

NEWS IN
brief

August breaks heat records across globe

AFP, Miami
Last month was the hottest August in modern history, in the latest sign of an unusually warm year across the world's land and sea surfaces, US government scientists said yesterday. The most scorching August on the planet in 136 years was also the sixth month this year to have broken a monthly temperature record, putting 2015 on pace to beat 2014 as the warmest year ever, scientists said.

ISIS bombings kill 14 in Iraq capital

AFP, Baghdad
Bombings in the Iraqi capital claimed by the Islamic State group killed at least 14 people and wounded 55 yesterday, security and medical officials said. The attacks struck central Baghdad's Wathba Square and near Tayran Square. The jihadist group said the attacks were carried out by two suicide bombers, whom it did not

Corbyn indicates won't campaign for EU exit

AFP, London
Newly elected British opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn indicated he would not campaign to leave the European Union in a referendum expected by 2017, in an interview on Wednesday. Corbyn has long been critical of the EU and had been unclear on this position in the past. Conservative Prime Minister David Cameron has promised to hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU by 2017.

US woman 'raped' in northern India

AFP, New Delhi
An American tourist has accused two men of raping her in the popular hill station of Dharamsala in northern India, police said yesterday, the latest sex attack on a foreigner. The 46-year-old woman has told police she was walking through a crowded market area of the town, famed for its Tibetan community and home to the Dalai Lama, on Tuesday evening when the attack occurred.

2 more fatalities from California wildfires

AFP, Los Angeles
Two more people were confirmed dead on Wednesday in the massive wildfires raging through northern California, with authorities expressing hope that rain and cooler temperatures will allow firefighters to gain the upper hand. Authorities said a search was under way for two possible victims from the two fires -- the so-called Valley and Butte fires -- that have raged through the region, destroying more than 800 homes and displacing 23,000



Policemen watch migrants during a stampede to board a bus in Tovarnik, Croatia yesterday. Croatia yesterday said it could not take in any more migrants, amid chaotic scenes of riot police trying to control thousands who have streamed into the European Union country from Serbia.

Burkina coup sparks deadly protests

BBC ONLINE
Presidential guard officers in Burkina Faso have seized power in a coup, with reports of more than 10 deaths amid protests in the capital, Ouagadougou. A close ally of former President Blaise Compaore has been named the country's new leader, state television reports. The US, France and African Union (AU) condemned the coup in the former French colony. Those killed were shot dead by presidential guard forces in the capital, a civil society group said. An unknown number of protesters have been detained. The coup leaders have imposed a night-time curfew across the West African state, and have ordered the closure of land and air borders, AFP news agency reports. The headquarters of Compaore's Congress for Democracy and Progress (CDP) party were ransacked in Ouagadougou as news of the coup spread, it adds. The AU and regional body Ecowas, the Economic Community of West African States, called for the immediate release of "hostages", referring to interim President Michel Kafando and Prime Minister Isaac Zida, who were detained at a cabinet meeting in the president palace on Wednesday. Their transitional authority was due to hand power to a new government after elections on 11 October. Compaore was ousted in a popular uprising, partly organised by Balai Citoyen, in 2014 after 27 years in power, and is currently in exile. He was accused of committing widespread abuses, and trying to change the constitution to extend his term in office.

Another happy refugee story

Father, who was tripped by Hungary camerawoman, gets Spanish football job

BBC ONLINE
A migrant father who was tripped by a Hungarian camerawoman while holding his son is to start a new life in Spain. Osama Abdul Mohsen fell while running across the Serbia-Hungary border last week. The camerawoman, Petra Laszlo, was fired and later apologised. Mohsen, who coached a football team in Syria, will now work at a sports school near Madrid. "The future will be very good for my son in Spain," Mohsen told El Mundo newspaper (in Spanish). He said he and his seven-year-old son Zaid had endured a difficult journey to Europe, after meeting with another son, Mohammad, who had already reached Europe by boat. He said he was then threatened with jail by Hungarian authorities. Miguel Angel Galan, the director of the Cenafe football school in Getafe, near Madrid, said officials had decided to "help a fellow coach". Spain has agreed to take in 17,000 refugees this year.



