

NEWS IN brief

Barrel bombs kill 21 near Syria's Daraa

AFP, Beirut
Barrel bomb attacks by Syrian regime helicopters killed at least 21 civilians late Thursday in a rebel-held town near Daraa city, a monitoring group said. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said regime helicopters "dropped barrel bombs on neighbourhoods in Busra al-Sham in Daraa province," killing at least 21 people, including two children and four women.

Indian army kills 5 'terrorists' in Kashmir

AFP, Srinagar
Indian soldiers shot dead five suspected rebels near the heavily militarised border in Kashmir yesterday as they tried to sneak in from the Pakistani side of the divided territory, an army spokesman said. India regularly accuses Pakistan of arming and training rebels to infiltrate what it sees as its territory. Islamabad denies the allegation.

ISIS attack on Tripoli airport kills three

AFP, Tripoli
Militants attacked Tripoli's airport yesterday and killed three security personnel, a Libyan official said, in an assault claimed by the Islamic State jihadist group. ISIS claimed the attack on Twitter. Flights were unaffected by the incident at what is the only airport still functioning in the militia-held city.

California wildfires death toll rises to 5

AFP, Los Angeles
The death toll from monster wildfires raging in northern California has risen to five with the discovery of two new victims, authorities said on Thursday. oth were killed in the so-called Valley fire, one of two giant blazes that have destroyed hundreds of homes and displaced thousands in the drought-stricken state.

'Islamist' stabs German cop, shot dead

AFP, Berlin
An Iraqi man who spent time in jail for membership in an Islamist terrorist group was shot dead by German police Thursday after he stabbed and seriously wounded a policewoman. The 41-year-old man had been convicted in 2008 of planning an attack in Berlin against former Iraqi prime minister Iyad Allawi, a prosecution spokesman told AFP.

Motorcycle bomb kills 3 in Thai south

AFP, Bangkok
Three people were killed and 14 wounded by a motorcycle bomb blast in Thailand's deep south, officials said yesterday. Since 2004 more than 6,400 people have been killed, the majority civilians, in the kingdom's Muslim-majority southern provinces where insurgents are fighting for greater autonomy.



(From top, anti-clockwise) A group of migrants walk down a dirt road towards the border between Croatia and Serbia, near the western-Serbia town of Sid, yesterday; a boy holds a placard during a protest at a makeshift refugee camp on the Serbian side of the border with Hungary; a boy pushes against a police barricade as they march along the highway towards the Turkish-Greek border at Edirne, Turkey.



Vatican takes in first refugee family

REUTERS, Vatican City
Responding to a call from Pope Francis for every Church parish to house refugees, the Vatican City yesterday said it had taken in a family that had fled the war in Syria. The family -- a father, mother and their two children -- came from Damascus and are Melkite Greek Catholics, a Christian church with close ties to the Roman Catholic Church. The Vatican said in a statement that the family, which was not named, arrived in Italy on Sept 6, the day Pope Francis made his appeal for European parishes to open their doors to refugees. The four Syrians have since asked for asylum. The Vatican City, a micro state which sits in the heart of Rome, contains two parishes -- Santa Anna and St Peter's Basilica. The Vatican said it could not yet provide any information about a second family that is expected to be housed by the St Peter's administration. Looking to help ease the crisis, the pope urged some 120,000 parishes across Europe to take in one family each.



Journalists perform CPR on Mohammed Jaffa who had a heart attack on Thursday while waiting to cross into Croatia from Serbia, as police stood by just metres away and did nothing. The middle-aged man, believed to be from Afghanistan, was one of thousands of people trapped in Tovarnik on the Serbian border.

