West at root of Europe's migrant crisis

Says Syria president:

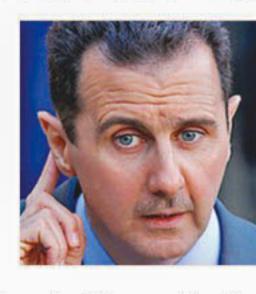
AFP, Damascus Syrian President Bashar al-

Assad said the West is "crying" for refugees flooding into Europe but its support for "terrorists" in his country lies at the roots of the crisis.

In an interview with Russian media, Assad also said it was natural for Iran to have stepped up its decades-old military and economic support for Damascus at a time of war.

"Those refugees left Syria: because of the terrorism, mainly because of the terrorists and because of the killing, and second because of the results of terrorism," said the embattled leader.

"When you have terrorism, and you have the destruction of the infrastructure, you won't have the basic needs of living,"



Assad said, according to a transcript made available yesterday.

"So, the West is crying for them, and the West is supporting terrorists since the beginning of the crisis when it said that this was a peaceful uprising," said Assad.

"If you are worried about them, stop supporting terrorists ... This is the core of the whole issue of refugees. Syria's government

labels all those involved in the anti-Assad uprising and ensuing civil war as "terrorists", including Westernbacked rebels.

Assad told the media outlets from Russia, a major ally, that Tehran's support was also essential for his regime in Syria's conflict, which has cost more than 240,000 lives since 2011.



UN wants 'bybrid court'

Unveils long-awaited report detailing 'horrific abuses' during Lankan civil war

AFP, Geneva

The United Nations yesterday detailed horrific abuses committed in Sri Lanka's civil war, including the disappearance of tens of thousands of people, and said the country needed international help to probe war crimes and

enable reconciliation. "A purely domestic court

procedure will simply not succeed in overcoming the widespread and justifiable suspicions fuelled by decades of violations, malpractice and broken promises," UN rights chief Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein told reporters in Geneva. The country, he said,

needed international assistance to address the "horrific level of violations

and abuses" during and following Sri Lanka's 26-year civil war, revealed in a long-awaited report.

Sri Lanka's new unity government has promised dramatic reforms to achieve accountability for alleged atrocities during the war with the Tamil Tiger guerrillas, which ended in 2009 and killed at least 100,000 people.

The government, which is planning various measures to ensure reconciliation including the creation of a truth commission, had been hoping to win UN backing for a domestic probe.

But yesterday's report concluded



that "Sri Lanka's criminal justice system is not yet ready or equipped" to conduct an independent and credible investigation.

Instead, it urged the country to establish a "hybrid special court", including international judges, prosecutors, lawyers and investigators, to probe war-related abuses.

The report identified patterns of grave violations "strongly indicating that war crimes and crimes against humanity' had been committed by both sides. Among other abuses, it found that

tens of thousands of Sri Lankans

remained missing after decades of conflict, suggesting enforced disappearances had been part of a systematic policy.

The seven investigators behind the report were not allowed into Sri Lanka but based their findings on interviews with victims and witnesses, video footage photos, satellite images and other sources.

The report, which looked specifically at the period between 2002 and 2011, described widespread illegal killings by both sides and a

deliberate policy by Lankan security forces to use rape and sexual violence as torture against both women and men. It found that children were often abducted by the separatists and sent to the front lines as soldiers, while a group linked to the government had also recruited children.

Nepal finally gets a new charter

AFP, Kathmandu

Nepal's parliament passed a new national constitution yesterday, weeks after political leaders reached a historic agreement to create a federal state following an earthquake that killed nearly 9,000 people.

A loud cheer went up in the House as Speaker Subash Nembang announced that the long-delayed bill had been passed, with 507 of the 598 lawmakers voting in favour. The marathon vote, which began on Sunday and contin-

ued late into yesterday night, follows violent protests that have killed more than 40 people and shut down large swathes of the south. The new charter will replace an interim constitution in

place since the end of a decade-long civil war that led to the abolition of the Hindu monarchy, and is due to come into force on Sunday evening. It will divide the Himalayan nation of 28 million people into seven federal provinces, a move aimed at devolving

enough to empower historically marginalised groups. They include the Madhesi and Tharu ethnic minorities, who mainly inhabit the country's southern plains and who claim

power from the centre, but which critics say will not do

that the new internal borders will leave them underrepresented. Political leaders counter that no deal would have pleased everyone, and point to the urgency of ending the long stand-off over the constitution so that the country can start rebuilding.