Refugees forced to head for Croatia minefields

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
Thousands of desperate refugees who have been turned away at the Hungarian border may be forced to try and cross deadly Croatian minefields in search of safety in Europe. Left over in the aftermath of the 1990s Balkan wars, there are thought to be between 60,000 and 100,000 landmines covering a 310 square mile area across Croatia. Efforts to clear them were halted by extensive flooding in 2014, and it is unknown how many remain or are still active. It makes for a potentially deadly prospect for refugees who, as of Wednesday morning, have begun arriving in Croatia on their way north towards Austria and Germany. Minesweeping teams have been scrambled to the border area with Serbia, officials said. A spokesperson for the Croatian Demining Centre told Reuters: "Police have contacted us and we sent a team to the border area in eastern Croatia." Volunteer groups on social media dedicated to helping refugees in Croatia have been publishing guidelines on how to avoid mines and maps showing where the main minefields are. And while officials said active minefields were clearly marked with warning signs, hundreds have been killed

REFUGEE EXODUS TO EU

and many more injured by mines since the end of the civil war in 1995. Hungary's response to refugees has contributed to a growing sense of distrust towards authorities, and mixed messages from the Croatian government mean that at least some of those who enter the country will travel cross-country, avoiding roads and therefore the police. On Tuesday, the Croatian government said people who entered its country illegally would be given only two choices -- claiming asylum there or being returned to Serbia. It was not until Wednesday that Croatia's Prime Minister Zoran Milanovic said it would allow refugees to continue onwards. "Croatia is entirely ready to receive or direct those people where they want to go, which is obviously Germany or Scandinavian countries," he said. "Many in Europe boast that they are Christians but behave otherwise. Walls will stop nobody and will not help," Milanovic added, in a thinly-veiled swipe at Hungary claims to defend Europe's "Christian values" from Muslim migrants. If they get through the minefields, refugees in Croatia will still have a long way to go before they reach Austria or Germany. To do that, they still need to cross either Slovenia -- or western Hungary.



Romanian PM Victor Ponta facing graft trial

AFP, Bucharest
Romania's Prime Minister Victor Ponta is to be tried for corruption, anti-graft prosecutors said yesterday -- the first head of the country's government ever to be put in the dock while still in office. The 42-year-old Social Democratic leader, who denies the charges, has been accused of fraud, tax evasion and money laundering dating back to 2007, five years before he became prime minister. Ponta -- once Europe's youngest national leader -- was taking part in a special meeting of the country's defence council on the migrant crisis hitting the EU when prosecutors from the DNA anti-corruption agency made the announcement. The agency said some of his assets have been frozen pending the outcome of the case when they charged him on Monday. The investigation has sparked calls for Ponta to resign, but he has refused to do so, firmly denying the allegations and promising to cooperate with the probe. The money laundering and tax evasion allegations relate to his activities as a lawyer. Ponta is accused of receiving the equivalent of around \$61,000 from Dan Sova, a political ally and member of parliament suspected by prosecutors of abuse of power but who also enjoys immunity. Sova was named a minister three times by Ponta before resigning in 2014. Dozens of former politicians and judges have been swept up in investigations launched by the anti-corruption agency in one of Europe's poorest and graft-

