporters.

The newly-elected chief -- the nation's most left-wing political leader for over 30 years -- immediately faced resignations from the shadow cabinet of Britain's main opposition party.

Corbyn slammed the Conservatives for presiding over "grotesque levels of inequality" and "an unfair welfare system" in his victory speech to the party faithful.

Labour was "united and absolutely determined in our quest for a decent and better society that is possible for all", he said to cheers from supporters, who shouted "Jez We Can!" when his win was announced.

The veteran MP has said he will oppose Britain joining in air strikes against the Islamic State Group over Syria and has been ambiguous on his stance on an upcoming referendum on Britain's EU membership.

In a campaign fuelled by protest groups and trade unions, he comfortably beat the more centrist Yvette Cooper, Andy Burnham and Liz Kendall -- who all had far stronger support from fellow Labour MPs.

Corbyn has electrified Labour's leadership race, which was triggered by the resignation of Ed Miliband after he lost May's general election to David Cameron's right-wing pro-austerity Conservatives.

His chances at the next 2020 general election are thought to be slim but the Conservative Party was quick to react to his victory with a statement calling him a threat to national security.

"Labour are now a serious risk to our nation's security, our economy's security and your family's security," Michael Fallon, the defence minister, said in a statement.

In his first speech as leader, Corbyn meanwhile called for Cameron to show more "compassion" in dealing with the Syrian refugee crisis and said he would attend a demonstration yesterday.

Corbyn drew strong support from students who had never voted before to older people disillusioned with Labour since it moved to the centre-ground of British politics under Tony Blair in the 1990s and led the country into the controversial 2003 Iraq war. The bearded, grey-haired vegetarian crammed in 99 campaign appearances, eschewing soundbites and usually wearing sandals and carrying a cup of tea.



Austria likens Orban's refugee policies to Nazi deportations

REUTERS, Berlin/nickelsdorf

Austria's chancellor criticised Hungary for its handling of the refugee crisis on Saturday, likening the country's policies to Nazi deportations during the Holocaust as refugees complained of their treatment in the eastern European country.

In an interview with German news magazine Der Spiegel, Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann likened Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban's treatment of refugees to the Nazis' deportations of Jews and others to concentration camps.

"Sticking refugees in trains and sending them somewhere completely different to where they think they're going reminds us of the darkest chapter of our continent's history," he said.

On Sept 3, migrants boarded a train in Budapest in the belief that they were heading to the border with Austria but the train was stopped 35 km (22 miles) west of the capital in the town of Biske, where Hungary has a camp for asylum seekers.

Hungary dismissed Faymann's comments as "utterly unworthy of a 21st century European leader" and summoned Austria's ambassador.

Many refugees and migrants now arriving in Hungary want to avoid being registered there for fear of being returned to Hungary later as they travel on to richer countries in western and northern Europe.

On Friday, an online video emerged of crowds clamouring for food in a border camp as police in surgical masks tossed them packs of sandwiches. Police in Hungary said they had launched an investigation into the scenes.

The crisis has exposed deep divisions within the European Union. The European Commission announced plans for obligatory quotas to share out 120,000 additional asylum seekers among 25 member countries.

The Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia oppose being forced to take in new arrivals.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia on Friday responded to "false and misleading" reports about its response to the Syrian refugee crisis, saying it has given residency to 100,000 people from the war-ravaged state.

Clashes over charter kills 6 in Nepal

AFP, Kathmandu

Five demonstrators and a police officer died in clashes in southern Nepal as protests intensified against a proposed new constitution, police said yesterday.

As violence escalated on Friday as protesters dragged the wounded police officer out of an ambulance and killed him, with anger running high after security forces fired on protesters.

"Five protesters -- two in Mahottari and three in Dhanusa district -- were killed after police were forced to fire at aggressive demonstrators yesterday," police spokesman Kamal Singh Bam told AFP.

"A police officer was also killed." More than 30 people including 11 police officers and an 18-month-old boy have been killed in violent clashes between security forces and protesters against a proposed new constitution that would divide the Himalayan nation into seven provinces.