Work on a new constitution began in 2008, two years after the end of a civil war between state forces and Maoist guerrillas seeking to depose an autocratic king and end high levels of social inequality.



Corbyn brings new style to UK PM debate

Newly elected British Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn yesterday engaged with David Cameron for the first time, bringing a low-key style to the usually raucous weekly showdown of Prime Minister's Questions.

The radical left-winger, whose refusal to sing "God Save the Queen" drew ire from the rightwing press, broke with convention and selected his six questions from the public having "crowd sourced" ideas online.

"I want things to be rather different because I think the public as a whole have had enough of 'yahboo sucks' politics, theatrical politics," the 66-yearold socialist said before the debate.

Cameron welcomed the call for a more orderly debate and was noticeably less blustery than before.

Questions from "Angela", "Steven", "Gail", "Marie", "Paul" and "Claire" dealt mainly with the provision of affordable housing and welfare cuts, hinting at the issues that will form the basis of his opposition.

The spectacle was far from the cut and thrust of previous Cameron grillings by Corbyn's predecessor Ed Miliband, and the cheers and jeers from opposing sides of the House of Commons were less audible than

before.

Afghan Taliban end leadership dispute

REUTERS, Peshawar

The Afghan Taliban yesterday said that a major dispute undermining the movement has been resolved, after relatives of the militant group's late leader, Mullah Omar, pledged support for his appointed successor Mullah Mansour.

As part of the deal, Mansour's faction say they will protect Omar's family from any retaliation by Mansour's rivals. Many important Taliban figures still oppose Mansour.

Yet the deal reinforces his leadership, making it more likely that the Taliban can avoid rupturing at a time when Islamic State is seeking to expand its influence in the region, and also raising hopes that stalled peace talks with the Afghan government may resume.

Both Mansour and his opponents had sought the backing of Omar's family in order to strengthen their claims to the leadership. Omar's family will be protected from any threats, a Taliban commander close to Mansour said.

Mansour will also reach out to senior Afghan Taliban who opposed him or had doubts over his appointment, the Taliban member added. Many important Taliban figures, including those in the political office in Qatar, have yet to publicly endorse him.

Omar's relatives could not be contacted directly, but a close aide to Omar's son confirmed an agreement had been celebrated at a secret ceremony after Mansour accepted eight demands.

MAKKAH CRANE CRASH

Victims to get 1m Riyals in compensation

AGENCIES

Saudi King Salman has ordered one million Riyals ((\$267,000) compensation for those who were injured with permanent disability and half a million for other injured pilgrims. Families of the deceased are also going to receive one million Riyals, according to a Saudi Royal Court order.

The Saudi Royal Court has not found any criminal intent behind the crane collapse in Makkah that killed 107 people and injured 331. The court, however, found the Saudi Binladin Group, which was involved in the Grand Mosque expansion project, guilty of violating safety standards and banned it from undertaking any future projects.

Half of world's marine life wiped out in 40 yrs: WWF

Pollution, industrial fishing and climate change have killed off half of marine life in the last four decades, according to a WWF report released yesterday.

Species essential to global food supply -- especially in poorer nations where fish provide essential dietary protein -were among the hardest hit,

the conservation group's Living Blue Planet Report said. The family of fish that includes tuna and mackerel,

for example, has declined by three quarters since 1970. "In the space of a single

generation, human activity has severely damaged the ocean by catching fish faster

than they can reproduce," Marco Lambertini, head of WWF International, said in a statement.

"Profound changes are needed to ensure abundant ocean life for future generations."

Fish are not the only marine organisms in steep decline, the report found. Large swathes of coral reef, mangroves and sea grasses have died off or been hacked away.