CIA releases Cold War era intel briefs

AFP, Washington
On October 30, 1962 President John F Kennedy received a secret CIA briefing on the first results of his diplomatic dance with Nikita Khrushchev to end the Cuban missile crisis. Now, thanks to a major release of previously classified CIA documents, Cold War historians can read along with him the daily memos he and his successor Lyndon B Johnson received. The 1960s were tumultuous years, and the news on that day was far from clear. Kennedy's spy chiefs were seeking concrete evidence that nuclear armageddon had been averted. "We are so far unable to verify Kuznetsov's assertion that the Soviets have begun to dismantle their missile bases in Cuba," they wrote, referring to the deputy Soviet foreign minister. Two days earlier, they had warned the president, under pressure from hawks in his administration to invade Cuba, that US planes had spotted 24 "fully operational" nuclear missile launchers. Kennedy held his nerve, enforcing a naval quarantine of the island and reaching out to his Kremlin counterpart through diplomatic back channels. The Soviets famously blinked and -- in exchange for Washington removing some missiles from Europe -- agreed to take their own medium-range weapons home from the Caribbean.



Japanese ruling and opposition lawmakers scuffle at the Upper House's ad hoc committee session for the controversial security bills at the National Diet in Tokyo, yesterday. Japanese lawmakers came to blows as they tried -- and failed -- to stop the passage of a security bill that could see the military fight abroad for the first time in decades.

PHOTO: REUTERS

Malaria deaths fall 60 pc since 2000: UN

AFP, Geneva
Malaria deaths worldwide have fallen by 60 percent since 2000, the UN said yesterday, with improved diagnostic tests and the massive distribution of mosquito nets aiding dramatic progress against the disease. Fifteen years ago, an estimated 262 million malaria cases killed nearly 840,000 people. Projections for 2015 indicate that some 214 million cases are likely to cause 438,000 deaths, according to a joint report from the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations children's agency (UNICEF). "Global malaria control is one of the great public health success stories of the past 15 years," WHO Director-General Margaret Chan said. Had malaria infection and death rates remained unchanged since 2000, another 6.2 million people would have died, according to the report. "We can beat this ancient killer," she added in a statement, while noting that children under five still make up the overwhelming majority of malaria victims. Most of the gains were recorded in Asia and the Caucasus, but in Africa the picture was less encouraging. Sub-Saharan nations accounted for nearly 80 percent of global malaria deaths this year and efforts to curb infection rates in the region lagged substantially behind other parts of the world.

Donald Trump pummelled by Republican rivals in debate

BBC ONLINE
Donald Trump has come under attack from all sides in a fiery debate between the top Republican presidential candidates in the 2016 election. The party's frontrunner, a billionaire businessman with no political experience, refused to apologise over comments about the wife of Jeb Bush. And he was on the receiving end when Carly Fiorina drew huge applause facing up to his recent jibe over her looks. Fifteen Republicans are vying to be the party's White House nominee in 2016. With more than a year until polling day, the second Republican debate in the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library in California saw Bush and Trump trading blows several times. Their most notable clash in the debate, hosted by CNN, came when the former Florida governor demanded that the tycoon apologise to his wife for saying he was weak on immigration because she is Mexican. Trump refused. But the loudest audience response of the night came when Fiorina was asked about an interview in which Trump said she could not be president because "Look at that face". She replied, to thunderous applause: "I think women all over this country heard very clearly what Trump said." But if Trump predictably took plenty of punches, as the candidate who has held a commanding lead for much of the campaign, he gave as good he got throughout the debate in his trademark style. He returned fire on Kentucky Senator Rand Paul with an oblique personal insult about his appearance, mocked the fiscal record of Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker and introduced himself with the words: "I say, not in a braggadocious way, I've made billions and billions of dollars." The Democratic Party will hold its first debate in Nevada in October, also hosted by CNN. By next summer, each party will have a presidential nominee who will do battle in the race for the White House. Votes will



A Syrian man carries his two girls as he walks across the rubble following a barrel bomb attack on the rebel-held neighbourhood of al-Kalasa in the northern Syrian city of Aleppo. Three children were among at least 11 civilians killed on Wednesday when a Syrian government aircraft dropped a barrel bomb on a rebel-held neighbourhood of Aleppo, a monitoring group said. Once Syria's economic powerhouse, Aleppo has been ravaged by fighting since the rebels seized the east of the city in 2012, confining government forces to the west.

PHOTO: AFP