Tensions are particularly high in the country's southern plains, where historically marginalised communities including the Madhesi and Tharu ethnic minorities say the new internal borders will limit their political representation.

A RARE APOLOGY FROM A COLONIAL POWER

British-backed Kenya Mau Mau memorial opens in Nairobi

AFP, Nairobi

A British-funded memorial to the thousands killed, tortured and jailed in the Mau Mau rebellion was unveiled in Kenya yesterday, in a rare example of former rulers commemorating a colonial uprising.

At least 10,000 people died in one of the British Empire's bloodiest insurgencies -- some historians say over double that -- and the security operation to tackle the 1952-1960 struggle was marked by horrific abuses.

The guerrillas, mainly from the Kikuyu people, terrorised colonial communities with attacks from bases in remote forests, challenging white settlers for valuable land.

But while attention at the time focused on 32 murdered settlers, the number of Kenyans killed was far higher.

Thousands of Mau Mau veterans crowded into the memorial site, dancing and singing, as the ribbon was cut and it opened to the public.

"It is a special day," said Gitu wa Kahengeri, Mau Mau Veterans Association secretary general, adding they "truly believe in reconciliation for a better future."

Britain's High Commissioner to Kenya, Christian



Turner, said he was "humbled" to be at the ceremony.

"I hope that this memorial will allow us to acknowledge and discuss together the issues arising from a difficult period in the history of both Britain and Kenya, and that it offers us the opportunity to

draw a line and move forward," Turner said.

"This is the right thing to do for those of you who suffered, for Britain and Kenya, and our joint relationship," he said. "To deal with the present and move forward into the future, we have to recognise and learn from the past."

British and Kenyan flags fluttered over Nairobi's Uhuru, or "Freedom", park, with a crowd of several thousand Mau Mau veterans surrounding the memorial, many still with their trademark but greying dreadlocks.

Thousands suffered horrific torture including sexual mutilation, and tens of thousands more were detained in shockingly harsh detention camps.

Kenya Human Rights Commission (KHRC) chief Makua Mutua said that "colonialism was a crime against humanity," but said that the British apology was accepted.

"The arc of history is long, but it bends towards justice," Mutua said, celebrating that now "perpetrator and victim, colonised and colonisers, can be together."

Russian cosmonaut back after record 879 days in space

AFP, Astana

Russian cosmonaut Gennady Padalka returned safely to Earth with two other astronauts from the International Space Station yesterday with the record for having spent the most time in space.

Padalka -- who has spent a total of 879 days in space over five separate trips -- touched ground on the barren Kazakh steppe on schedule at 0051 GMT along with Kazakh cosmonaut Aidyn Aimbetov and Danish astronaut Andreas Mogensen.

"Landing has taken place," a spokesman for Russia's space agency Roscosmos told AFP. "All is well."

Padalka led the 44th expedition to the ISS, breaking a 10-year-old record for the total number of days spent in the cosmos on June 28 when he surpassed the figure of 803



days, nine hours and 41 minutes achieved by Sergei Krikalev, another Russian.

His most recent mission began on March 27 when he blasted off from the Baikonur cosmodrome with compatriot Mikhail Kornienko and American Scott Kelly. Mogensen, the first Dane in Space and Aimbetov, the third cosmonaut from his country, had a comparatively short stay at the ISS having entered space in the Soyuz TMA-18M on September 2 and docking two days later on September 4.

Padalka made four trips to ISS in total. He is the only person to command the ISS four times.

Space travel has been one of the few areas of international cooperation between Russia and the West that has not been completely destroyed by the Ukraine crisis.

US, Cuba set agenda on future talks

REUTERS, Havana

Cuba and the United States on Friday set an agenda for improving relations, putting a priority on more easily attainable agreements while leaving aside difficult issues such as the US trade embargo and naval base at Guantanamo Bay, Cuba said.

The two sides put a priority on environmental protection, natural disaster response, health, civil aviation and law enforcement issues such as drug trafficking, Cuban officials said.