Half of all coral has already disappeared, and the rest will vanish by 2050 if temperatures continue to rise at current rates, previous research has shown.

"Coral reefs occupy less than one percent of the ocean surface, but they harbour a third of ocean species," said French biologist Gilles Boeuf, commenting on the report.

Doubling previous samplings, the joint WWF and Zoological Society of London analysis tracked 5,829 populations of 1,234 species for an updated, "more troubling" picture of ocean health.

At the same time that the volume of marine life is diminishing, so too is the number of species, both in

the ocean and on land, other research has shown.

Indeed, scientists believe Earth has entered a sixth "mass extinction event", with species disappearing 100 times more quickly than only a century or two ago. There have been five such episodes over the last half-billion years, the most recent wiping out all non-avian dinosaurs and most other forms of life some 65 million years ago.

AFP, Bangkok Thailand's junta yesterday

June 2017: Thai junta

killing three passengers and

injuring seven, authorities

said. Allen Kenitzer, a spokes-

man for the Federal Aviation

Administration, said the sea

plane, a De Havilland

Turbine Otter, crashed on

takeoff at Eastwind Lake near

Iliamna after hitting a patch

Elections likely in

said elections are unlikely to take place before June 2017 in the latest delay to the restoration of democracy since the military seized power last year. The kingdom's generals had initially promised to return power to civilians within 18 months of their May 2014 putsch as they set

try's constitution. Iranian women fined

about rewriting the coun-

\$260 for 'bad hijabs' AFP, Tehran

A Tehran court has fined two women \$260 for violating the Islamic dress code by not wearing their mandatory hijabs (headscarves) properly in the street, a judicial official was quoted as saying yesterday. When in public, all women in Iran, even foreigners, are required to wear the loose scarf, which covers the hair and neck. But since the mid-1990s, there has been a gradual relaxation of the dress code despite continued campaigns by police to enforce it.

Kurdish militants kill 5 more Turkey cops

AFP, Diyarbakir

Five Turkish police officers were killed in two bomb attacks by Kurdish militants in the country's southeast overnight, Turkish security sources said yesterday. Dozens of soldiers and police have been killed in PKK attacks since a two-year ceasefire between the government and rebels broke down in July, when the army launched a major "antiterror" operation against PKK strongholds in northern Iraq and southeast Turkey.



Dengue patients share bed with others in a casualty ward of a government hospital in New Delhi. India's capital is combating its worst outbreak of dengue fever in five years, with the tropical mosquito-borne disease posing a momentous challenge to the city's creaky health infrastructure. The Press Trust of India says that at least 11 people have already died from it this year.

more kids like you to like science. It's

PHOTO:

AFP

US teenager arrested over clock mistaken for bomb

Ahmed Mohamed

Agencies

A Muslim teen in the US was led out of a Texas school in handcuffs after a teacher mistook his homemade digital clock for a bomb. A photo of Ahmed Mohamed, 14,

standing in handcuffs while wearing a tshirt with the US space agency

NASA's logo was retweeted thousands of times in a matter of hours and

"#IStandWithAhmed" was the top trending hashtag on Twitter.

Among those voicing support for the boy was US President Barack Obama. He congratulated Ahmed on

his skills and issued a presidential invitation, in what amounts to a pointed rebuke to school and police officials who precipitated his arrest.

what makes America great," the president

"Cool clock, Ahmed. Want to bring it to the White House? We should inspire

Hillary Clinton tweeted: "Assumptions

and fear don't keep us safe-they hold us back. Ahmed, stay curious and keep building." Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg also

invited Ahmed to visit his office.

The teenager told The Dallas Morning

News that he was just trying to impress his teachers when he brought the clock to MacArthur High school on Monday.

stuff," he said in a video posted on the paper's website that was filmed in his electronics-filled bedroom.

easy. I wanted to show something small at first... they took it wrong so I was arrested for a hoax bomb."

"My hobby is to invent "I made a clock. It was really

The aspiring inventor, who lives in Irving just outside Dallas, said police would not let him call his parents during a lengthy interrogation. Once released, he was suspended from school for three days.