Another toddler washes up on Turkish beach

AFP, Istanbul
A four-year-old Syrian girl's body washed up on a beach in western Turkey yesterday, state media said, just weeks after images of drowned Syrian toddler Aylan Kurdi shook the world. The yet-to-be identified girl was found lifeless on a beach in the Aegean town of Cesme in Izmir province after a boat carrying 15 Syrians to the Greek island of Chios sank, the official Anatolia news agency said. It said the Turkish coast guard rescued the remaining 14 Syrians, including eight children, from the inflatable boat. The girl appeared to be the only casualty. Harrowing pictures of three-year-old Syrian refugee Aylan Kurdi, whose body was found washed up on a Turkish beach after the boat carrying his family to the Greek island of Kos sank, caused an outpouring of emotion



around the world, pressuring European leaders to step up their response to the refugee crisis. But two weeks later EU members are still at odds over how to accommodate the tens of thousands of new arrivals. Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Numan Kurtulmus yesterday said that the Turkish coast guard had rescued over 53,000 migrants from stricken boats since the beginning of the year. He said around 274 migrants have lost their lives in Turkish waters this year seeking to leave the country by sea for Greece. In the latest tragedy, 22 people who had left Turkey drowned on Tuesday when their wooden boat sank off Kos. Migrants have in recent days turned to Turkey's land borders with Greece and Bulgaria to avoid the sea voyage that has cost over 2,600 people their lives in the Mediterranean this year.

US, Russia militaries launch talks

AFP, Washington
The United States and Russia renewed high-level contacts between their militaries yesterday to discuss how to deal with the war in Syria. US Secretary of Defense Ash Carter and Russia's Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu spoke by telephone, spokesmen from their ministries said. Washington and its Nato allies broke off ties with the Russian military in April last year in protest at Moscow's intervention in Ukraine. But now the rivals find themselves enmeshed in Syria, where they face an opportunity to work together but also the danger of an accidental clash. For a year, the United States and a coalition of Western and Arab allies have been carrying out air strikes against Islamic State jihadists. The United States has also, with limited success, been training Syrians who are fighting the extremist IS group but who are also in revolt against the Damascus regime. Russia, meanwhile, is providing

support to Bashar al-Assad's government and building up its own military presence at an airbase and a naval depot in western Syria. "The secretary and the minister talked about areas where the United States and Russia's perspectives overlap and areas of divergence," Pentagon spokesman Peter Cook said. Russian defense ministry spokesman Igor Konashenkov told Russian

was open to limited talks with Moscow following what Washington believes is the deployment of Russian troops and heavy weapons to war-torn Syria. Russian President Vladimir Putin has provided vital support to Assad throughout a popular uprising against his regime and as the conflict has metastasized into a brutal civil war that has killed 240,000 people and displaced four million. But Moscow has also sought to portray Assad's army as a bulwark against Islamist rebels, including ISIS, which has seized a vast swathe of eastern Syria and northern Iraq and declared a so-called "caliphate." Moscow yesterday said it would consider any request from Syrian President Bashar al-Assad to send troops. "If there is any request then it would naturally be discussed and evaluated through bilateral contacts and dialogue," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted as saying by Russian news agency RIA Novosti. "But it is difficult to talk about this hypothetically."

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agencies that the call had lasted an hour and that contacts would continue. In Washington, Cook said: "They agreed to further discuss mechanisms for deconfliction in Syria and the counter-ISIS campaign." In military terms, "deconfliction" means rival armies will talk to one another to avoid accidental encounters between their forces. The White House said Thursday it

Burkina junta frees interim president

Senegal, Benin launch mediation efforts
AFP, Ouagadougou
Coup leaders in Burkina Faso announced yesterday they had released the country's interim president Michel Kafando whom they had detained along with the premier and two ministers. "As a sign of easing tensions and in the general interest, the national council for democracy has decided on the release of ministers and Michel Kafando," said a statement, adding that Kafando had been released late on Thursday. There were no specific details about Prime Minister Isaac Zida. Meanwhile, the leaders of coup were due to hold mediation talks with two African heads of state yesterday, as they reopened the landlocked country's borders. Soldiers from Burkina Faso's elite presidential guard burst into a cabinet meeting Thursday and seized Kafando and the others. The coup -- led by General Gilbert Diendere, close to ousted strongman Blaise Compaore -- triggered street protests outside the presidential palace. Three people died from gunshot wounds and at least 60 others were treated for various injuries, doctors at the main hospital in Ouagadougou, the capital, said.