A second, more difficult block of issues included human rights, people-trafficking, climate change and epidemics, Cuba said.

Egypt cabinet resigns over 'graft scandal'

AFP, Cairo

Egypt's prime minister and his cabinet resigned yesterday following a corruption scandal and President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi tasked the oil minister with forming a new government.

A senior government official told AFP the reshuffle was meant to "pump new blood" into the government after the arrest on Monday of agriculture minister Salah Helal on suspicion of taking bribes.

The presidency said prime minister Ibrahim Mahlab handed his government's resignation to Sisi who accepted it, and tasked outgoing oil minister Sharif Ismail with forming the new cabinet within a week.

A statement from the presidency said the outgoing government will stay on in a caretaker role till then.

Egyptian media had reported an impending reshuffle after Helal's arrest.

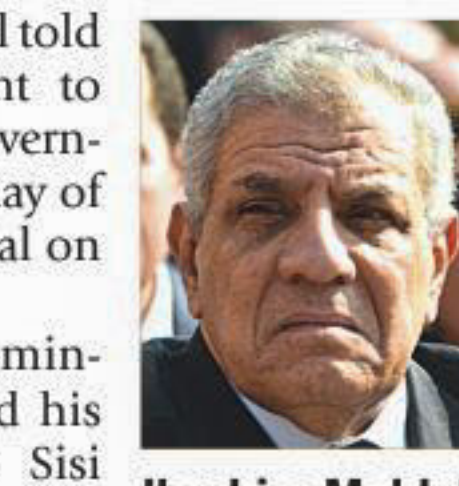
He was detained after Sisi asked him to resign, in connection with an investigation into corruption.

Helal and his chief of staff were accused of having "requested and received" bribes from a businessman, through an intermediary, to legalise the purchase of state property.

The government had denied the reports of a reshuffle, and said no other ministers had been implicated in the corruption case.

But there have been growing calls for Mahlab's resignation and increasing protests by civil servants over a new law that centralises promotions while taxing bonuses.

"The main reason was the president was displeased with the job of some ministers, and his feeling that the government wasn't achieving what he wanted, especially in light of complaints by citizens regarding services," said Mostafa Kamel al-Sayed, a Cairo University political science professor.



Ibrahim Mahlab

THAI SHRINE BLAST Cops looking for 'Chinese' suspect

AFP, Bangkok

Thai police yesterday said an arrest warrant had been issued for a "Chinese" man over last month's deadly Bangkok blast, backtracking after they earlier identified the suspect as a member of the country's Uighur minority.

Confusing and sometimes contradictory official statements have characterised updates into the investigation of the attack which killed 20 people, the majority ethnic Chinese visitors at a religious shrine in the capital's bustling downtown district on August 17.

Analysts have increasingly pointed towards militants from China's mostly Muslim Uighur minority -- or their supporters -- in revenge for Thailand's forced deportation of 109 Uighur refugees to an uncertain future in China in July.

National police spokesman Prawut Thavornsiri earlier told AFP the suspect was a Uighur according to his passport releasing a photo. But, shortly afterwards, police sent reporters another photo of the suspect -- this time removing mention of his ethnicity and requesting media "drop the word Uighur".

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Russia making a 'big mistake' Obama warns Moscow on military moves in Syria

AFP, Fort Meade

US President Barack Obama said Friday that Russia's decision to send military advisors and equipment to Syria extended a strategy "doomed to failure," and could kill off already stagnant peace efforts.

Obama said that Russia's decision to ramp up its military presence in war-torn Syria represented a "doubling-down" of Moscow's support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

US officials say Russia has sent ships, armored personnel carriers and naval infantry to the country in recent weeks, a move which Obama said showed Assad was worried his grip on power is slipping.

"The strategy that they are pursuing right now, doubling down on Assad, I think is a big mistake," Obama said at an event marking the 14th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

"We are going to be engaging Russia to let them know that you can't continue to double down on a strategy that is doomed to failure."

He said Russia -- which has a large and restive Muslim population in the North Caucasus -- faced more of a threat from the Islamic State group than the United States does.