A fishing boat is pictured washed ashore in the port of Coquimbo, some 445 km north of Santiago, after an 8.3 earthquake strike Chile on Wednesday. Hundreds of traumatized Chileans spent a second night out in the open or in shelters Thursday after the earthquake left 12 dead.



United Britain is 'on borrowed time'

Warns Scottish leader
AFP, London
Scotland's First Minister yesterday warned that a united Britain was "on borrowed time" unless Prime Minister David Cameron devolved more powers to Edinburgh, on the first anniversary of a historic independence referendum. Scottish voters decided to stay part of the United Kingdom by 55 percent to 45 percent on September 18 last year. "Only the people can decide if we will have another referendum," Scottish National Party (SNP) leader Nicola Sturgeon said in the anniversary address. Recent polls have shown an increased support for independence. "Right now, what people see at Westminster is a Tory government failing to fully deliver on the vow it made on more powers for our parliament," she said. "My message to David Cameron today is ... what happens to support for independence in the months and years to come will depend as much on what you do as it will on what we do. "And, right now, you are living on borrowed time," she added.

Japan set to pass security bills despite mass protests

AFP, Tokyo
Swelling crowds gathered outside Japan's parliament yesterday as lawmakers looked close to passing security bills that could see Japanese troops fight abroad for the first time in 70 years. As the evening ticked on, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's ruling coalition and opposition lawmakers remained at loggerheads inside parliament, where the controversial changes are expected to pass into law tonight. Tensions are running high the day after scuffles broke out in parliament, while outside thousands stood in the rain to voice their opposition to what could be the biggest shift in Japan's defence policy for half a century. Tens of thousands of people, young and old, have taken to the



streets for weeks in almost daily rallies, in a show of public anger on a scale rarely seen in Japan. As some 100 extra police officers arrived on the scene, Yoko Fujiwara waited with her six-year-old daughter, who carried a hand-written sign saying: "We do not forgive. Children are angry, too." "I came to the protest together with

my daughter to show what real democracy is like," said the 40-year-old graduate law student. Nationalist Abe wants what he calls a normalisation of Japan's military posture, which has been restricted to narrowly defined self-defence and aid missions by a pacifist constitution imposed by the US after World War II. He and his backers say the changes are necessary because of threats from an increasingly belligerent China and unstable North Korea. Opponents argue the new laws -- which would allow the tightly restricted military to fight in defence of allies -- go against the national psyche and could see the country dragged into American wars in far-flung parts of the globe.

Arrest of Muslim Teen in US over Bomb Fiasco Texas cops knew it wasn't a bomb

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK
The Texas police officers who arrested teenager Ahmed Mohamed over his homemade clock knew the device was not a bomb -- but detained him anyway. The 14-year-old science enthusiast made headlines across America when he was marched out of MacArthur High School in handcuffs on Monday after school officials called the police. But speaking to MSNBC, Irving Police Chief Larry Boyd revealed his officers had taken the student into custody despite knowing he presented no threat. "The officers pretty quickly determined that they weren't investigating an explosive device," he said. "What their investigation centered around is the law violation of bringing a device into a facility like that that is intended to create a level of alarm. In other words, a hoax bomb -- something that is not really a bomb, but is designed and presented in a way that it creates people to be afraid." Host Chris Hayes, who pointed out that no bomb squad was called to the scene and that the school was not evacuated, asked:

"But he never called it a bomb, right? He just kept calling it a clock. I mean, it never came out of his lips, he never did something or started showing it around saying 'Look at this bomb! I have.'" Boyd responded: "The officers made the decision they did with the information they had with what they thought was right at the time. We are clearly going to review this." Irving Mayor Beth Van Duynne has also defended the decision to take the teenager into custody. Ahmed, who dreams of attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, told reporters he was "very sad" his teacher thought his clock was a weapon: "I built a clock to impress my teacher but when I showed it to her she thought it was a threat to her. I'm very sad that she got the wrong impression of it." He has since said he intends to leave the school. The arrest has been widely criticised, with top US scientists telling Ahmed not to lose his passion for invention. And President Barack Obama this week invited him to the White House, tweeting: "Cool clock, Ahmed. Want to bring it to the White House? We should inspire more kids like you to like science. It's what makes America great."

